

Correspondence

Dependent Israel

To the Editors: In the excellent article "Dependent Israel: The Two Options" in the April issue of *Worldview* the authors [Mark Bruzonsky and Israel Singer] refer to Zionism as a political idea. I wish they would have developed the thought that the religious groups are promoting a military right-wing outlook. For it would seem to me that the answer to many of the problems is to recognize Zionism as a political entity and disestablish the Jewish religion.

Last November in a lecture in Jerusalem I heard Abba Eban refer to Hebrew and the requirement of an Ulpan as the basis of identity for the State of Israel. The language of the Old Testament or Bible has become a living language to welcome the Jew home to his native land. Thus the question I would raise is whether the lack of independence is due to the lack of a personal religious faith, which the Jews of America display but which is not evident in Israel. Were not the revivals and the testing of faith of the Great Awakening of the 1740's a necessary precondition to the American Revolution?

As a Christian, I would hope that the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as the Mount of Olives and Mount Scopus, would be part of a unified City of Jerusalem. The authors object to the ghetto mentality of Israel, yet use their boundary for Jerusalem as the Old City, which would return Mount Scopus to the boundaries of the Palestinian state.

Christopher Niebuhr

Albany, N.Y.

Mark Bruzonsky Responds:

That Jerusalem should be unified in the sense of being a single and open city is not at issue, we think. Various plans are being debated, including one by Lord Caradon, author of Security Council resolution 242, who foresees two sister cities—one Jewish and one Arab—under a single municipal administration.

We spoke in our article of "special provisions for the Old City of Jerusalem" precisely because some condominium arrangement with a Palestinian entity or state will be necessary. But we did not intend in our article to discuss in any detail the possible alternatives. Our point is simply that compromise over Jerusalem must be a part of any overall peace initiative. Such a compromise would allow for minor border adjustments, special provisions for holy sites, and flexible political arrangements.

After we wrote our article the Israel Council for Israeli-Palestine Peace issued a twelve-point Manifesto, and we are inclined to agree with point six regarding Jerusalem: "We affirm that Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel. Being sacred to three religions and inhabited by the two peoples [the people of Israel and the Palestinian Arab people], it deserves a special status. It will remain united under a common municipal roof-organization and will be accessible to people of all nations and faiths. Jerusalem will continue to be the capital of the State of Israel, and the Arab part could become after the establishment of peace, the capital of the Palestinian Arab state. The Holy Places of all three religions will be administered autonomously by their respective institutions."

Mr. Niebuhr's two other points are more amorphous. While Zionism as a political movement does require a secular separation from the Jewish religion qua religion (as Herzl once said, "We shall prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks...[Both] must not interfere in the administration of the State..."), there is no getting away from Israel as a "Jewish state." History and contemporary allegiances dictate this reality even for many atheistic Jews. The separation of religion and the political state is not as easily accomplished as Mr. Niebuhr seems to imply. A paragraph from the *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel* makes the point rather well: "To the extent that the Jewish State is the outgrowth of Jewish

(religious) history, the separation of these concepts is highly problematical. The 'State' is designed as a solution to a Jewish dilemma and justifies its existence on the basis of a religious historic tradition, no matter how it is reinterpreted....Modern Israeli attitudes toward religion cannot be divorced from attitudes toward the State of Israel."

As for speaking Hebrew and going to an Ulpan as sufficient basis for identification with the state, this is true today precisely because only Jews do so, with rare exceptions. And whether Jews of America have more or less personal religious faith than Jews in Israel is highly debatable. Anyway, the connection between political independence and personal religious faith largely escapes us.

As for Mr. Niebuhr's wish that we would have discussed in more detail how religious elements in Israel have become the exponents of a right-wing militarism, we will accede to his request in a future, shorter article.

Israel Singer Responds:

No! Jerusalem must remain a united city. The specific arrangement is left to negotiations as to how municipalities with multiple ethnic communities should be governed. There is an arrangement under the enlightened attempts of Teddy Kollek that seems to be working out fairly well now, but may indeed be in need of revision. If so, so be it. But all of the Arabs and Jews that I've met in the years I've lived and taught in Israel have felt that they were citizens of Jerusalem. This lends to Jerusalem not only its historical character of indivisibility but also one that exists in the popular will of its people. Generations of my grandparents, making great sacrifices to come and live in that city, were loyal to an indivisible Jerusalem before there was a State of Israel. I know that there are tens of thousands of Arab inhabitants of that same city who have continued to live in it because their loyalty is to Jerusalem, as it was before either the Palestinian movement or Zionism changed modern politics. Jerusalem therefore is a special subject and must be treated in a manner somewhat different from the usual geopolitical considerations.