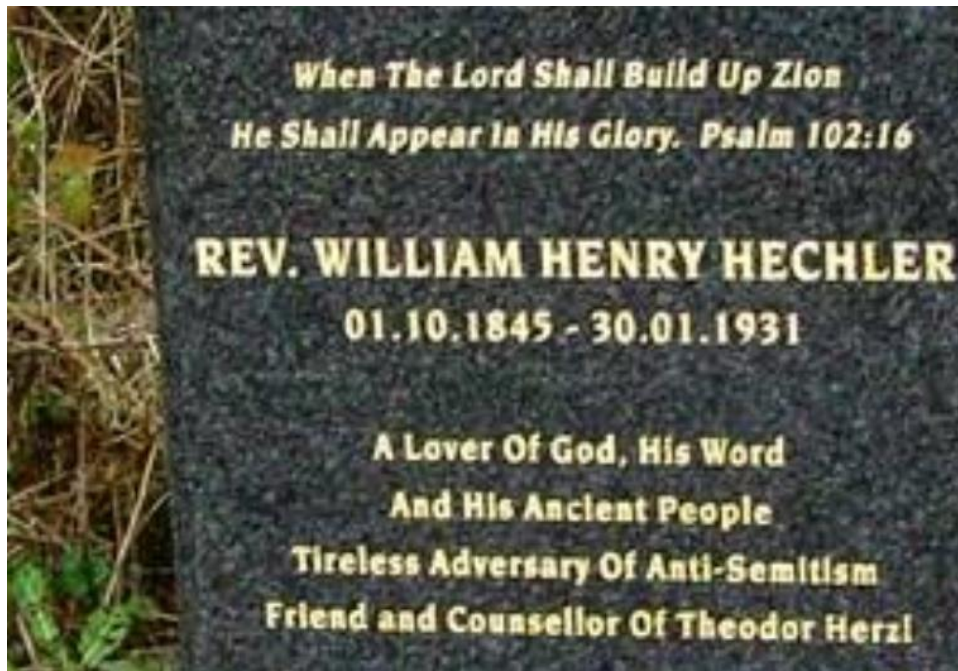


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by  
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## Christian leader pivotal to Herzl's work recognized



LONDON – The contribution of a Christian chaplain to Theodor Herzl's work and to the Zionist cause was commemorated in London this week with a tombstone dedication at his unmarked grave.

Rev. William Henry Hechler was pivotal to Herzl's diplomatic successes, allying himself with the emerging Zionist movement and providing Herzl with key introductions to German royal society.

Hechler had been a close friend of Archduke Frederick I of Baden and a tutor to his children.

In 1896, while serving as the chaplain for the British Embassy in Vienna, he read Herzl's newly written pamphlet, "The Jewish State," and immediately understood the centrality and importance of Herzl's work as complementary to his belief in the prophetic biblical restoration of the Jews.

In 1893, Hechler published his own broadsheet, “The Restoration of the Jews to Palestine according to the Prophecy,” and anticipated that the days of the Jewish salvation would begin in 1897-1898.

With Hechler’s and the Archduke’s assistance, Herzl met the sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid II, in 1896 and German Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1898.

Born in India in 1845, Hechler died in Islington, North London, in 1931, alone and impoverished. He was buried at the New Southgate Cemetery in London in an unmarked grave.

Last year, Jerry Klinger – president of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, an organization that identifies and recognizes sites of American Jewish Historical interest – discovered Hechler’s forgotten grave site with the help of Rev. David Pileggi of Christ Church Jerusalem.

“It was a Zionist obligation I could not let go by,” Klinger said, explaining his motivation to get Hechler’s contribution recognized.

“Hechler remained a confidant, friend, supporter and aide to Herzl until his death in 1904. He was at Herzl’s bedside at his death.

When Herzl was dying, he asked that we not forget Hechler for all that he did for him and for Zionism,” said Klinger. “We did.”

He noted that “it has long been recognized that without Hechler’s intercession and support, Herzl may have simply remained an obscure, eccentric Viennese journalist. The course of Zionism, and possibly the very founding of the modern State of Israel, may not have been successful.”

Klinger had also helped to get Herzl’s last descendent, Stephen Norman, buried with his family on Mount Herzl in 2007.

“Rev. Hechler played a vital role in advancing the Zionist cause at the crucial, early stage of the movement’s emergence,” said Dr.

David Breakstone, vice chairman of the World Zionist Organization, who attended the commemoration. “In honoring him as we did this week, we not only paid him the respect that was long overdue, making good on an historical debt of gratitude, but also publicly recognized the vital role that so many Christians have played – first in the establishment of the Jewish state, and since then, in support of it.”

Monday’s tombstone commemoration marked the 80th anniversary of his death.

The ceremony was attended by an array of Christian and Jewish dignitaries, Israeli Embassy officials and international and local Jewish community and Christian organizations.

Israel's Ambassador Ron Prosor paid his respects to Hechler.

"Britain and Israel enjoyed a friendship long before the establishment of the State of Israel, as a result of the committed efforts of British Christian Zionists. Marking Rev.

Hechler's prominent place in the rich tradition of Christian Zionism in Britain, on the 80th anniversary of his passing, is especially timely," he said.

"The support he gave to Theodor Herzl is symbolic of the understanding that is found today among our Christian friends, of the eternal connection that exists between the Jewish People and Eretz Yisrael," said Prosor.

Alan Aziz, director of the Zionist Federation of the UK, stated that "it is very important to Israel and the Jewish people to recognize the incredible efforts and friendships made by our friends and supporters in the Christian world. The ZF has very strong links to the Christian community, which we value enormously."

He added that "the tombstone commemoration befitted a man who made such a huge contribution to the Zionist cause."

"Particularly in this age, when the very legitimacy of a Jewish state is being attacked by so many, it behooves us more than ever to acknowledge the faith and allegiance of our non-Jewish friends whose support has proven to be unequivocal," Breakstone said.

"The ceremony was an inspiring event that demonstrated the fast friendship and commonality of purpose between us all," he added. "It was also an event of which Herzl would have been proud, giving expression as it did to our common humanity that was so fundamental to Herzl's worldview.

"In his utopian novel Old-New Land, the visionary of the Jewish state has one of its leaders stating, 'My associates and I make no distinctions between one man and another.

We do not ask to what race or religion a man belongs. If he is a man, that is enough for us,'" he said.

<http://www.jpost.com/International/Christian-leader-pivotal-to-Herzls-work-recognized>