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IN QUEST OF SECURITY: THE CONTROVERSY OVER ZIONISM
IN THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, 1897-1920

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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IN QUEST OF SECURITY: THE CONTROVERSY OVER ZIONISM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For the greater part of the last two thousand years Jews have been forced to live a ghetto-like existence. In only a few places and at only a few times have they been allowed to share an existence of rough equality with the majority culture. But in each case, when they have been given this equality, Jews have taken full advantage of it and have sometimes achieved great economic and social success. Examples of places where this success has been attained include Babylonia, Spain, the Ottoman Empire, Holland, Poland and the United States. This paper is a study of how, in the last of these, the American Jews reacted when confronted with a movement which aimed at putting an end to this cycle of suffering and success--which aimed at solving the "Jewish Problem."

At the time of the establishment of this movement, called Zionism, there was in the United States a large group of acculturated Jews and a large and rapidly growing group of traditionally-oriented immigrant Jews. The acculturated group had a great stake in the society and in maintaining its freedom and equality, and it was therefore motivated in its attitudes to a large degree by whether or not it felt its

position was being threatened. The immigrants had come from Russia and Eastern Europe where Jewish suffering was real, and they were therefore motivated in their attitudes to a large degree by what they had experienced before emigrating. In addition this group still had very close ties with the people from where they had come. Thus news from "back home" affected them in a very personal way. *on this aspect in English.*

In Russia and Eastern Europe two methods had been developed to solve the "Jewish Problem." One was Socialism and the other was Zionism. As the Jews of these areas emigrated to the United States, they brought these "solutions" with them. When Zionism was introduced as a world movement in 1897, it thus had a solid base of support in the United States. But many of the acculturated Jews opposed the movement and therefore an ideological conflict developed. Since the immigration and the acculturation were both ongoing processes, there were many Jews somewhere in between these two extremes. It was only natural, then, that there developed positions which were neither Zionist nor anti-Zionist. This paper will illustrate all of the major ideological positions.

The period to be covered is from the establishment of the World Zionist Organization in 1897 to just before the major split occurred in the American Zionist movement in 1921. The controversies that took place within each of the groupings are not the primary subject here. Rather, it is the manner in which the various ideological positions conflicted with one another. Internal controversies will be discussed only when they serve to illustrate the larger disputes. *second chapter will give*

The sources investigated include, for the most part, contemporary published materials such as magazine and newspaper articles and books.

Emphasis has also been put on biographies and autobiographies. Secondary works have been consulted especially where they served to fill the gap produced by the writer's lack of proficiency in the Yiddish language. It should be pointed out, however, that a large part of the debate took place in Yiddish, especially when it involved the Orthodox and Socialist Jews, and few adequate works have been done on this aspect in English.

Generally speaking, manuscript sources have not been consulted. It has been assumed that in an ideological debate of this sort, every argument deemed worthy of use would find its way into print. The people involved and their biographies are not of primary importance. The arguments they used are the subject of this paper. The participants in the debate will be mentioned, however, in order that the reader may find it easier to tie the positions together.

Two approaches can be taken to understanding the ideological conflicts. One would be to study the group positions--that is, for example, the position of Reform Judaism, of Orthodox Judaism, of the Jewish Socialists, and of the Zionists themselves. The other would be to study the individual conflicts that resulted and often crossed group lines. In this paper both approaches will be employed. It is felt that the understanding of the group attitudes will facilitate the understanding of the individual controversies and vice versa. The group positions will be considered in chapter four and the unfolding debate in chapter five. Chapter three will be devoted to the meaning of Zionism and especially the relation of Jewish nationality to it. The second chapter will give a historical background, concentrating on the rise of Zionism and Zionism in the United States.

A considerable amount of work has been done in the study of Zionism up to this time. But it has been almost entirely devoted to the political development of the Zionist movement. Little has been done on the anti-Zionists; and the attitudes of all the various factions have been covered only in passing. It is hoped that this paper will lay some groundwork for future study of these attitudes.

The writer has felt from the beginning of his research on this paper that there was another reason for doing it than simply to illustrate the various American Jewish attitudes toward Zionism. It will be seen that all the factions within the American Jewish community were really after the same end. They were each attempting to solve the "Jewish Problem." It is hoped that this paper will illuminate the meaning of that "Problem;" and it is hoped that the reader will gain, as has the writer, a better understanding of what it means to be a Jew in the American situation.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

History of the Jews

The history of the Jewish people is surely one of the most fascinating and unusual of all national histories. It began, so the Bible tells us, with Abraham, who, about thirty-five hundred years ago, introduced the idea of monotheism which was to become one of the central foundations of Western Civilization. This history continued through centuries of wandering, enslavement, suffering, and warfare. It reached great high points in the receiving of the Ten Commandments by Moses, the Kingdom established by King David, the preachings of the numerous prophets, and the composing of the Talmud during the Babylonian exile. The first great phase of Jewish history came to an end at the hands of Rome in the wars of 68-70 A.D. and 132-35 A.D.

At the time of the defeat by Rome, Jews were already scattered through most of the known world. The conquest of their homeland accentuated this scattering and, as will be seen, added great meaning to it. For without a homeland, a spiritual center, the burden of the preservation of Judaism fell entirely upon these dispersed Jews.

For almost a thousand years after the dispersion the center of gravity of Judaism was located in Babylonia. Then for a period of roughly five hundred years (980-1492), Jews occupied exalted positions and enjoyed

a high degree of freedom in Arab controlled Spain. But with the ascendancy of Christianity came the Inquisition and the beginning of the eastward migration of the Jews. Relative degrees of freedom were achieved temporarily in Southern France, the Ottoman Empire and Holland. By the sixteenth-century the spiritual center was located in Poland and to a lesser degree in Lithuania and the Ukraine. But following the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, Jews were again subjected to periodic slaughters and retreated into ghetto living for protection.

By the eighteenth-century the center of Jewish opportunity and freedom had again shifted westward to France and Germany. In Germany Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86) ushered in the movement called "Enlightenment" (Haskalah), which aimed at integrating Jews into European culture. And in France, Napoleon gave Jews almost complete civil emancipation, extending it to his entire Empire between the years 1812 and 1815.¹

In Western Europe the process of acculturation² continued unabated throughout most of the nineteenth-century. But in Eastern Europe those lands in which Jews had been emancipated by Napoleon quickly reverted after 1815, and in all of Eastern Europe and Russia the condition of the Jews became increasingly intolerable. Until the latter part of

¹For this brief historical account see: Cecil Roth, A History of the Jews (New York: Schocken Books, 1954); Max Wurmbrand and Cecil Roth, The Jewish People: 4000 Years of Survival (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv: Massadah-P.E.C. Press Ltd., 1956); S.M. Dubnow, Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of History, trans. by "J.F." and "H.S." (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1903); Irving Miller, Israel: The Eternal Ideal (New York: Farrar, Straus and Gudahy, 1955); and Isidore Epstein, Judaism: A Historical Presentation (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1959).

²I will use "acculturation" to mean the condition in which Jews accept the major societal values but keep their Judaism. The word "assimilation" I will use to mean conversion to the dominant societal religion.

the century the Jews had only two ways out--"escape from Judaism through assimilation; or escape into Judaism through Hasidism,"³ a mystically oriented form of Orthodoxy then popular in that area.

The Rise of Zionism

But then a stirring began to appear in the Jewish youth of Eastern Europe which demanded a change. Cultural Zionism, or the glorification of the Jewish past, became popular, especially in Russia, in the 1860's.⁴ Then in the 1880's the Russian pogroms (organized massacres of Jews) led large numbers of Jews to believe that this romantic Zionism had to end and be superseded by a more practical political Zionism. Lovers of Zion (Chovevei Zion) was founded in Odessa in 1882 and was devoted to the practical work of founding Jewish colonies in Palestine.⁵ It quickly became evident, however, that only a very limited success could be achieved without legal protection and money. At this point events in Western Europe were to be decisive.

The rising nationalism in Western Europe was giving impetus to a rapidly surfacing suspicion of Jewish minorities. Even though Jews had been emancipated, they continued to preserve a good deal of their clannishness and a good many traditions and customs different from the majority's. "Christians disliked their religious recalcitrance; farmers, their urban-mindedness; Conservatives, their flocking with Liberals or

³Julius Haber, The Odyssey of an American Zionist: Fifty Years of Zionist History (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1956), pp. 19-20.

⁴Stuart E. Rosenberg, America is Different: The Search for Jewish Identity (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964), pp. 73-74.

⁵Richard Gottheil, "Zionism," The Century Magazine, LIX (December, 1899), pp. 299-301.

Marxians. But all this dislike was more or less latent until the widespread Conservative and intensely nationalist reaction of the early 1880's and the rise of racialism. Then it was crystallized and rationalized as 'anti-Semitism.'⁶ This anti-Semitism, by continually suggesting that Jews were 'aliens' who could not be good citizens of the countries in which they lived, led them, "in defense or as compensation, to develop a Jewish nationalism."⁷

By 1897 Jewish nationalism in western countries had developed to such a degree that a Viennese newspaper correspondent, Theodor Herzl, was able to successfully and permanently bring together, in organizational form, the western money and talent and the eastern desire for emigration to Palestine. The first meeting of this group was held in Basle, Switzerland in August, 1897. It formed the World Zionist Organization and adopted the "Basle Program" which spelled out the purpose of the Organization as that of solving the "Jewish Problem" by establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.⁸

⁶Carlton J. H. Hayes, A Generation of Materialism, 1871-1900 (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. 261.

⁷Ibid., p. 264.

⁸The Basle Program reprinted in Joseph Heller, The Zionist Idea (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1949), p. 72, states the following:

Zionism strives to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion by appropriate means of the settlement in Palestine of Jewish agriculturists, artisans and manufacturers.
2. The organization and binding together of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, both local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps towards obtaining the consent of governments, where necessary, in order to reach the goal of Zionism.

The desire for a return to Palestine had been held firmly by religious Jews for the entire seventeen and one-half centuries of the dispersion. The literature of Judaism is replete with examples of this longing. The fifth and sixth verses of the one hundred thirty-seventh psalm are recited by religious Jews every day at midnight:

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning;
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not;
If I set not Jerusalem
Above my chiefest joy.⁹

This prayer is incorporated in the Sidur, a collection of Jewish prayers and customs for every occasion. Also in the Sidur is the following prayer which is recited every morning, "Sound the great horn for our freedom; lift up the ensign to gather our exiles and gather us from the four corners of the earth."¹⁰

Each year at the end of the Passover service, celebrating the exodus from Egyptian bondage, Jews recite a prayer which ends requesting God to "lead the stem-shoots of thy ward, Redeemed and singing, Zionward," and wishing to be, "Next year in Jerusalem!"¹¹ And as a final example of the eternal Jewish longing for a return to Palestine, there is this often recited prayer of the second exile, "On account of our sins we have been exiled from our land and removed from our soil. Our Father, our King . . . bring together our scattered from among the nations and

⁹Psalm 137:5-6.

¹⁰Sidur, trans. by Zohar and Nira Landau (Budapest, Hungary: Sinai Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 76-77.

¹¹Haggadah of Passover, trans. by Abraham Regelson (New York: Shulsinger Brothers, 1951), p. 52.

gather our dispersed from the ends of the earth."¹²

The formation of the World Zionist Organization in 1897 was, then, an event founded upon centuries of longing, made possible by the emancipation of Jews in western countries, and stimulated by an increasing level of persecution in Eastern Europe and Russia. As might be expected in such a situation, the immediate growth of the Zionist organization was quite rapid. Within a year after the meeting in Basle, it had grown from one hundred seventeen societies to more than eight hundred.¹³ And the prestige of the organization was great enough to gain Herzl an audience with Kaiser Wilhelm II in October, 1898 and again the following month. Though these meetings produced no substantive results, they did cause a "wild stir among the Jewish youth of the world. . . ."¹⁴

But in 1904 Theodor Herzl died at the young age of forty-four, and the Zionist organization suffered a period of slump and disorganization from which it was not to recover until after the outbreak of the war. By 1908 the membership had declined by over fifty percent.¹⁵

The war brought renewed suffering to Eastern European Jews and thus stimulated increased activity to help them from the West. By 1917 the Zionist organization was again strong enough to get a hearing from heads of state and was successful in getting the British government to

¹²quoted in Israel Friedlaender, "Dubnow's Theory of Jewish Nationalism," The Maccabean, VIII (June, 1905), p. 244.

¹³Richard Gottheil, "The Zionist Movement," North American Review, CLXIX (August, 1899), p. 230.

¹⁴Haber, Odyssey of an American Zionist, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵Jacob DeHaas, Louis D. Brandeis: A Biographical Sketch (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1929), p. 24.

issue a statement that was to be known as the Balfour Declaration. This Declaration expressed a favorable attitude on the part of the British government, which controlled Palestine, towards "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," and was the first semi-legal basis upon which the Zionists were to claim a right to Palestine.¹⁶

Following the war the Zionists again suffered a loss in membership and prestige and it was not until the rise of Hitler and the Second World War that they had the power to achieve their aim--a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Zionism in the United States

In the United States interest in a movement to restore Palestine to the Jews was demonstrated as early as 1825 when Major Mordecai M. Noah dedicated "Ararat," his island in the Niagara River, as the temporary homeland of the Jews until Palestine could be obtained. The idea never really caught on, but it was never allowed to completely die either. Several men, including Raphael J. De Cordova, lay preacher of Temple Emanu-El in New York, and Warder Cresson, a converted Quaker living in Philadelphia, kept the hope of a restored Palestine alive.¹⁷

Finally, in 1884 the first American branch of the Lovers of Zion was established in New York City.¹⁸ This was the first organized

¹⁶Heller, The Zionist Idea, p. 72.

¹⁷Naomi Wiener Cohen, "The Reaction of Reform Judaism in America to Political Zionism (1897-1922)," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, XL (June, 1951), pp. 363-64.

¹⁸Marnin Feinstein, American Zionism, 1884-1904 (New York: Herzl Press, 1965), p. 26.

group in America to advocate Jewish colonization in Palestine. It never grew very large nor very active, but by 1890 there were eight branches in the United States with twenty-five hundred members.¹⁹

By 1897, however, when Herzl summoned Zionists to Basle, the Lovers of Zion movement in the United States was almost dead. Only the Baltimore branch was strong enough to send a delegate.²⁰ Indeed, the Zionists in America were so weak that if it had not have been for Herzl establishing a political movement and for the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jews were immigrating from Eastern Europe, it is doubtful that any real form of Zionism would have existed in the United States after the turn of the century.²¹

The significance of Jewish immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for American Zionism is immediately apparent when the total Jewish immigration pattern is considered. The first Jewish immigration, prior to and about the time of the American Revolution, was composed predominantly of Sephardic or Spanish Jews. Then between 1840 and 1880 came the "German" immigration--Jews primarily from Central Europe.²² But both of these "immigrations" were small compared to the immense influx from Eastern Europe and Russia between 1880 and 1924. In 1880 there were about 250,000 Jews living

¹⁹Jacob Kabakoff, "Beginnings of Hibbat Zion in America," in Herzl Year Book, Vol. VI: Essays in Zionist History and Thought, ed. by Raphael Patai (New York: Herzl Press, 1965), p. 255 n. 1.

²⁰Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 53.

²¹Ibid., p. 277.

²²Samuel Halperin, The Political World of American Zionism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), p. 51.

in the United States. By 1924 there were four million.²³

This sizable immigration from an area of the world that was already interested in Zionism coupled with the formation of the World Zionist Organization made possible the formation of the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) in 1898. The leadership for this Federation was assumed by Dr. Gustave Gottheil, his son Dr. Richard Gottheil, who was chosen president, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Though these three men were products of the "German" immigration, the majority of their supporters were recent immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia.²⁴ By 1899 the Federation could count one hundred twenty-five affiliated groups.²⁵

But this initial activity was somewhat misleading. Once the romantic hopes at the beginning had given way to the practical activities requiring time and work, problems arose. The leadership could give only their leisure hours to the organization;²⁶ and the membership, composed mostly of poor immigrants, was burdened too heavily with the problem of individual survival to give either time or money. In addition, many were more attracted to Socialism as a panacea than to Zionism.²⁷

²³Ibid., p. 47.

²⁴DeHaas, Brandeis, p. 28.

²⁵Gottheil, "The Zionist Movement," p. 230.

²⁶DeHaas, Brandeis, p. 28.

²⁷Feinstein, American Zionism, pp. 279-85; Halperin, Political World of American Zionism, p. 11; and Bernard A. Rosenblatt, Two Generations of Zionism: Historical Recollections of an American Zionist (New York: Shengold Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 52.

The weak state of American Zionism was demonstrated in 1903 by the reaction to the Kishinev massacres in Russia. This event, in which thousands of Jews were killed, has been described as having aroused "the direct interest of American Jews more than had any previous foreign event in which Jews were involved."²⁸ In fact, the Zionist ranks grew substantially as a result of this, and the Kishinev Relief Fund was launched by the FAZ. But even with this added interest and support, the total amount collected was well under \$6,000.²⁹ And furthermore, in 1905, a year in which the membership of the FAZ reached its high point before World War I, the Zionists could count only 25,000 members out of a total American Jewish population of about 1.5 million.³⁰

Nevertheless, in these years before the war certain progress was made. The Maccabaeon was established as a monthly journal of the FAZ in 1901, and Dos Yiddishe Folk was founded to serve the same function in Yiddish in 1909. American finances principally supported the Aronson Agricultural Experiment Station in Palestine and assisted in the founding and support of the three outstanding educational institutions of that land, the Haifa Technion, Bezalel and the Herzliah Hebrew High School. American funds also brought much reclaimed land into Jewish hands. Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization was founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold. And Solomon Schechter and Louis D. Brandeis,

²⁸Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 242.

²⁹The Maccabaeon, V (August, 1903), p. 132.

³⁰Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 278.

two of the leading American Jews, were both converted to Zionism.³¹

The significance of Brandeis' acceptance of Zionism was to become apparent during the war years. When the war broke out in Europe, the central office of the World Zionist Organization in Berlin was cut off from the rest of the organization. It was therefore decided to form an emergency office in the United States to direct the world-wide Zionist affairs. In late August, 1914, a meeting was held in New York in which the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs was formed, and Brandeis was chosen to head it. It was thought at the time that Brandeis, though he had never been an active Jew and had only encountered Zionism seriously in 1910, would, through his name, "lend luster to a cause that needed great aid. . . ."³²

But Brandeis took his role seriously. He quickly shifted what had previously been merely an academic interest in Zionism to an avid and able leadership which was to result in a seven hundred fifty percent increase in American membership alone by 1920.³³ He also played an active role in getting the British government to issue the Balfour Declaration in 1917.³⁴ The effectiveness of Brandeis' leadership is

³¹Herbert Parzen, "The Federation of American Zionists," in Early History of Zionism in America, ed. by Isidore S. Meyer (New York: American Jewish Historical Society and Theodore Herzl Foundation, 1958), pp. 252-53.

³²DeHaas, Brandeis, pp. 51-60.

³³Sulamith Schwartz, "Zionism in American Jewish Life," in The American Jew: A Composite Portrait, ed. by Oscar I. Janowsky (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 243. There were 20,000 members in the United States in 1914 and 171,000 in 1920.

³⁴Alpheus Thomas Mason, Brandeis: A Free Man's Life (New York: The Viking Press, 1956), pp. 451-55. See also Herbert Parzen, "Brandeis and the Balfour Declaration," in Herzl Year Book, Vol. V: Essays in Zionist History and Thought, ed. by Raphael Patai (New York: Herzl Press, 1963).

demonstrated by the fact that in 1919 the American Zionists were strong enough to be able to present to President Wilson a petition signed by over 500,000 Jews concerning the fate of European Jews.³⁵

The effectiveness of Brandeis' leadership was not the only factor in the increase in Zionist membership, however. Other factors included the renewed suffering of European Jews, which motivated American Jews into more activity, and the changing American attitudes toward immigration which threatened to cut off the United States as a haven for Jews.³⁶ The result of this combination of circumstances was a growth in the feeling of Jewish nationalism and a more vigorous effort to gain a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Of the three types of Zionism, Political Zionism was simply the political attempt to gain a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The World Zionist Organization and the Federation of American Zionists were essentially political organizations. Theodor Herzl was primarily a Political Zionist.

Economic Zionism aimed at the colonization of Palestine without a homeland as an end objective. It was a humanitarian Zionism designed to finance the emigration of those Jews who desired to go to Palestine. Economic Zionism existed before Political Zionism. The first real colony in Palestine was Mikveh Israel, founded in 1870.

³⁵DeHaas, Brandeis, p. 70. The exact number of signatures was 523,048.

³⁶Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951), pp. 286-300.

CHAPTER III

ZIONISM AND JEWISH NATIONALITY

Zionism, like almost any ideology, meant different things to different people. In general there were three distinct types of Zionism: Political, Economic, and Religious or Spiritual. Each was meant to fulfill a separate desire--the desires to alleviate Jewish suffering in Russia and Eastern Europe, to check assimilation in the West, and to fulfill the Jewish longing for the restoration of Palestine.

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¹Gottheil, "The Zionist Movement," p. 229.

instrumental in founding colonies and financing projects in Palestine. In the twentieth century, American "non-Zionists" were active Economic Zionists. Remaining independent of Zionist organizations, and frowning upon Political Zionism, they, nevertheless, provided money for a good many Palestinian projects.

Economic Zionism carried obvious political overtones, since it was virtually inevitable that at some point in the future, Jewish immigrants to Palestine would attempt to form a politically independent Jewish State. And if enough Jews had immigrated and peaceful attempts at independence failed, it was likely that a forceful attempt would be made.

Religious Zionism also carried political overtones. Specifically it was aimed at revitalizing the Jewish communities in the free western countries where assimilation was making rapid headway. It was the spirit and the enthusiasm and the pride that would come from the political attempt to regain the Holy Land that would serve to revivify these communities. But the revitalizing force was a political force.

It should be apparent that these three types of Zionism were not necessarily thought of as separate. In fact, most Zionists thought of them as merely three aspects of the same movement. Though these Zionists might emphasize one or the other aspect, they did not think that any one could exist without the other two. For most Zionists, Zionism meant the obtaining of a homeland in Palestine, the colonization of Palestine while the homeland was being obtained, and the revitalization of the world Jewish community as a result of these two efforts--all wrapped into one.

In 1897 Theodor Herzl published The Jewish State, a short book which inspired the formation of the World Zionist Organization the following year. In this book Herzl told why he thought Political Zionism was necessary to solve the Jewish Problem:

We have honestly endeavored everywhere to merge ourselves in the social life of surrounding communities and to preserve only the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. In vain are we loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places running to extremes: in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers. . . .²

And later he lamented, "If we could only be left in peace. . . . But I think we shall not be left in peace."³

Herzl saw the problem as a political one in which Jews, by moving from one country to avoid persecution, created the same intolerable situation in the country to which they moved. The solution, he felt, was to break this cycle by obtaining political guarantees for a permanent Jewish homeland.⁴

Richard Gottheil, the first president of the Federation of American Zionists, felt that Zionism served as the means which would bring about the religious regeneration of Judaism. It would do this, he believed, by reestablishing the Jewish spiritual center through political and economic methods:

²Theodor Herzl, The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question, trans. by Israel Cohen (New York: Scopus Publishing Company, 1943), p. 20.

³Ibid., p. 21.

⁴Ibid., pp. 19-20.

We believe that if an end is to be made to Jewish misery and to the exceptional position which the Jews occupy--which is the primary cause of Jewish misery--the Jewish nation must be placed once again in a home of its own. . . . We believe that only by means of such a national regeneration can the religious regeneration of the Jews take place.⁵

On another occasion, in the "announcement" of the establishment of The Maccabaeen as the monthly organ of the FAZ, Gottheil stated that the aim of Zionism was "to reconstruct the Jewish people, to lead them to an organized national existence, to make Jewish religious life possible, to foster the study of Jewish literature and history, to provide a stable home for the oppressed and downtrodden of our race. . . ." ⁶

For Solomon Schechter, head of the Jewish Theological Seminary from 1902 to 1915, Zionism also meant primarily a religious rebirth. He felt that, "the work . . . in which Zionism had to engage first, and in which it will have to continue for many years to come, was the work of regeneration. It had to recreate the Jewish consciousness before creating the Jewish state."⁷ At another point Schechter stated firmly, "I belong to that class of Zionists that lay more stress on the religious-national aspects of Zionism than on any other feature peculiar to it. The rebirth of Israel's religion, or, to use a shorter term, the revival of Judaism, are inseparable."⁸

⁵Richard Gottheil, "The Aims of Zionism," in The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader, ed. by Arthur Hertzberg (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. and Heral Press, 1959), p. 500.

⁶Richard Gottheil, "Announcement," The Maccabaeen, I (October, 1901), p. 3.

⁷Solomon Schechter, "Zionism: A Statement," in Seminary Addresses and Other Papers, ed. by Louis Finkelstein (New York: The Burning Bush Press, 1959), p. 100.

⁸Ibid., p. 97.

Louis Brandeis saw Zionism more from an economic than from a religious angle. As was the case with the other Zionists, he worked for a political solution, but he saw the whole problem as one entailing the securing of a location where Jews could be free from persecution. He believed that Zionism

aims to enable the Jews to exercise the same right now exercised by practically every other people in the world; to live at their option either in the land of their fathers or in some other country; . . . Zionism seeks to establish in Palestine, for such Jews as choose to go and remain there, and for their descendants, a legally secured home, where they may live together and lead a Jewish life; where they may expect ultimately to constitute a majority of the population, and may look forward to what we should call home rule.⁹

Throughout the above statements, two particular concerns can be noted--concerns that Zionism was meant to alleviate. These fears were felt to one degree or another by all Zionists and were often expressed with great clarity. The first was that Judaism would be wiped out by force. Max Nordau, a leader in the World Zionist Organization, expressed this apprehension with great passion when he prophesied that, "Unless the Zionist movement succeeds, and a country is provided where the Jews who have not assimilated with other nations may go and be at peace and find complete liberty, the race will die, judging by the present rate of increasing oppression."¹⁰ This same feeling was expressed by Gustave Gottheil in the last public appearance before he died:

⁹Louis D. Brandeis, "The Jewish Problem--How To Solve It," The Maccabean, XXVI (June, 1915), pp. 107-108.

¹⁰Max Nordau, "The Zionist Movement," The Independent, LII (September 13, 1900), p. 2192.

Zionism is not a question of opinion or creed, but one of life and death. The Jewish people are actually being murdered, and the days of the Middle Ages are coming back to us. I love Zionism because for the first time in centuries the Jew has said to the Gentile, "If you do not help me, I shall help myself." And to my dying hour I shall help this movement.¹¹

The second fear was that Judaism would disappear through assimilation. The freedom gained as a result of emancipation would lead Jews to adopt the majority culture which in time would bring on the end of the Jewish people as a distinctive group. This concern was expressed concisely by Elisha Friedman:

For less than a century, the Jewish people have been freed from civil and political disabilities. Yet, in the train of emancipation, there followed various dangers. Released from pressure, the Jewish people have lost their distinctive spiritual bent, so that they no longer produce peculiar and essential social values of any kind. Worse, still, they are dying out.¹²

These two concerns--one over persecution and the other over assimilation--were powerful motivating forces behind Zionism. But there was a more positive aspect to Zionism, too. There was a feeling among many that Judaism had a destiny and that Zionism was the means of fulfilling that destiny. Rabbi Judah Magnes, who emigrated to Palestine in 1922 and became the first president of Hebrew University, felt that Zionism was an "idea, a necessity, a moving force in the lives of all Jews, not merely of the oppressed." "A race," he believed, "cannot give full expression to its genius except in its own home on indigenous soil."¹³ Bernard Rosenblatt said that what

¹¹quoted in Isidore D. Morrison, "Milestones in a Career," The Maccabaeans, IV (May, 1903), p. 279.

¹²Elisha M. Friedman, "Zionism and the American Spirit," The Forum, LVIII (July, 1917), p. 70.

¹³quoted in Norman Bentwich, For Zion's Sake: A Biography of Judah L. Magnes (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), p. 53.

attracted him to Zionism was this hope for the future. "A Jewish state seemed to me the proper fulfillment of Jewish destiny."¹⁴ This same feeling, that there was something more to Zionism than simply a reaction to persecution and assimilation, was expressed slightly differently by a British Jew writing in The Maccabaeon. He was contrasting the aims of the Zionists with those of anti-Zionists:

The anti-Zionists are, we credit them unreservedly, animated by at least as good intentions toward the majority of their own kith and kin as we are; they are all anxious to help. The only difference between them and us is that we wish to help, not only others, a few or a large number of our brothers in exile, but to reconstruct that unity which knows no distinction between the Jews of one continent and country and those of other continents and countries; we wish to help, not them, but us, all. We wish to remove the artificial barriers erected during the last fifty or one hundred years between Jew and Jew, and work out together our social and political salvation.¹⁵

This feeling, that there was something that all Jews had in common, that there was a sort of "Jewish destiny" that tied all Jews together, was central to Zionist thinking. For lack of a better word it was called nationalism. That Jews formed a nation was taken for granted by all Zionists.¹⁶ Indeed, as Max Nordau stated, "Whoever maintains and believes that the Jews are not a nation can indeed not be a Zionist. . . ."¹⁷ But it was seriously questioned by many Jews who were not Zionists. Due to the central position of this claim of Jewish nationhood in the meaning of Zionism, it will be considered in

¹⁴Bernard Rosenblatt, Two Generations of Zionism, pp. 28-29.

¹⁵M. Gaster, "Zionism, Anti-Semitism, Etc.," The Maccabaeon, I (October, 1901), pp. 13-14.

¹⁶Rosenberg, America is Different, p. 74.

¹⁷Max Nordau, "Zionism," in The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader, ed. by Hertzberg, p. 243.

more detail than the concerns over persecution and assimilation.

To begin with it is quite obvious that Jews lacked several group qualities that were generally associated with nationhood. They lacked a common language, a common land area, and to a large degree they even lacked common customs. (Reform Judaism was in many ways closer to Christianity than to Orthodoxy). Nevertheless, many Jews believed that there still remained a sort of indefinable quality that made a Jew, no matter how weak his religious convictions, still a Jew. Julian Mack, who served as president of the Federation of American Zionists from 1918 to 1921, speculated about a part of this quality:

. . . in the days of Dreyfus, in the days of the Kishinev victims, in the days of Beilis, an American radical or reform Jew did not think of these sufferers merely as co-religionists; indeed, he knew that there was a great gulf, a sharp line of religious demarcation between his Judaism and that of the Orthodox Russian Jew; he felt, however, that notwithstanding this difference, they were bound to him by the tie of common inheritance, a common tradition, a common sympathy based beyond question upon the ancestral religion but not limited thereto.¹⁸

Prominent theorists of nationality have generally agreed with Mack's analysis. Simon Dubnow, one of the greatest Jewish historians, believed that "the Jewish national idea and the national feeling connected with it have their origin primarily in the historical consciousness, in a certain complex of ideas and psychic predispositions."¹⁹ Carlton J. H. Hayes felt that Jews had lost their nationality in the dispersion. But in the nineteenth century, in response to the rising nationalism in Europe and the concomitant anti-Semitism, Jews redeveloped

¹⁸Julian W. Mack, Americanism and Zionism (New York: Federation of American Zionists, 1918), pp. 7-8.

¹⁹Dubnow, Jewish History, p. 29.

oped their nationality.²⁰ Hayes felt, like Dubnow, that it was the common heritage or "historical consciousness" that made this redevelopment possible.

Indeed, the point in dispute was not so much how Jewish nationality could exist, but when and where it existed. And, of course, from this, the key question for American Jews was, did it exist in the early twentieth century in the United States. As might be expected, there was entirely no agreement on this question.

At one extreme Rabbi Samuel Schulman objected to the idea that Jews made up a homeless nation, because "logically carried out, it is destructive to Judaism as a religion." He felt that Jews never were a nation but a theocracy, and he pointed out that a person could become a Jew simply by converting and that he could renounce his Jewishness in the same manner. "Judaism," he believed, "is a religion to be classed with Catholicism and Protestantism, and is not the expression of a national aspiration."²¹

A more moderate position was taken by Maurice Fishberg, an anthropologist, who, in a country by country study of Jewish society, concluded that up until the end of the eighteenth century "Jews were undoubtedly a nation." About that time they ceased to be a nation in the western countries while in Eastern Europe they continued to comprise a nation.²² This conclusion was based not only on the fact

²⁰Carlton J. H. Hayes, Essays on Nationalism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), pp. 213-20.

²¹Samuel Schulman, "Why American Jews Consider Zionism Undesirable," The Outlook, CXII (January 5, 1916), pp. 40-41.

²²Maurice Fishberg, The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), pp. 475-87.

that in Eastern Europe Jews continued to hold themselves separate, using their own laws and language and living in a Ghetto or Pale, but also on the fact that the countries treated them as being separate, authorizing each Jewish community its own autonomous administrative, financial and judicial organizations.

Morris Jastrow, a historian and outspoken anti-Zionist, came to the same essential conclusion as Fishberg. "With the opening of the new era in which we live," he wrote, "the nationalistic attachment disappeared from the consciousness of the Jews living in lands in which they had obtained full political rights. . . ." ²³

At the other extreme Jacob DeHaas, who served as secretary to the Federation of American Zionists and as editor of The Maccabaeon, was less compromising. "That the Jews are a nation," he stated, "is practically indisputable." He went on to set up a tautology in which he tried to show that the fact that Zionism existed proved the existence of a Jewish nationality:

If the Jews were not a nation and had no national idea, the Jewish trouble would not be a sufficient impelling force to raise a movement capable of solving the Jewish trouble. A negative line of reasoning might suggest that were the Jews a disintegrated, dispersed mass of religionists they would have already disappeared, and therefore there would have been no Jewish problem to solve. ²⁴

If the question at this point seems to be weighted in favor of those who disbelieved in the existence of a Jewish nationality in America in the early twentieth century, due to the moderates siding

²³Morris Jastrow, Zionism and the Future of Palestine: The Fallacies and Dangers of Political Zionism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), pp. 19-20.

²⁴Jacob DeHaas, "The National Idea," The Maccabaeon, V (September, 1903), p. 171.

with the anti-Zionists, then consider the pragmatic statement by Judah Magnes: "Any groups which regard themselves as a nation are a nationality."²⁵ American Zionists fulfilled that requirement.

CHAPTER IV

ZIONIST ATTITUDES OF MAJOR JEWISH GROUPINGS

To a large extent in the early twentieth century the varying Jewish attitudes toward Zionism fit into patterns. There were three such within Judaism--Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform--and a strong secularist socialist orientation among many Jewish workers. Each of these divisions had a particular world-view which tended to govern the thinking of its members toward Zionism. In addition to these four belief structures there was a fifth which could not be classed as a world-view but would be more accurately defined as a compromise position. This was the "non-Zionist" position. It was essentially a belief in Economic Zionism while neither supporting nor opposing Political Zionism.

There are two ways of approaching the ideological conflicts over Zionism. First, to a large degree, these conflicts can be fit into the attitudes of the above groups, one of the ways is to consider them from the group level. But many of the conflicts crossed group lines and thus must be considered separately. The next chapter will look at the conflicts that crossed group lines. This chapter will consider the primary attitudes of Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative

²⁵quoted in Bentwich, Magnes, p. 73.

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Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox or traditional Jews faced a peculiar problem with Zionism. They believed fervently in the return to Palestine, but they believed the return would come by way of a Messiah.¹ Whatever else it was, the Zionist organization was obviously not a Messiah and, in fact it made no claims of even being a Messianic movement. In addition, the major leaders of Zionism were secularist Jews, oftentimes agnostic or atheistic, and Orthodox Jews were naturally hesitant to follow such a leadership. On the other hand, as has been shown, the desire for a return to Palestine was exceptionally strong among religious Jews. Thus there developed twin dilemmas, first, over how strictly the traditional idea of the method of return, a personal Messiah, should be observed, and second, over whether or not religious Jews should follow the lead of secularist Jews in a Jewish movement.

At the turn of the century most West European and American Orthodox rabbis considered Zionism "a blasphemous act of rebellion against the will of God." Secular attempts to normalize the position of the Jews by providing a sovereign state were regarded as "defections from 'Jewish Fate'." . . . But in Eastern Europe, where Jewish suffering was great and where emancipation had as yet little effect, rabbinical and lay Jews alike generally supported the Zionist organization.² There, the need for Zionism was great enough to stimulate the new interpretations necessary to allow for Orthodox support of Zionism.

¹Milton Steinberg, A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1945), pp. 233-34.

²Halperin, Political World of American Zionism, pp. 65-66.

Orthodox Judaism had held that the restoration would be led by the Messiah. But the Zionist movement was attempting the restoration without waiting for a Messiah, and strictly speaking, Orthodoxy could therefore not support it. But the social and economic need for a Jewish homeland was very great for those Eastern European Jews, and they therefore reinterpreted the tradition. It was decided that the resettlement of Palestine without the Messiah, rather than meeting with disfavor from God, "might give Israel added favor in God's sight, so that He would hasten the coming of the Messiah."³ This reinterpretation gave Orthodox Jews the theological license for supporting Zionism.

Once the religious objection was circumvented, only the secularism of Zionism remained as an impediment to Orthodox support. But since Zionism claimed to be only a political movement and did not intend to involve itself in religious, spiritual, or cultural matters, this too was not an insurmountable obstacle.⁴ As long as the Zionists did not enlarge their activities to include more than the obtaining of a homeland through political methods, there would be no conflict with Orthodoxy. Orthodox Jews were thus free to support Zionism.

These interpretations, worked out in the East, began filtering their way westward and set the stage for massive Orthodox support of Zionism there as well. But while this was happening, the Zionists were in the process of changing the ground rules and as a result forced the Orthodox into a new maneuver.

³Eugene Kohn, "Zionism and Jewish Religious Tendencies: Zionism and Orthodox Judaism," The Maccabaeon, XXXI (September, 1918), p. 269.

⁴Samuel Rosenblatt, The History of the Mizrahi Movement (New York: Mizrahi Organization of America, 1951), p. 14.

At the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 the issue of secularist education in Palestine came up. The Zionists, in other words, had moved into the realm of cultural and religious matters. There was a split and many of the Orthodox left and made plans for what was to become the Mizrachi movement.⁵ This movement was to serve the function of enabling Orthodox Jews, who opposed the incursion of Zionism into the religious and cultural arena, a way of expressing both this opposition and their support of the ultimate aim of regaining Palestine.

The Mizrachi grew very rapidly, gaining two hundred ten chapters in the first year. The first world conference was held in 1904 and was attended by one hundred delegates including one from the United States.⁶ At this conference a new philosophy was developed. Previously, Orthodox Zionists had attempted only to foster Zionism among their fellow traditionalists. Now it was decided to also point out "in word and in deed that Israel and its Torah were indivisible, that nationalism and religion were equally indispensable elements of true Zionism."⁷ Now they would foster religion among the Zionists as well as Zionism among the religious.

The Mizrachi developed slowly in America. Many Orthodox Jews stayed with the Federation of American Zionists because they felt the

⁵Ibid., p. 16; and Simon Federbush, "Religious Zionism," in Struggle for Tomorrow: Modern Political Ideologies of the Jewish People, ed. by Basil J. Viavianos and Feliks Gross (New York: Arts, Inc., 1954), pp. 77-78.

⁶Samuel Rosenblatt, History of Mizrachi, pp. 18-19.

⁷Ibid., p. 20.

movement should not be divided.⁸ But in 1913, Rabbi Meyer Berlin came to the United States and proceeded to organize American Orthodoxy into the Mizrachi. He was helped by the war which brought so much suffering to European Jews. By 1916 there were one hundred one chapters and the Chicago convention of that year drew one hundred fourteen delegates.⁹

The Mizrachi worked very closely with the American and World Zionist Organizations. At times it even became a part of these Organizations. Its success in converting the American Orthodox community was significant. As early as 1905, The Maccabaeon could announce that the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, the principal organization of Orthodox congregations in the United States, was "favorable to the Zionist movement."¹⁰

Nevertheless, American Orthodox Jews as a group were relatively slow to pick up the Zionist banner. This was surely due in part to their economic condition; as recent immigrants they had little time for idealistic movements. But it was also due in part to the tenacious belief expressed by the religiously-oriented newspaper, Tageblatt, that Zion could only be restored as a result of a "messianic movement." "A Zion restored by purchase or force," it claimed, "would be in opposition to the spirit of Judaism. . . . Zion will be given to us by Him who deprived us. . . ."¹¹ But if Orthodoxy was slow in coming to

⁸Hyman B. Grinstein, "Orthodox Judaism and Early Zionism in America," in Early History of Zionism in America, ed. by Isidore S. Meyer (New York: American Jewish Historical Society and Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1958), pp. 223-24.

⁹Samuel Rosenblatt, History of Mizrachi, pp. 28-30.

¹⁰The Maccabaeon, IX (July, 1905), p. 25.

¹¹quoted in Feinstein, American Zionism, pp. 120-21.

Zionism in America, it was also sure. Richard Gottheil explained that, "The Zionist body finds the largest number of its recruits within the Orthodox camp, for it has remained in closer contact with its people and with its past. Every Orthodox Jew is by nature a Zionist."¹²

Reform Judaism

The Reform movement in Judaism was a nineteenth-century phenomenon which grew out of the emancipation. It was an attempt to adapt the Jewish religion to this new emancipation.¹³ The traditional Orthodox Jews had prayed for the return of Jews to Palestine to again become a nation ruled by a descendant of the house of David. They believed Jews were in dispersion as punishment for ancient sins. When these sins were atoned for, the restoration would take place led by a Messiah. Reform Judaism rejected this entire doctrine. It held that the national existence of the Jews ceased when the Romans burned the temple and destroyed Jerusalem. It held that Jews were now "citizens and faithful sons of the lands of their birth or adoption. They are a religious community, not a nation." As to a Messiah, the Reform movement rejected the concept of a personal Messiah and substituted a hope for a "Messianic age of universal peace and good will among men," and it shifted the leadership of this messianic age from a single inspired individual to the "people of Israel," the entire Jewish community dispersed throughout the world.¹⁴

¹²Gottheil, "The Zionist Movement," pp. 233-34.

¹³Jastrow, Zionism and the Future of Palestine, p. 44.

¹⁴David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism (revised ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), pp. 5-6. See also Kaufman Kohler, Jewish Theology: Systematically and Historically Considered (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), p. 330.

In the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was an extreme emphasis on Americanizing the immigrants. Reform Judaism supported this Americanization fully when it came to the Jewish immigrants. Reform was composed primarily of Jews from the "German" immigration, and by the turn of the century they were almost completely Americanized. With this background, then, and with these aims, it was only natural that the Reform segment of Judaism should oppose Zionism. The Zionists' claim of a Jewish nationality was completely incompatible with the Reform desire for acculturation into American society.¹⁵ And the Zionist belief that only in Palestine could the full Jewish potential be realized was not compatible with the Reform belief that the "mission" of the Jews was to remain scattered throughout the world in order to bring the word of God to all peoples.

By the time of the establishment of the World Zionist Organization in 1897, the Reform movement in the United States was well organized into a lay and rabbinical association and a college for training rabbis. The lay association, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), had been founded in 1873; the rabbinical association, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), had been established in 1889; and the Hebrew Union College (HUC) had been in operation since 1875. The Reform movement also had two important national circulation newspapers, the American Israelite and the Reform Advocate.¹⁶ All of these organizations and media were officially

¹⁵N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," pp. 367-68.

¹⁶Halperin, Political World of American Zionism, p. 65; and N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," pp. 372, 382, 386-88.

opposed to Zionism through 1920.

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations adopted the following anti-Zionist resolution in December, 1898:

We are unalterably opposed to political Zionism. The Jews are not a nation, but a religious community. Zion was a precious possession of the past, the early home of our faith, where our prophets uttered their world-subduing thoughts, and our psalmists sang their world-enchancing hymns. As such it is a holy memory, but it is not our hope of the future. America is our Zion. . . . The mission of Judaism is spiritual, not political. Its aim is not to establish a state, but to spread the truths of religion and humanity throughout the world.¹⁷

In 1919 the attitude of the UAHC was unchanged. In that year it reaffirmed its 1898 resolution and added:

In accordance with the spirit of our whole history we declare that it is imperative for the welfare of Jews everywhere as a great religious community with a universal message for humanity that Israel dedicate itself not to any aspiration for the revival of a Jewish nationality or the foundation of a Jewish state, but to the faithful and consistent fulfillment of its religious mission in the world. We, therefore, do not seek for Israel any national homeland, it being our conviction that Israel is at home in every free country and should be at home in all lands.¹⁸

In 1885, before the Central Conference of American Rabbis was founded, Reform rabbis gathered in Pittsburgh and issued a declaration of principles, which has been termed the most succinct statement of the Reform movement of Judaism ever to be published.¹⁹ Included in this statement was the following sentence: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a

¹⁷from Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Proceedings, Vol. V, p. 4002, and quoted in N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," pp. 383-84.

¹⁸Ibid., Vol. IX, pp. 8520-21 and quoted in N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," pp. 383-84.

¹⁹Philipson, Reform Movement, p. 355.

return to Palestine . . . nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."²⁰

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, as a group, remained true to this statement through 1920. As the years went by, more and more dissension could be noted in the voting, but Zionism among Reform rabbis never constituted a serious threat. In the 1917 meeting, the President's Message Committee submitted a majority report on Zionism signed by twenty-one rabbis and two minority reports signed by one rabbi each. The majority report stated:

We herewith reaffirm the fundamental principle of reform Judaism, that the essence of Israel as a priest-people, consists in its religious consciousness, and in the sense of consecration to God and service in the world, and not in any political or racial national consciousness. And therefore, we look with disfavor upon the new doctrine of political Jewish nationalism, which finds the criterion of Jewish loyalty in anything other than loyalty to Israel's God and Israel's religious mission.²¹

A substitute resolution, which aimed at saying the same thing without as much emphasis on the split in the Jewish community, was finally passed by a vote of sixty-eight to twenty.²²

At the same meeting the president of the Conference, Rabbi William Rosenau, stated in his message that, "we, as rabbis . . . have no place in a movement in which Jews band together on racial or national grounds and for a political state or even a legally-assured home. . . . The religious Israel, having the sanctions of history, must not

²⁰Proceedings of the Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference, November 16, 17, 18, 1885 (Cincinnati, Ohio: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1923), p. 25.

²¹Central Conference of American Rabbis, Yearbook, 1917 (Cincinnati, Ohio: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1918), p. 132.

²²Ibid., p. 141.

be sacrificed to the purely racial Israel of modern planning."²³

At the next meeting, in 1918, the Conference took up the explosive Balfour Declaration. With only a few objections it adopted a statement which expressed gratitude toward the British government for its good-will toward the Jews. The statement voiced no objection to Jews going to Palestine and it supported their right to equality there as well as anywhere else. But it objected to the phrase in the declaration which said, "Palestine is to be a national homeland for the Jewish people." It went on:

This statement assumes that the Jews although identified with the life of many nations for centuries are in fact a people without a country. We hold that Jewish people are and of right ought to be at home in all lands. . . . Jews in America are part of the American nation. . . . We believe that our survival as a people is dependent upon the assertion and the maintenance of our historic religious role and not upon the acceptance of Palestine as a homeland of the Jewish people. . . .²⁴

It should be noted here that at no time was the Reform movement completely united in its opposition to Zionism. From the beginning such prominent Reform rabbis as Bernard Felsenthal and Stephen S. Wise were supporters of Zionism. And as the years went by the breaks in Reform anti-Zionism became more and more pronounced. The most controversial of these came in 1907 when Professors Henry Malter, Max Margolis and Max Schloessinger resigned from their positions at the Hebrew Union College ostensibly because they were not allowed to express their Zionist sympathies.²⁵

²³Ibid., pp. 201-202.

²⁴Ibid., (1918), pp. 133-34, 137.

²⁵See N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," pp. 373-81 for the best account of this controversy. See the following volumes and pages of the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Yearbook for pro-Zionist sympathies: Vol. XVII, pp. 31, 81; Vol. XXVI, pp. 132, 135-36, 128-39; Vol. XXVIII, p. 135; Vol. XXIX, pp. 299-300; and Vol. XXX, pp. 107, 142-43, 151-52.

Hebrew Union College, as an institution, however, remained firm in its anti-Zionist position through 1920. When Isaac M. Wise, who was then president of the College, opened the academic year of 1897, he commented:

Talmud Torah is the curriculum of this college. We want teachers of Judaism. Judaism, we say, and not nationalism, Judaism and not Zionism, Judaism and not Messiahism of any kind; that eternal Judaism which is not tied down to a certain piece of land here or there, or to a certain form of government and peculiar laws and institutions.²⁶

In 1920 HUC published a statement on Zionism which showed it had not deviated from its earlier position:

We declare that no one land, Palestine or any other, can be called "the national home for the Jews, . . ." Each land, whereof Jews are loyal citizens, is the national home for those Jews. Palestine is not our national home, since we are not now and never expect to be citizens of that land.²⁷

Reform oriented newspapers were also firm in their anti-Zionism, as these two examples from the American Israelite illustrate. In 1897 it commented, "we want no flag besides the one of our country, no emblem of nationality besides the Stars and Stripes." And in 1898 there appeared the following statement, "We are Jewish Americans . . . we are Americans qualified by our Judaism, not Jews qualified by our Americanism."²⁸

According to Naomi Wiener Cohen, who has done the finest study

²⁶from David Philipson, Centenary Papers and Others (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1919), pp. 56-57, and quoted in N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," p. 372.

²⁷from Hebrew Union College, Minutes of the Board of Governors, May 25, 1920, and quoted in N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," p. 382.

²⁸quoted in Joseph P. Sternstein, "Reform Judaism and Zionism, 1895-1904," in Herzl Year Book, Vol. V, pp. 13, 16.

of Reform anti-Zionism, this opposition to Zionism was based primarily upon Reform theology which held that Judaism was a religion with a universal message. It had a mission to propagate this message throughout the world. Dispersion was, therefore, a necessary condition for Judaism. But she felt there were other factors in the Reform opposition including

the optimism of Reform theology--a theology which had been born in the wake of emancipation and the opening up of America--which minimized the significance of anti-Semitism; the almost "religious" love of Reform for America as the Promised Land; the consonance of Reform opinion with the prevailing American thought at the beginning of the twentieth century that all immigrants must become Americans in customs and ideals after the pattern of the older settlers; the fear of Reform Jews that Zionism would endanger their position as loyal Americans; the practical difficulties faced by the Zionist movement. . . .²⁹

Some of these factors will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conservative Judaism

The Conservative movement, unlike the Reform movement which originated in Germany, was a thoroughly American product. It developed, in part, as a reaction to the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 which deviated too far from Orthodoxy for many Jews. In the following year, 1886, the Conservative rabbinical training school, the Association of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, was founded. Its initial growth was promising, but around the turn of the century it suffered a decline due to the deaths of many of its leaders. Then in 1902 Solomon Schechter was brought from England to head the faculty at the Seminary. Schechter was "perhaps the most distinguished Jewish scholar of his

²⁹N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," pp. 361-62.

generation,"³⁰ and he quickly drew such leading Jewish figures as Louis Ginzburg, Israel Friedlaender and Israel Davidson to the Seminary. From this point on Conservatism has prospered in America.

Most of the members of the Conservative movement were "enthusiastic supporters" of early Zionism. Nevertheless, many had doubts, especially that Zionism might become "too concerned with material as opposed to spiritual values, that the spirit of politics would supplant the spirit of the Torah."³¹ This attitude was reflected in the Conservative lay association, the United Synagogue of America. At the 1917 convention it rejected the resolution, "Be it Resolved, That the United Synagogue of America joins with the Zionists throughout the world in voicing the claim to a legally recognized and internationally secured homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine." And it passed the resolution which reaffirmed "its faith in the fulfillment of our ancient Zionist hope in the early restoration of Palestine as the Jewish homeland as the means for the consummation of the religious ideals of Judaism."³² It rejected the political support but favored the idea. This attitude was reflected in the opinions of the Conservative leadership and especially in those of Solomon Schechter.

³⁰Theodore Friedman, "Jewish Tradition in 20th Century America: The Conservative Approach," in Jewish Life in America, ed. by Theodore Friedman and Robert Gordis (New York: Horizon Press, 1955), p. 51.

³¹Moshe Davis, The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963), p. 270.

³²Herbert Parzen, "Conservative Judaism and Zionism (1896-1923), A Documentary Account, " in Herald Year Book, Vol. VI, pp. 315-21.

As indicated, Schechter was easily the intellectual and spiritual leader of Conservatism. His thought concerning Zionism stressed two main points. He believed Zionism must be religious and not secular in orientation. In fact, he at first refused to join the Zionist organization because it was too secular.³³ But he also felt that Zionism was at the very core of Judaism and that, its secular leadership notwithstanding, it was serving as an effective check on assimilation.

The first view governed his attitude before 1905, the year in which he joined the Zionists. In this period he saw Zionism as strictly a political organization, and he felt that what Judaism needed most was a spiritual uplifting. In late 1898 he expressed it this way:

The fact is that the great danger threatening Judaism is not coming from the poor and persecuted. Judaism has survived many a massacre, and was only strengthened by it. It is the majority of the prosperous classes with their indifference, with their rage for assimilation, with their aping the Christians, which furnishes the church with new converts and destroys Judaism. To provide these classes with a Jewish country--or rather to convert their cosmopolitan homes into Jewish homes, is much more important than to discover a new continent for the Russian emigrants. . . . I am deeply convinced that you cannot sever Jewish nationality from Jewish religion. The destruction of the latter will end in the destruction of the former. Zionism must begin at home if it really wishes to be a power for good.³⁴

By 1905, however, Schechter was beginning to view Zionism with more sympathy. Following his joining the Zionist organization he felt compelled to write an essay explaining his change of position. This essay appeared the next year under the title, "Zionism: A Statement,"

³³Bernard G. Richards, "First Steps in Zionism," in Herald Year Book, Vol. V, p. 367.

³⁴quoted in Norman Bentwich, Solomon Schechter: A Biography (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), p. 312.

and quickly became one of the central documents of American Zionism. In this essay Schechter stated that he felt that Zionism "will prove, and is already proving a most wholesome check" on assimilation.³⁵ He had changed his mind about Zionism because he had come to believe that the political effort was paying off in that spiritual uplifting he thought so necessary.

Cyrus Adler, who became president of the Seminary on Schechter's death in 1915, did not feel that these side effects sufficiently counteracted what he disliked so much in Zionism. He, like Schechter, was repulsed by the secularism of the leadership and its public flaunting of traditional practices. But in addition he held disdain for the American Zionist leaders because he felt they were opportunists, grasping for communal power under the cover of Zionism.³⁶ The difference between Adler and Schechter was that Adler never came to feel that the assets outweighed the debits.

With the two spiritual leaders of Conservatism thus on opposing sides, it is understandable that the board of directors of the Jewish Theological Seminary was unable to agree on a position concerning Zionism.³⁷ The controversy on the board was further complicated by the fact that "non-Zionists" Jacob Schiff and Louis Marshall sat on it.

About Conservative Judaism and Zionism it only remains to

³⁵Schechter, "Zionism: A Statement," pp. 94-95.

³⁶Herbert Parzen, "Conservative Judaism and Zionism (1896-1922)," Jewish Social Studies, XXIII (October, 1961), p. 240.

³⁷Marshall Sklare, Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955), p. 192.

be said that in general Conservative Jews supported Zionism in greater percentages than either Orthodox or Reform Jews.³⁸ They also supplied much of the leadership of the FAZ.³⁹ Being less strict in their interpretation of dogma than Orthodox Jews, they were not as troubled by the religious conflict with the concept of a personal Messiah. And being less acculturationist-minded than Reform Jews, they were also less fearful of the Jewish nationalism in Zionism.

"Non-Zionism"

The "non-Zionist" position is included in this study, not because of organization or because of the number of adherents, but due to the importance and prestige of its supporters. There were, in fact, very few vocal "non-Zionists," and there was no organization; but the ideas of men like Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall and Felix Warburg toward Zionism cannot be excluded from consideration. Furthermore, one would suspect that during the first two decades of the century, there were many Jews who felt the same about Zionism as these men did.

Schiff, Marshall and Warburg had several things in common which, in themselves, almost define the "non-Zionist" viewpoint. They were each wealthy, active in Jewish affairs, opposed to political Zionism, large contributors to economic projects in Palestine, and products of the German-Jewish immigration. Of the three Jacob Schiff

³⁸Friedman, "Jewish Tradition," p. 49; Halperin, Political World of American Zionism, p. 101; and Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea, p. 503.

³⁹Haber, Odyssey of an American Zionist, p. 99.

was the most outspoken during the period of this study. Louis Marshall and especially Felix Warburg did not speak to the problem as much until after Schiff's death in 1920.

Jacob Schiff was a very wealthy New York banker, who, at least partially because of his upbringing in a Frankfurt ghetto, was deeply conscious of the plight of European Jews.⁴⁰ He gave vast sums of money to Jewish causes including some development projects in Palestine,⁴¹ and he supported the establishment of a Jewish cultural center in Palestine,⁴² but in general he held himself aloof from the politically-oriented Zionists. His opposition to Zionism centered around its neglect of the Jewish religion and its emphasis on Jewish nationalism. He thought the majority of Zionist leaders were atheists or agnostics who had no interest in the Jewish religion,⁴² and that Zionism and Jewish nationalism had become synonymous.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, at several points between 1917 and his death in 1920, he came very close to joining the Zionists. He favored a Jewish homeland, but he wanted this to be under British suzerainty. He opposed an independent Jewish nation. On the surface this appeared to

⁴⁰Oscar Handlin, Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 145.

⁴¹Cyrus Adler, Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters (2 vols.; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1928), II, pp. 169-76.

⁴²New York Times, September 12, 1918, p. 8. Also Adler, Schiff, II, p. 307.

⁴³New York Times, May 21, 1917, p. 11.

⁴⁴Adler, Schiff, II, p. 308.

be in line with the aims of the Zionists, since all they wanted was a "homeland," but Schiff could never get them to state it publicly. In late 1917 he wrote to Israel Zangwill, a Zionist, about this problem:

I find myself getting more and more in favor of an autonomous Palestine under British suzerainty, so that if, after the war, a sufficient number of our co-religionists will go into Palestine to make it their home, in due time it would become a Jewish country, as part of the British Empire, in the same manner perhaps as the Transvaal is now part of Great Britain. Leading Zionists here tell me that this is all they are really aspiring to; yet when I ask them, 'Will you make a clear public declaration to that effect?' I meet, if not with a refusal, with all kinds of hedging and explaining why this should not be done, and thus I find myself again and again facing the question of the reestablishment of a Jewish independent nation in Palestine, which is neither practicable nor desirable.⁴⁵

It was the Zionists' refusal to make this statement that kept Schiff from joining.⁴⁶

Schiff could not join the Zionists as long as they were striving for an independent Jewish nation, since he felt that this would jeopardize the citizenship of all Zionists should they succeed. He did not believe that it was possible to maintain allegiance to two countries and thus he concluded, "speaking as an American, I cannot for a moment concede that one can be at the same time a true American and an honest adherent of the Zionist Movement."⁴⁷

In January, 1920, shortly before his death, Schiff wrote to Paul Nathan clarifying his position on Zionism:

You will perhaps be interested to hear direct from me that I am not a member of the Zionist Organization, and that my relations to Zionist work are limited to this extent: I am sympathetic to the rehabilitation of Palestine, with a view to the establishment of a Jewish homeland under the aegis of Great Britain, but I am as little as ever interested in political Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish nation.⁴⁸

⁴⁵quoted in Ibid., p. 310.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 317.

⁴⁷quoted in Ibid., p. 165.

⁴⁸quoted in Ibid., p. 320.

Schiff felt so strong a tie with his fellow Jews that he was able to support the means of Zionism without accepting its ends. He was able to give large sums of money to support the Zionists' projects in Palestine, but he feared the conflicts that would result for American Jews if a Jewish nation were established.

Louis Marshall was a prominent and wealthy lawyer, who, like Schiff, was a Conservative Jew. In his thinking an emphasis can be noticed on the religious benefits of Zionism which sounds much like Solomon Schechter. There is also an explicit support of Economic Zionism, but a total rejection of Political Zionism. In the early days of the movement, however, he was more prone to dismiss the political aspect as impractical while favoring the other two manifestations. In a letter he wrote in 1901 refusing an invitation to speak at a Zionist meeting he said the following:

While I sympathize heartily with every movement which tends to ameliorate the condition of our co-religionists, I have been unable to convince myself that the nationalistic movement represented by the Zionists possesses any element of practicability. The racial aspect of Judaism does not appeal to me as strongly as does the religious side, and, much as I have been impressed by the enthusiasm of Herzl, Nordau and Zangwill in respect to the Palestinian restoration, I can view it merely in the light of a poet's dream.⁴⁹

Despite the fact that by 1919 the Zionists had shown that their idea was not so impractical, Marshall had not changed his mind about Zionism. He still had no intention of supporting it. But he did see some good coming from it:

⁴⁹quoted in Charles Reznikoff, ed., Louis Marshall, Champion of Liberty: Selected Papers and Addresses (2 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), II, p. 704.

I am not in favor of a Jewish State and never have been. I am not a Zionist and have no intention of joining the Zionist organization. However I have always strongly sympathized with certain phases of Zionism, those which tended to stimulate interest in Judaism among Jews who would otherwise have been entirely indifferent to Jewish history, Jewish life and Jewish traditions. It has brought many Jews who had strayed from the fold back to the House of Israel, and it has also tended to develop a sympathetic interest among non-Jews with the poetic aspirations of those whose ambition it has been to rehabilitate Palestine. . . . My great desire is to bring about the emancipation of the Jews, to help them attain their civil, religious and political rights, and, so far as the Eastern World is concerned, to obtain group rights if other nationalities residing in the same States are accorded those rights.⁵⁰

Felix Warburg, the son-in-law of Schiff and also a wealthy banker, remained almost entirely out of the Zionist controversy until after 1920; but he was active in support of Economic Zionism during World War I as chairman of the Joint Distribution Committee which disbursed funds for emigration to Palestine in addition to providing money for economic projects within Palestine. In 1919 he was asked to sign an anti-Zionist petition which would be sent to the Paris Peace Conference. And in a rare statement of his views on Zionism he replied that while he was opposed to a Jewish State in Palestine, he would not sign the petition because, "I hate to take our Jewish difference before the State Department."⁵¹ Warburg thus put himself in the same camp as Schiff and Marshall. He favored and even worked for Jewish emigration to Palestine, and he helped build institutions there; but he opposed establishing a Jewish State and, therefore, he opposed the organized Zionist movement.

⁵⁰quoted in Ibid., pp. 723-24.

⁵¹Felix Warburg to Max Senior, January 17, 1919, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, Warburg MSS, Box 188a, "Zionism."

Socialism

In addition to the three Jewish sects--Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative--and the "non-Zionists," there was the Socialist group. The Socialists, most of whom were recent immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe where there existed a highly sophisticated level of socialist and Marxist thinking, made up a fascinating group. In fact, their theories were highly developed on both sides of the Zionist question. While some of the Socialists were passionately anti-Zionist, others were just as fervently pro-Zionist. The pro-Zionist Socialists, or simply Socialist Zionists, were organized into a group called Poale Zion. The anti-Zionist Socialists, or simply Socialists, since they identified with the international socialist movement, were never organized except as they joined the broader American parties--the Socialist Labor Party or the Socialist Party.

The Jewish Socialists followed the thinking of the international movement. When it came to the question of anti-Semitism and persecution, they thought that the only way to end it entirely was to eliminate all nationalisms and all prejudice based on differences, and the way to accomplish this was through international socialism.⁵² While Zionists were zealously working for "the maintenance of the sacred tongue, the preservation of the ancient faith, the regeneration of the national feeling, and the restoration of the Holy Land," Jewish Socialists were laboring for "the rejection of the antiquated speech, the abolition of the old-time creed, the dissolution of the national consciousness and all sectional boundaries, and the establishment of the

⁵²Saul Beaumont, "Zionism or Socialism: Which Will Solve the Jewish Question?" The Arena, XXXIX (January, 1908), pp. 57-58.

cooperative commonwealth after the dream of the brotherhood of man."⁵³

Though socialism did not succeed as well among American Jewish immigrants as one might expect, considering the fact that they arrived from Russia and Eastern Europe where socialist ideas were spreading rapidly among the workers and Jews,⁵⁴ it nevertheless did make an impact in the large city ghettos. There were constant ideological arguments between the Socialists and Zionists over the best solution to the Jewish Problem.⁵⁵ Polemical pamphlets and booklets could be found in all the Jewish bookstores in New York City including a Yiddish pamphlet on "Zionism or Socialism" which contained statements such as this one: "The intelligent workers cannot be blinded; they know that Palestine would only mean more poverty; that the colonies now existing there have never been self-supporting; that hope for them lies only in uniting with the toilers of the world and demanding the full fruits of all their labor."⁵⁶

The Socialists equated the Jewish problem with the great social problem that confronted all mankind. The persecution and oppression suffered by the Jews was no different from that suffered by all oppres-

⁵³Bernard G. Richards, "Zionism and Socialism," The Arena, XXIX (March, 1903), p. 278.

⁵⁴Rosenberg, America is Different, pp. 83-84. Rosenberg attributes this to the fact that most of these Jewish immigrants were sons and grandsons of merchants and scholars and thus had a middle class drive. In modern psychological terminology their reference group was the middle class rather than their fellow workers. In addition they had the advantage over the other immigrants, who were primarily of peasant origin, of having come from cities.

⁵⁵Richards, "Zionism and Socialism," p. 279.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 284-85.

sed groups. The poor, of whatever nationality, have always been "dominated over, oppressed, harassed, denied the right to live, and robbed of the fruits of their labor." To the wealthy, be they Christian or Jew, every country has been their Palestine. It has been social inequality and the unjust social system that has been at the bottom of all the evil. The Jew cannot escape this by running away. Even in Palestine the wealthy Jews exploit the poor Jews. "Both Zionist and anti-Semite stand against the goal of human brotherhood. The salvation of the Jewish people lies in the salvation of the world."⁵⁷ To prove their case the Jewish Socialists pointed to the fact that only in the international revolutionary movement had the Jew been accepted on equal terms. He was able to achieve places of honor in even the most Jew-baiting countries. Hadn't Singer, Bernstein and Adler served as Socialists in the Reichstag? Didn't Dreyfus find his greatest support among the Socialists?⁵⁸

The Jewish Socialists in America made much out of the developing situation which saw Jewish capital and Jewish labor directly facing each other. "The phenomenon of a Jewish capitalist exploiting a Jewish worker lent credence to the contention that Jewish workers and Jewish capitalists must necessarily face each other from opposite sides of the fence." Jewish Socialist leaders were at first successful in convincing Jewish workers that "Zionism was an anti-labor device, serving the interests of the wealthy Jews."⁵⁹ But four factors

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 280-81.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 283.

⁵⁹Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 228.

were to change this conception among the workers and were to make those Socialists who supported Zionism the far more dynamic force.

Beyond question, the Kishinev massacres of 1903 was the most significant of these factors. The report that Christian workers had participated in the attacks against their Jewish "brothers" caused bedlam to reign in the Jewish quarter of New York.⁶⁰ Many of the Jewish Socialists emerged from this event convinced of the need of a Jewish Socialist organization combining the philosophies and aspirations of Socialism and Zionism.⁶¹ Other factors creating support for this need were: the rising anti-Semitism manifesting itself in gang attacks on Jews on Coney Island, the East Side and other sections of New York and in Chicago and other large cities; a developing awareness that a historic Jewish movement was taking root with promise of success; and a growing realization that many of those working for the Zionist movement were, in fact, not representatives of capitalism, but rather men of moderate means and in many cases poor dedicated people.⁶²

The first Socialist Zionist group established in America was Ohave Zion in 1900. It was small but served to lay the groundwork for Poale Zion which emerged in 1905.⁶³ Poale Zion did not demonstrate a rapid growth, but its growth was steady enough so that by 1919 it had six thousand members.⁶⁴ And its influence was great enough among

⁶⁰Labor Zionist Handbook (New York: Poale Zion Zeire Zion of America, 1939), p. 54.

⁶¹Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 286.

⁶²Ibid., p. 229.

⁶³Ibid., p. 231.

⁶⁴Nachman Syrkin, "The Eleventh Poale Zion Convention," The Maccabaeon, XXXII (January, 1919), p. 23.

Jewish workers so that in 1918 the Balfour Declaration gained the "enthusiastic endorsement" of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the International Ladies' Garment Workers, the two most powerful Jewish labor unions.⁶⁵

Socialist Zionism had its roots in Europe--first in the writings of Moses Hess (Rome and Jerusalem, 1862), and later in the works of a large number of men including Nachman Syrkin and Ber Borochov.⁶⁶ In the early twentieth century the philosophy was incorporated into the movement, Poale Zion. This organization manifested itself in a number of different ways, generally more radical in the eastern countries and less radical in the western. In the United States Poale Zion did not officially adopt any dogmatic socialist platform. Contrary to the more radical Eastern European variety, it did not make historical materialism the starting point for Zionism but assumed nationalism and socialism to be "two distinctly different currents running in parallel lines through history, each having its own function and its own reason for existence."⁶⁷

The program of the American Poale Zion was laid out at the Baltimore Convention in 1905:

Zionism:

- (a) Whereas the welfare of mankind is dependent upon the creative powers of its component nations,
- (b) Whereas the creative powers of a nation are dependent on its forming a majority in a specific territory,

⁶⁵Harry Rogoff, An East Side Epic: The Life and Work of Meyer London (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1930), p. 121.

⁶⁶Labor Zionist Handbook.

⁶⁷A.S. Waldstein, "Radical Movements in Zionism," The Maccabean, XI (August, 1906), p. 85.

- (c) And whereas creative powers of a nation can be achieved only in a territory with which it has historic ties; therefore, we embrace Zionism which aims to create for the Jewish people a homeland, secured by public law, in Palestine.

And somewhat further on, under "Socialism," the program stated:

We recognize the injustice of the existing social order which is based on private property and competition, in which a non-productive minority exploits the working majority. We are certain that all attempts hitherto to reform these evils are only palliatives which cannot emancipate mankind. Emancipation can be achieved only through a socialist society. Although the evil effects of the existing order are not limited to one class, but afflict all of mankind, nevertheless only the working class, which suffers most, can emancipate mankind.⁶⁸

In short the program of Poale Zion, and of Socialist Zionism, can be summed up in two sentences:

The Jewish people, if it is to be like all other peoples, must have a home of its own where it can be master of its destiny. If man is to be free, he must strive for a society which eliminates slavery and exploitation--the society of socialism.⁶⁹

The Socialist Zionist saw no conflict between these two ideas. Each seemed to be necessary for Jewish survival and for a better Jewish existence.

The conflict that raged between the Jewish Socialists and the Socialist Zionists was one over the meaning of Socialism, not of Zionism. Both agreed that Zionism was Jewish nationalism. The one found it unacceptable for the Socialist; the other found it mandatory for the Jew. In the end conditions, not ideology, made Socialist Zionism the more relevant.

Under the fire of debate, each of these five groups forged ideological positions which best met their own situation. Each was

⁶⁸Labor Zionist Handbook, pp. 59-60.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 28.

searching for a more secure livelihood, and was thus motivated in its reaction to Zionism. American Orthodox and Socialist Jews were generally poor immigrants. For them Zionism meant hope; but in order to realize this hope, the one was forced to reinterpret its theology and the other its ideology. Reform and "non-Zionist" Jews were substantially acculturated into American society. For them the Zionist movement was a threat. Zionism meant Jewish nationalism, and Jewish nationalism meant a conflict of allegiance. America was the "homeland" for these Jews. Conservative Jews fell in between. In general they were more acculturated than Orthodox and Socialist Jews and less so than Reform. They supported Zionism in large numbers, but not so much for the "homeland" aspect as for its revitalizing effect on "assimilated Jews."

alternative. The last chapter studied the major group attitudes toward Zionism. But many of the controversies drew support from across group lines. It is therefore necessary to look at these individual controversies.

Since Zionism was aimed at changing the existing situation, it was first attacked by the anti-Zionists and then defended by the Zionists. For each of the separate controversies the anti-Zionist charges will be examined first, followed by the Zionist defenses and countercharges where they occurred.

Zionism Creating a Conflict of Allegiance

Without any doubt the controversy that drew the most attention was the one centered around patriotism or loyalty to country. Zionism was charged with creating a conflict of allegiance.¹ The

¹ Jaslow, Zionism and the Future of Palestine, pp. 125-26.

charge was expressed clearly by Ralph P. Boas who felt that "with Zion an independent State every American Jew must become a Zionist and take the responsibility for the acts of Zionists, or find some other name than Jew."² Morris Jastrow was equally adamant: "It is impossible to belong to two countries, and if one makes the effort, complete attachment to one must result."

CHAPTER V

INDIVIDUAL CONTROVERSIES OVER ZIONISM

Zionism was a dynamic movement. It challenged the status quo, and it did so with a positive alternative. But there were many who, for one reason or another, were committed to the status quo, or who believed for one reason or another, that the Zionist solution was incompatible with their own conception of Judaism. And there were others, as we have seen with the Jewish Socialists, who proposed a different alternative. The last chapter outlined the major group attitudes toward Zionism. But many of the controversies drew support from across group lines. It is therefore necessary to look at these individual controversies.

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¹Jastrow, Zionism and the Future of Palestine, pp. 120-31.

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Many Jews who were prominent in public life felt compelled, as a reaction to the implications of Zionism, to stress their loyalty and the loyalty of their fellow Jews. Simon Rosendale, a former Attorney General of New York, wrote to his Congressman:

We are Americans by nationality and in our interpretation of Judaism there is neither doctrine nor dogma of Palestinian nationalism. If there were, we would reject it as inconsistent with untainted Americanism. We refuse to have any other nationalism thrust upon us. We will have no Palestinian nationality primarily or secondarily, directly or remotely.⁴

Another public figure, Representative Julius Kahn of California, wrote in an article for the New York Times, "I know that I voice the sentiment of the overwhelming number of Jews in this country when I say unreservedly we are content to live here and to die here; that we intend that this country shall always be our homeland and that of our children."⁵ And Henry Morgenthau wrote in a letter to the New York Times that Jews "are 100 percent Americans, and wish to remain so, irrespective of the fact that some of our blood is Jewish and some of our clay is German, Russian, or Polish. To us and our children Amer-

²New York Times, December 16, 1917, IV, p. 4.

³Jastrow, Zionism and the Future of Palestine, pp. 120-21.

⁴New York Times, December 22, 1918, III, p. 10.

⁵Ibid., February 16, 1919, VII, p. 7.

ica, too, is veritably a Holy Land."⁶

In 1907 Jacob Schiff wrote a letter to Solomon Schechter in which he raised the problem of dual loyalty. He said that, "speaking as an American, I cannot for a moment concede that one can be at the same time a true American and an honest adherent of the Zionist Movement."⁷ The letter was reprinted in the September issue of The Maccabaeon and was answered by Harry Friedenwald, who was then president of the Federation of American Zionists. He began by expressing resentment at "being taunted with disloyalty to America," and by repudiating the implication because, "we know and feel that it is not true." He then pointed out that Schiff was in effect branding as disloyal every Jew who recites daily those ageless prayers of longing for a homeland and a return:

If Mr. Schiff is correct, there is one conclusion from which there is no escape, that Judaism and Americanism are incompatible and that the Jew who believes in the Judaism, that has been the religion, the hope and the life of our people during many centuries, cannot be a "true American." For Mr. Schiff will certainly not claim that the Jew who prays for the Restoration is entitled to the full degree of "true American," while he who believes or hopes or works for its realization is not.⁸

But Friedenwald did little more in his reply to Schiff than further elaborate the problem. One possible answer to the charge had been voiced three years earlier by Cyrus Sulzberger. He wrote in The Maccabaeon that he could see no difference between Americans, Jewish

⁶reprinted in Henry Morgenthau and French Strother, All in a Life-time (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1922), p. 290. The letter was dated December 11, 1917.

⁷Adler, Schiff, II, p. 165.

⁸The Maccabaeon, XIII (September, 1907), p. 121.

or Christian, helping the Cubans gain their independence from Spain and Americans, Jewish or Christian, helping the Jews establish a homeland in Palestine. In neither case, he felt, did it imply disloyalty to the United States.⁹

Rabbi Max Heller took a different tack in defending the Zionists' loyalty to the United States. He appealed to the attested Americanism of the men and women who did support Zionism:

To say now that Zionism is un-American is to impeach the judgment, as to Americanism, of men like Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson; is to denounce as traitors men like Justices Brandeis and Mack, Nathan Straus and Felix Frankfurter, women like Mary Fels and Henrietta Szold. In the ranks of our army the majority of the Jewish soldiers are ardent Zionists; of our Jewish chaplains who have volunteered for the religious work in Europe, four-fifths are Zionists.¹⁰

The problem was tackled more concretely by Judge Julian Mack and by Louis Brandeis. Mack, who was to become president of the FAZ in 1918, spoke to the issue before the Executive Committee of the American Jewish Committee in 1915:

. . . I have been sympathetic with the national idea, with the conception of the Jews as a nationality and I have become satisfied with the aims of the Zionists. I have not, I never had, the slightest fear that any of those ideas will make the Jews of this country any less good Americans or that there is such a conception as a political nation within the American nation. The only conception of nationality that I can see is that of the Jews as a people. There is no difference in my mind between the nationality of the Jews of this country and the nationality of the Germans and the Irish of this country, and the fact that we claim that we belong to a people is exactly the same as the claim of the Germans that they belong to the German people and makes them none the less American.¹¹

⁹Cyrus Sulzberger, "Patriotism and Loyalty," The Maccabean, VI (February, 1904), pp. 83-84.

¹⁰Max Heller, "Americanism and Zionism," The Maccabean, XXXII (March, 1919), p. 70.

¹¹quoted in Moses Rischin, "The American Jewish Committee and Zionism, 1906-1922," in Herzl Year Book, Vol. V, pp. 287-88.

What Mack was doing, of course, was claiming that for the American Jew, the American nationality and the Jewish nationality were not of the same quality. On another occasion he further developed this line of thinking. He began, in fact, by agreeing with the anti-Zionist charge that a man could owe his political allegiance to only one country:

But a kinship he may have with two or even several peoples. In other words, some loyalties, like that of citizenship or of religion are single and exclusive; others, like that based upon a common civilization or upon affection, may be manifold. A true man ought to be and is no less a dutiful son because he becomes a faithful husband, or later an affectionate father; for him there is no incompatibility between these three relations. Indeed, on the contrary, just because the loyalty of love is not single and exclusive, each branch of it should be strengthened by the strengthening of every other branch. The more devoted a man is as a husband, the better he should be as a son and a father. Similarly, a man may have an inherited kinship with one people and yet, in the fullest sense, have made himself part and parcel of another people. Sympathy with the ideals of the Jewish people will but intensify the devotion of the American Jew to American ideals because there is essential agreement between them.¹²

This last point of Mack's was developed more thoroughly by Brandeis:

Let no American imagine that Zionism is inconsistent with Patriotism. Multiple loyalties are objectionable only if they are inconsistent. A man is a better citizen of the United States for being also a loyal citizen of his state, and of his city; for being loyal to his family, and to his profession or trade; for being loyal to his college or his lodge. Every Irish-American who contributed towards advancing home rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice he made. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will ever live there, will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so. . . . There is no inconsistency between loyalty to America and loyalty to Jewry. . . . Indeed, loyalty to America demands rather that each American Jew become a Zionist. For only through the ennobling effect of its strivings can we develop the best that is in us and give to this country the full benefit of our great inheritance.¹³

¹²Mack, Americanism and Zionism, p. 5.

¹³Brandeis, "The Jewish Problem," p. 109.

Brandeis had made a complete circle. In answer to the charge that Zionism set up a conflict of allegiance, a dual loyalty that was incompatible with true Americanism, he replied that a man was more loyal to one nationality for being loyal to the other. A Jew was a better American for being a good Zionist. But Brandeis had one possible flaw in his argument. He had begun with the condition, "Multiple loyalties are objectionable only if they are inconsistent." As long as Zionism and Americanism were striving for similar ends, there would be no conflict. But what if they should ever oppose each other? What if Americans and Zionists should ever be on opposite sides? Where would the Jew's loyalty go then?

Louis Brandeis was not the only Zionist who chose to avoid this question even while implicitly recognizing its existence. Israel Zangwill, in speaking for the possibility of having a dual loyalty, also set up the condition that loyalty to one country would preclude loyalty to another only when the two countries were at odds with each other.¹⁴ Apparently the Zionists were unable or unwilling to consider any such possibility. In fact, only one of the American Zionist leaders, Louis Lipsky, recognized that there could be no guarantee that Americanism and Zionism would continue as allies.

Lipsky had served as secretary of the FAZ and as editor of The Maccabaeon. It was his opinion that American patriotism and Zionist patriotism could not help but conflict:

¹⁴Israel Zangwill, "Zionism and Loyalty," The Maccabaeon, VI (March, 1904), p. 133.

The more definite Zionism becomes, the closer its appeal, the better understood its aims, the more real it becomes to the Jew, the more incongruous it becomes in the light of genuine American patriotism. The nearer Palestine is brought, the more devoted the American Zionist must become not to the Stars and Stripes, American literature, life, and art, its economic welfares, but to the blue and white flag, and that land, which rises out of the dim past and whose outlines become ever more and more distinct.

Lipsky felt that the time would come when the American Jew would be "bound to declare himself . . . either an American or a Zionist. . . ." ¹⁵

Despite the fact that Lipsky was a Zionist and thought that Zionism would create a conflict of loyalties, the general view among the Zionists was that this was not the case. They believed that a Jew could be just as loyal, or even more loyal, to the United States for being a Zionist. It was the anti-Zionists and "non-Zionists" who held that this conflict of loyalties would occur.

Zionism Conflicting With the "Mission" Theory

The Reform anti-Zionists, in addition to opposing Zionism for this secular reason, were against it for a religious one. They felt that Zionism served to work against the mission of Judaism. Reform Judaism held that the Jews had been dispersed in order to bring peace and brotherhood to the peoples of the world by introducing the idea of a single God. The first two points of a statement issued by a Conference of American Reform Rabbis meeting in Philadelphia in 1869 spelled this out:

1. The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all the children of God in the confession of the unity of God, so as to realize

¹⁵Louis Lipsky, "Jewish Nationalism and American Patriotism," The Maccabaeon, XII (March, 1907), p. 101.

the unity of all rational creatures and their call to moral sanctification.

2. We look upon the destruction of the second Jewish commonwealth not as a punishment for the sinfulness of Israel, but as a result of the divine purpose revealed to Abraham, which, as has become ever clearer in the course of the world's history, consists in the dispersion of the Jews to all parts of the earth, for the realization of their high priestly mission, to lead the nations to the true knowledge and worship of God.¹⁶

The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 went even further in the definition by declaring that Reform Jews did not "expect" a return to Palestine.¹⁷

The idea of a Jewish mission was further stressed by Rabbi David Philipson in 1896, when he declined an invitation to participate in the recital of Lamentations on Tisha B'Av, a holy day mourning the loss of Palestine, because he considered the loss of that land and the scattering of the Jews, "not causes for mourning, but for rejoicing because then the broader and greater mission of the Jews began."¹⁸

Following the establishment of the Zionist organization in 1897, Reform Judaism was thrown on the defensive concerning the Jewish mission. This is indicated by the frequent discussions engaged in and resolutions passed by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. In that same year, 1897, the following resolution was passed unanimously by the CCAR:

Resolved, That we totally disapprove of any attempt for the establishment of a Jewish state. Such attempts show a misunderstanding of Israel's mission, which from the narrow political and rational field has been expanded to the promotion among the whole human race of the broad and universalistic religion first proclaimed by the Jewish prophets. . . . We reaffirm that the object of Judaism is

¹⁶Philipson, Reform Movement, p. 354.

¹⁷Proceedings of the Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference, p. 25.

¹⁸Sternstein, "Reform Judaism and Zionism," p. 12.

not political nor national, but spiritual, and addresses itself to the continuous growth of peace, justice and love in the human race, to a messianic time when all men will recognize that they form "one great brotherhood" for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.¹⁹

At the 1903 meeting of the CCAR, Rabbi Tobias Schanfarber delivered a conference lecture in which he stressed the problems in the world, the mission of Judaism to show the way to the solutions, and the failure of Zionism to provide the means for doing this. Schanfarber felt that Jews "must continue to be a thorn in the side of the world, an irritant, a factor and a ferment in modern life."²⁰ Again at the 1907 meeting a conference lecture was devoted to the Reform interpretation of the Jewish mission. Rabbi Maurice Harris stressed that, "Reform recognizes with earnest insistence the world mission of Judaism. It would emphasize the universal side of Hebrew prophetism."²¹

By far the most comprehensive discussion of the mission of Judaism was given by Kaufman Kohler, president of Hebrew Union College, in an address to the CCAR in 1919. Entitled "The Mission of Israel and Its Application To Modern Times," Kohler's lecture traced the entire Biblical and post-Biblical religious foundation for the mission idea. In concluding his essay Kohler stated that the aim of Judaism was, "not a Church Universal, nor a uniform religion for all, but the divine truth reflected in many systems of belief and thought . . . a religion ever progressive on lines of historical continuity, but never finished or final, leading all the nations and classes of men to the mountain of God. . . ."²²

¹⁹Central Conference of American Rabbis, Yearbook, 1897-98, pp. xl-xli.

²⁰Ibid., (1903), p. 371.

²¹Ibid., (1907), p. 181.

²²Ibid., (1919), p. 288.

Closely related to this argument that Jews must remain dispersed in order to fulfill their mission was the idea that Jews occupied a unique position in the world for furthering international good will and peace. This view put more stress on the political nature of the Jewish dispersion. It was not so much that Jews had a mission to bring peace and brotherhood to the world as that Jews were well placed to actually do so. What a pity if, at that moment of history, the Jews themselves should capitulate to the nationalist tide sweeping the world.

Henry Morgenthau, though quite willing to emphasize his full fledged patriotism to America, seemed to be imbued with some of this spirit when he wrote to the New York Times:

The whole world is now moving away from the emphasis hitherto placed on extreme nationalism. The forces of internationalism must be developed practically and systematically. What an error it would be, at the very time when the primary message to the world of the Jewish people and their religion should be one of peace, brotherhood, and the international mind, to set up a limited nationalist State and thereby appear to create a physical boundary to their religious influence.²³

The Zionists, for their part, were quick to counter the mission objection to Zionism of Reform Judaism. Israel Friedlsender was willing to concede a Jewish mission but he could not understand how this precluded a Jewish nation. He wrote that the idea that Jews have to remain in exile "has no root whatsoever in the Jewish past." "It is true," he said, that "the Jewish mission, or rather the expectation that the principles of the Jewish Religion will extend their influence over the non-Jewish world, is often spoken of in the literature of

²³Morgenthau and Strother, All in a Life-time, p. 292.

the Jews, but never with the addition that to this end the Jews have to give up their own national centre." Furthermore, he pointed out, "the theory of a Jewish mission is entirely unknown in those countries where the Jews still live a genuine Jewish life. . . ." It is limited in influence to the western countries where "Jews have more or less loosed the ties connecting them with their nationality. . . ." ²⁴

Richard Gottheil agreed with Friedlaender, pointing out that the whole idea of a mission may be an exercise in "deceiving ourselves:"

Mission-preaching and wealth-getting can never go hand in hand. Until we can let the last go, it is sheer folly for us to talk of being a nation of priests. . . . With three-fourths of Jewry in dismal penury, unwilling to remain in such condition, fighting tooth and nail against a whole world in the effort to rise above it; with the other one-fourth seeking a comfortable and easy life in well-warmed houses and at well-supplied tables, what, I ask, has become of the Mission of Israel? ²⁵

Further criticism of the mission idea came from two Reform rabbis, who were also outspoken Zionists. Bernard Felsenthal pointed out that though the idea was a "noble one," modern communications had enabled Jews to spread their doctrine throughout the world, and there was no part of it that was not already widely known. He went on to say that he felt that the mission idea was merely a rationalization to further the assimilation process and was not based on historical or theological fact. ²⁶ Rabbi Max Heller was only slightly less harsh in stating, "we Reform Jews lack even the first of all requisites for missionary activity in the religious field, the deep religiousness,

²⁴Friedlaender, "Dubnow's Theory of Jewish Nationalism," p. 246.

²⁵Gottheil, "The Aims of Zionism," p. 498.

²⁶Bernard Felsenthal, "Israel's Mission," The Maccabaeon, IV (March, 1903), pp. 131-37.

the strong conviction, the loyal observance which fit the missionary for his arduous work."²⁷

The Zionists were saying, in the first place, that there was nothing in the mission idea that precluded a Jewish homeland; and in the second place, that even if there were, Reform Judaism just did not have the religious dedication necessary to fulfill this mission to any greater degree than it had already been fulfilled through mass communications and personal contact.

Zionism Irreligious

It was this same charge--lack of dedication to religion--that many of the anti-Zionists, Reform Jews among them, levelled against Zionism. Thus, one of the arguments Zionists used against Reform's mission theory was turned right back on them. Rabbi Samuel Schulman, for instance, declared in a sermon that Zionism was an irreligious movement. He felt this was so because Zionism, in emphasizing Jewish nationality, was doing so at the expense of the Jewish spirituality.²⁸

The method most often used, however, to show that Zionism was irreligious was to cite its leadership. Herzl and Nordau were known to be agnostics, and for this reason Reform rabbis Emil Hirsch and Kaufman Kohler among others declared their opposition to Zionism.²⁹ Cyrus Adler, a Conservative Jew, felt antipathy toward Zionism for the

²⁷Max Heller, "Zionism and the Mission," The Maccabaeon, XX (January, 1911), p. 231.

²⁸New York Times, January 3, 1916, p. 9.

²⁹Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 163.

same reason.³⁰ And Solomon Schechter, who eventually did join the Zionist movement because it "will do for the present," initially opposed it because it was so lacking in religion. He was not opposed to Jewish nationalism but thought that that nationalism should be fused with religion. "To me," he wrote, "Zionism divorced from the religious idea is a menace."³¹

In their defense the Zionists could offer little, except as Rabbi Stephen S. Wise put it, "The truth is that Zionism in and of itself is neither religious nor irreligious."³² But if it was not irreligious as many of the anti-Zionists claimed, and if the Zionists were unwilling to say that it was religious, then what was it? What relation did Zionism have to Jewish religion? According to Israel Zangwill, Zionism was rooted in the religion and that was what was important. As he pointed out, "the Zionist yearning for the re-establishment of our nation has its roots in our religion. We want a place that will be our own, where we can worship in our own fashion and follow out our own ideals."³³

By 1905 Solomon Schechter had come to agree with Zangwill on this point. In fact, it was his conviction that there was more religion in Zionism than appeared on the surface, that persuaded him to join. In June, 1905, he wrote to Bernard Felsenthal, "theological

³⁰Parzen, "Conservative Judaism and Zionism," p. 240.

³¹Bentwich, Schechter, pp. 311-15.

³²Stephen S. Wise, "Zionism, Religion and Americanism," The Maccabaeon, XXVII (June, 1916), p. 125.

³³Israel Zangwill, "Zionism of Today," The Independent, LXV (October 15, 1908), p. 893.

reasons kept me from joining the movement. But I see that it is a genuine manifestation of the deeper Jewish consciousness; deeper perhaps than several of its leaders realised."³⁴

For his part Richard Gottheil also accepted the idea that Zionism was neither religious nor irreligious. He believed that it was more than religious: "Zionism has sought and has found for us a basis which is a broader one than the religious one (and on which all religious distinctions vanish), that of race and of nationality." But he did not mean by this that Zionism had lost sight of the religious aspect and substituted race and nationality; for he believed that Jews were "something more than a purely religious body." Zionism, as the expression of Jewish nationalism, included the Jewish religion along with race and nationality.³⁵

On another occasion Gottheil defended the religiosity of Zionism in a much less abstract manner. He replied to the critics that they should have been in the Basle synagogue on Saturday of the 1901 World Zionist Congress. "They would have seen the greater part of the members of the Congress assembled there in public worship." He also recommended that the critics look at a list of the leadership of the FAZ. "They will find it to contain the names of quite a number of Jews who stand as firm in their devotion to the religious ideals of Judaism as [they] do." Gottheil also explained that the fact that there were some Jews active in Zionism who were not religious was only

³⁴Bentwich, Schechter, p. 316.

³⁵Gottheil, "The Aims of Zionism," pp. 498-500.

a condition that existed in all Jewish movements.³⁶

The anti-Zionist charge that Zionism was an irreligious movement and that many of its leaders were irreligious was not contested seriously by the Zionists. Indeed, they admitted that it was substantially true; but they argued that the movement had its roots in the religion, and that that was sufficient to legitimize it. The problem for the Zionists lay in the definition of "Jew." Herzl, among others, was an admitted agnostic, and yet he was still recognized as being a Jew. This seeming paradox made it possible for a movement which included only Jews to be attacked as irreligious.

Zionist Aims Confused

At this point it will be easy to understand another of the anti-Zionists' objections to Zionism. In 1903 the American Israelite charged that Zionism's ultimate aims were terribly confused. Some Zionists were calling for a State, some for colonization, and others were just dreaming. As a result, the American Israelite felt, funds were being taken under false pretenses.³⁷ The Maccabaeon answered these charges with the claim that the many different forms of Zionism constituted one of its strengths--it appealed to all classes and levels of Jews. For The Maccabaeon it was the end goal that counted, and that was obtaining a Jewish homeland. The motivations, whether religious, economic, or national, did not matter.³⁸

³⁶Richard Gottheil, "Some Critics of Zionism," The Maccabaeon, II (February, 1902), pp. 93-94.

³⁷Sternstein, "Reform Judaism and Zionism," p. 22.

³⁸The Maccabaeon, IV (April, 1903), p. 226.

In 1906 Solomon Schechter expressed the same sentiments in The Maccabaeans:

Zionism is an ideal, and as such is indefinable. It is thus subject to various interpretations and susceptible of different aspects. It may appear to one as the rebirth of national Jewish consciousness, to another as a religious revival, whilst to a third it may present itself as a path leading to the goal of Jewish culture; and to a fourth it may take the form of the last and only solution of the Jewish problem. By reason of this variety of aspects, Zionism has been able to unite on its platform the most heterogeneous elements; representing Jews of all countries, and exhibiting almost all the different types of culture and thought as only a really great and universal movement could command. That each of its representatives should emphasize the particular aspect most congenial to his way of thinking, and most suitable for his mode of action, is only natural. On one point, however, they all agree, namely, that it is not only desirable, but absolutely necessary, that Palestine, the land of our fathers, should be recovered with the purpose of forming a home for at least a portion of the Jews, who would lead there an independent national life.³⁹

It does seem that the Zionists were fairly clear in defining their aim as that of obtaining a homeland. What bothered the anti-Zionists, though, was the meaning of that word "homeland." To them the aims of the Zionists were confused because "homeland" could mean anything between a land to which Jews would be allowed to immigrate freely and a Jewish State. The Zionists never officially defined what they meant by a homeland--only that they wished to obtain it.

Practical Objections To Zionism

In addition to the theoretical and abstract objections to Zionism explained above, there were a few "practical" objections. It was felt, by some Jews, for instance, that Palestine was not fit for settling, that the land was not good enough, and that even if the land could be improved, the Christian powers would never permit their Holy Land to be turned into a Jewish State. Therefore, it was con-

³⁹Schechter, "Zionism: A Statement," pp. 91-92.

cluded that Zionists were no more than dreamers.

The first of these objections, that the land was not suitable for colonization, was voiced by the American Israelite. It even went so far as to print a report in 1899 by Oscar Straus, the United States' Minister to Turkey, in which the living standards of Jews in Palestine were described as "miserable." Straus asked, "Why send more?" and suggested that Jews might be better helped "where they reside."⁴⁰

The second "practical" objection, that a Jewish State in Palestine would not be allowed, was expressed by Morris Jastrow, who felt that Palestine belonged equally as well to Christians and Moslems,⁴¹ and by David Philipson, who wrote in a letter to the Boston Jewish Advocate that he could not "believe that the Christian powers, whether singly or collectively, would permit Palestine, filled as it is with spots sacred for Christians by the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, to be governed by Jews either as a 'homeland' (I use your expression) or under a suzerain."⁴²

These two objections were answered by Leon Zolotkoff in The Maccabaeans in 1902. First, he cited the many examples of how the Jewish settlers were draining the swamps and irrigating the deserts, and he pointed to the delicious wines, fruits, and honey they were shipping all over the world as proof that the land was not sterile. Then he suggested that the opinion that Christian powers would oppose

⁴⁰quoted in Sternstein, "Reform Judaism and Zionism," pp. 18-20.

⁴¹Jastrow, Zionism and the Future of Palestine, pp. 109-110.

⁴²quoted in Leo Shubow, "Jacob DeHaas and the Boston Jewish Advocate," in Herzl Year Book, Vol. V, p. 294.

the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine was the opinion, only, of Jews. There was not a "single Christian authoritative opinion in opposition to the Zion movement," while there were many in favor of it. In addition he showed that even Germany and Russia were not totally against the movement. The German Kaiser had granted Herzl an audience twice, and Russia allowed open Zionist meetings--a privilege not granted to many movements in that land.⁴³

These practical objections were not considered very serious by either side, but there was one further practical objection that was. It was quite obvious that Palestine was not large enough to support all the world's Jews no matter how fertile the land might be made. And it was also well known that there were a great many Jews who did not want to go to Palestine. The question was, what would happen to those Jews who would not or could not go, once a homeland was established.⁴⁴ The anti-Zionists were naturally somewhat concerned about this even after the Balfour Declaration of 1917 assured them that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice . . . the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country [than Palestine]."⁴⁵ The Zionists, for their part, went overboard to reassure everyone.

Louis Brandeis wanted to make it perfectly clear that no one would be forced to emigrate to Palestine. He wrote that Zionism:

⁴³Leon Zolotkoff, "A Few Objections Dissipated," The Maccabaeon, II (May, 1902), pp. 260-61.

⁴⁴New York Times, November 25, 1917, IX, p. 3; and Sternstein, "Reform Judaism and Zionism," p. 18.

⁴⁵Philipson, Reform Judaism, p. 362.

is not a movement to remove all the Jews of the world compulsorily to Palestine. In the first place there are 14,000,000 Jews, and Palestine would not accommodate more than one fifth of that number. In the second place, it is not a movement to compel anyone to go to Palestine. It is essentially a movement to give to the Jew more not less freedom. . . .⁴⁶

Richard Gottheil dealt more directly with the question of what would happen to those Jews who did not go. What would be their relation to the Jewish homeland? He answered that it would be

exactly the same as is the relation of people of other nationalities all the world over to their parent home. What becomes of the Englishman in every corner of the globe; what becomes of the German? Does the fact that the great mass of their people live in their own land prevent them from doing their whole duty toward the land in which they happen to live?⁴⁷

Zionism Increasing Anti-Semitism

But Brandeis and Gottheil were not taking into consideration the distinctiveness of the Jewish people. No nationality had ever avoided assimilation with the majority group for anywhere near the length of time the Jews had. Immigrants to the United States may have remained loyal to their homelands for several generations, but only in exceptional cases did this loyalty extend further. What would happen to the Jews, who had proven they could keep their ties through many centuries, if they should obtain a homeland? Could they indeed be loyal to America even if the United States should conflict with the Jewish land? And even if they could, would other Americans accept it? Would they not question the Jews' loyalty? These were the questions that most profoundly disturbed anti-Zionists. In a word they were terribly afraid of anti-Semitism in the United States.

⁴⁶Brandeis, "The Jewish Problem," pp. 107-108.

⁴⁷Gottheil, "The Aims of Zionism," pp. 499-500.

This fear was not discussed outright very often. It was usually shrouded in claims that Judaism was a religion not a nationality, that "America is our Palestine and Washington our Jerusalem."⁴⁸ But once-in-awhile the anti-Zionists were very explicit. David Philipson called Zionism a "distinct menace" to Jews in the United States and other lands. "Zionism sets Jews apart as a national group," he said.⁴⁹ Henry Morgenthau feared that if Zionism were to succeed, it "would cost the Jews of America most that they have gained of liberty, equality, and fraternity."⁵⁰ Isaac M. Wise, as early as 1897, pointed out with regard to the effects of Zionism that, "Already many of the journals of this land are making capital out of this thing. . . ."⁵¹ The American Israelite was opposed to any attempts to awaken Jewish nationalism because it was afraid that "the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine or in any other area of the world, would expose Jews everywhere to charges of disloyalty to their respective countries."⁵² And Morris Jastrow was convinced that even if a Jewish State did not create a conflict of allegiance for Jews, it definitely would seem to do so to non-Jews and would thereby increase the feelings of prejudice and anti-Semitism.⁵³

⁴⁸N.W. Cohen, "Reaction of Reform Judaism," p. 363 n. 4.

⁴⁹New York Times, September 14, 1918, p. 7.

⁵⁰Henry Morgenthau, "Zionism a Surrender, Nor a Solution," World's Work, XLII (July, 1921), p. ii.

⁵¹quoted in Elmer Berger, The Jewish Dilemma (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1945), pp. 239-40.

⁵²quoted in Feinstein, American Zionism, pp. 256-57.

⁵³Jastrow, Zionism and the Future of Palestine, pp. 120-31.

Naturally, the Zionists had a different view of the situation. They felt that Zionism, far from being the cause of a resurgence of anti-Semitism, was the answer to the anti-Semitism which had never ceased to exist. The Jewish Exponent stated that anti-Semitism had deep roots, centuries old, and was in no way related to Jewish efforts on behalf of a national revival.⁵⁴ Richard Gottheil was in full agreement, pointing out that opponents of Zionism were deluding themselves if they really believed that anti-Semitism was "but a passing indisposition. . . ." It had lasted for some twenty centuries and, "like a plague, it makes its appearance whenever the conditions are favorable--that is, whenever the Jews flourish and are likely to become a power."⁵⁵ Joseph Zeff was a stirring speaker who spent many evenings in the Jewish sections of New York City recruiting for the Zionists. In one of his speeches he spelled out the situation so clearly that no one could mistake his meaning:

Don't fool yourselves that you are Americans. You are, presently, not counted as Americans and you never will be regarded as Americans. The Russians will be assimilated with the Poles; the German with the French--all will become as one nation--but not the Jews. The Jew will not be assimilated among the Americans. He will always be alone. If he will refuse to live an isolated ghetto-like existence, the gentiles will force him to be isolated. . . . Against his own wishes, he will remain loyal to his race and to his past. He must therefore provide himself with a place on which to rest his feet. In his land he will be able to be like all nations. . . . Only in Palestine will the Jew learn to stand erect and be a guide to all the nations.⁵⁶

This, then, was the Zionists' answer to the anti-Zionists'

⁵⁴Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 102.

⁵⁵Gottheil, "The Zionist Movement," p. 233.

⁵⁶quoted in Feinstein, American Zionism, p. 169.

fear that they were rocking the boat. That the boat would be rocked eventually anyway, they were convinced. What they were trying to do was put the Jews in a position so they would have a place to go if the boat were ever again to overturn.

CHAPTER VI

REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

Zionism was a movement that grew out of the combined factors of the nineteenth-century emancipation of western Jews and the continued persecution of eastern Jews. It caught on in the United States slowly because the most powerful grouping, the Reform movement, was generally opposed to it, and the newly arrived immigrants were too involved with their personal problems of survival to engage themselves in an idealistic movement.

But Zionism was a dynamic movement and conditions were working in its favor. The deteriorating condition of the Jewish people in Russia and Eastern Europe and of the Jewish religion in the west were calling Jews to action. Objections of Orthodox Jews that Zionism was pre-empting the Messiah and that it was a secular movement were quickly overcome, and Orthodoxy became a bulwark of Zionism. Conservative Jews, while putting stress on the religious side-effects of Zionism, gave the movement considerable support. Jewish Socialists were "shocked" into the Zion—caused by continued outbreaks of anti-Semitism in which Christian workers participated. They reconciled the Socialist and Zionist ideologies into a new Socialist Zionism.

Only the "non-Zionists" and Reform Jews, among the major groupings, remained fairly firm in their opposition to Zionism. But the

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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"non-Zionists" supported Economic Zionism, giving large sums of money to projects in Palestine, and were thereby a great help to the Zionist movement; and Reform Judaism, never totally united in its opposition to Zionism, bred a larger and larger minority of Zionist sympathizers within its ranks as the years went by.

The principle argument used against Zionism was that Judaism was not a nationality but a religion. Zionists, by claiming a Jewish nationality, were putting Jews in a very tenuous position in their native lands. American anti-Zionists were adamant in proclaiming their loyalty to America. The Zionists countered with the argument that Americanism and Zionism were of different qualities, and one could therefore be loyal to both, and that, in fact, a Jew was a better American for being a Zionist. They cited the examples of many prominent American Jews who were also active in the Zionist movement to prove their point.

The idea that the Jews had a mission in the world to bring the word of God to mankind was also advanced against the Zionist movement. It was held that the Jews could best accomplish this mission by remaining dispersed. A Jewish nationalism would keep the Jews from their "destiny"--to bring peace to a world already so tormented by nationalisms. The Zionists, for their part, charged that the Jews who held to this idea of a Jewish mission were the very Jews least capable of carrying it out. They were the most acculturated with the dominant Christian community. And on top of that there was no aspect of Judaism that had not been fully disseminated to the world through modern mass communications.

Anti-Zionists also used in their attacks the arguments that Zionism was irreligious and that its ultimate aims were terribly confused. The Zionists admitted to the existence of irreligious elements in the movement but pointed out that the roots of the movement were firmly planted in religious faith, and they stressed that Zionism's many aspects was one of its strengths, and not a weakness at all. At any rate, they claimed, all Zionists were united in the goal of obtaining a Jewish homeland.

Practical objections to Zionism were also set forth. The poor land conditions in Palestine were mentioned along with what was thought to be the inevitable opposition of Christian countries to a Jewish homeland in the Christian Holy Land. In addition it was argued that Palestine was very small. Only a tiny percentage of the world's Jews would ever be able to live there. The Zionists answered that great progress had been made in improving the land, and that there had been very encouraging support thus far from Christian nations and Christians in general. As to Palestine being too small to hold all the world's Jews, it was stressed that all Jews were not expected to emigrate there and that no one would be forced to go. Palestine was to be a place of refuge only for those Jews who wanted to live there.

Finally, the anti-Zionists were afraid of anti-Semitism. They were afraid that Jewish nationalism and a Jewish State would make living in other countries intolerable. They accused Zionism of stirring up the ancient seeds of anti-Semitism in countries where it had been to a large degree eliminated. The Zionists replied that anti-Semitism was always a possibility, and that the only real solution

was a Jewish State. They felt, in fact, that Zionism was necessary for Jewish survival.

It should be evident that all of the positions relating to Zionism had one thing in common. They were all concerned with solving the "Jewish Problem," with finding security. The Zionists, of course, thought the solution lay in a homeland where Jews could be free to worship and live as they pleased. The Reform anti-Zionists felt the solution lay in achieving freedom and equality for Jews in all countries, and they felt that the existence of a Jewish homeland would only hinder this effort. The Socialists believed the solution lay with international socialism. The "non-Zionists" accepted Economic, and to some extent, Religious Zionism as a solution but otherwise sided with the anti-Zionists. And the Orthodox who did not accept the reinterpretation of the dogma held that the only solution to the "Jewish Problem" could come with the coming of the Messiah.

In general the Zionists had a more realistic view of the situation. Events since 1920 have tended to support their claims over those of the anti-Zionists. In the first place, it became appallingly apparent that anti-Semitism had not been eliminated--even in the western countries. Anti-Zionists would surely have thought twice about the value of a Jewish homeland if they could have foreseen Hitler and the Nazi holocaust. Secondly, the present Jewish condition in the USSR, that product of the international socialist movement, would substantiate the claims of the Socialist Zionists as against those of the Jewish Socialists. Jews in Russia, far from being free to worship as they please, are being forced to assimilate into an

atheistic culture. Moreover, as if to admit the more realistic Zionist position, Reform Judaism has come to almost fully support the Zionist cause.¹ And finally, the existence today of the prospering nation of Israel has proven the "practical" objections to Zionism to have been unfounded.

But if the Zionists' arguments can be shown in retrospect to have been the more realistic, it is not necessarily true that they had the better arguments at the time. The arguments of the anti-Zionists had a great deal of merit, also.

For instance, in the case of the conflict over a Jewish nationality, it can be said that both sides were dealing in actualities. It was surely true that Jews did have something in common that could not fit the definition of a twentieth-century religion. As Jacob DeHaas said, if this were not the case, then there would be no Zionism. And it was also true that Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe were experiencing almost intolerable persecution, and Jews throughout the world were united in their feeling of kinship with these Jews and in their efforts to alleviate the suffering. In addition, simply because the Zionists thought of the Jews as a nation, they were somewhat justified in their claim of a Jewish nationality.

But the American anti-Zionists may have been equally justified in their fear of the western reaction to Jewish nationalism. Their claim that Judaism was merely a religion like all others was not so much based on the existing situation as it was on the desire that it be so. Their contention, therefore, was not as realistic as that of

¹Ben Halpern, The Idea of The Jewish State (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 197.

the Zionists, but their fear was quite as real. The anti-Zionists were afraid that Zionism and Jewish nationalism might bring on a rise of anti-Semitism in the United States. The fact that this did not occur to any measurable degree does not detract from the legitimacy of their fear. The experience of Jewish history coupled with an already visible American dislike of things foreign was enough to justify considerable uneasiness. Zionists thus claimed a Jewish nationality based on what they felt was the real situation, while the anti-Zionist argument that Jews were only a religion was based on what they felt was a real fear of what a Jewish nationality might inspire.

As to the question of a Jewish mission, again neither side can be said to have had the better argument. The Zionists believed the mission could be best fulfilled with a Jewish homeland as a spiritual center. Indeed, they believed that without a homeland Judaism itself would soon disappear as a result of attrition from the two plagues of assimilation and persecution. The anti-Zionist claim of a Jewish mission to be carried out by the dispersed Jewish people might easily be dismissed as a rationalization caused by their fear of anti-Semitism, but it is always possible that they really believed the rhetoric. It might well be the case, as the Zionists charged, that Reform Judaism did not have the religious dedication necessary for the mission, but this is not a sufficient reason to dismiss the legitimacy of the mission ideal for those Reform Jews who did believe in its adequacy. Until better historical methods are developed for distinguishing rationalizations from true feelings, the Zionist and anti-Zionist arguments will both have to be accepted at face value.

When all the arguments are reviewed, it becomes unmistakably apparent that underlying each was a common motivation. Throughout the dialogue, Zionists and anti-Zionists, Socialists and "non-Zionists," all expressed a fear, both real and imagined, that anti-Semitism was not an impossibility in the United States. One senses in all of the arguments that the antagonists spoke from a common uneasiness about the position of Jews in a Christian world, that the debators, even if they never said it, understood one another unusually well. Both the support of Zionism and the opposition to it must be seen as the American Jewish response to the fear of anti-Semitism; it must be seen as the American Jewish quest for security.

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