

# Correspondence

## Zionism and the Century

To the Editors:

I appreciate your courtesy in sending me an advance copy of the article by Robert Gordis ("Zionism, Judaism and the State of Israel," *Worldview*, June) which mentions me and *The Christian Century*. His article deals with only one of the three long reports I developed from my Israeli trip, and it is a piece written in a polemical style that I find self-defeating. The long section detailing the history of Zionism repeats what was already common knowledge to me and, I am sure, to *Century* readers. The point of my first sentence still stands, however: In terms of the political reality of what did take place in 1948, Zionism as a dream of centuries would not have been actualized in history at that particular moment without the pressure of the Holocaust, because by 1948 the spirit of anti-colonialism was indeed putting an end to such ventures. This is not a value judgment as to whether or not the State of Israel should have come into existence; it is a statement of journalistic interpretation which I think is fairly obvious to any viewer, regardless of whether he favors or doesn't favor the creation of the State.

I think the Gordis statement that the *Century* has "an unbroken record of hostility to Zionism" is not designed to encourage dialogue. It presumes a mindset that persists among editors of the magazine, and as one who has come to this spot only within the past two years, I find Gordis's comment somewhat akin to the generalization that all Methodists hate alcohol. What I am after in the *Century* is a discussion of the Mideast situation at a level of some rationality. I don't expect to find that rationality in the living room of a mother in Jerusalem whose son has just been killed by Arab terrorists. Nor would I ask her

to be rational on the topic. But in the pages of the *Century* some rationality is in order and is to be expected.

I think also that in the interest of dialogue the reference to the creation of Arab refugee camps should not be left as simply the fault of Arab leaders. At best there is ambiguity over this matter, and the best I have been able to determine is that the British, the Israelis and the Arab leaders, all for their own reasons, helped create the hasty departure of many Arab residents from what is today the State of Israel. Also, I have grown weary of hearing the kind of argument that says "your hands are dirtier than mine." The subject matter I focused on dealt with the West Bank and the danger of this continued occupation to the internal strength of the State of Israel. Had Gordis also dealt with my third article in the series, he would have seen my effort to deal with the matter of the Bir Zeit College situation. In short, I don't think Gordis seeks dialogue. He seeks to make a polemical point, and in an emotion-laden situation like this one we are not lacking in persons willing to express deep emotions from either side. My effort was to be open, which I think is the role of the journalist.

James M. Wall

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: Fair-minded persons always rejoice when a defense is made of any party who has been wrongly accused. Accordingly, a salute is due Rabbi Robert Gordis for his article in the June *Worldview*.

That salute would be heartier if he had stopped there and not gone on to make the major portion of his article a pure reworking of the tired and tendentious clichés of Zionist doctrine. That too could be accepted for what it is worth. But what requires further brief comment is found in his quotation from a former statement of his own.

Nahum Goldmann and David Ben-Gurion may be the possessors of "little minds," though most peo-

ple, including the undersigned, do not thus dismiss them. They were among the creators of the State of Israel, and it was both of them who continually urged the Jews of the rest of the world to harbor a "dual allegiance."

Coming to the last sentence of Dr. Gordis's self-quote, the first clause, "They [American Jews] owe no political allegiance to the State of Israel," is so self-evident that even to assert it raises the question that its assertion could be necessary. Of course nobody *owes* a particle of allegiance to any country but his own, and there is no power on earth or elsewhere that can require such allegiance. However, Dr. Gordis follows this truism with a startling error of fact in the second clause, on which his entire argument rests heavily and which reads: "Nor does the government of the young republic expect it of them." The fact is that the Israeli government does indeed call for, and expect, the political allegiance of Jews in other countries. That has been clearly spelled out in basic Israeli laws and resolutions of the World Zionist Organization (which is officially related to the Israeli government) too lengthy and numerous to reproduce here.

In addition to Dr. Gordis, salutes should be in order also to all those American Jews who have throughout maintained their allegiance to the United States equitable with that of Americans of other faiths; all the more so, since, as is not the case with other religious groups, it has not been purely because demands for allegiance to—or "solidarity with"—a specific foreign country have not been made of them. This is the only category of people in the world exposed to such pressure—even though many members of it are unaware of where that pressure originates.

Richard Korn

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Robert Gordis Responds:

I heartily endorse the desire James Wall has expressed in his response

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