

CORRESPONDENCE

THE EDITOR,
International Review of Missions.

May 4th, 1955

SIR,—My attention has been drawn to an article by the Rev. Robert Smith in your April issue, regarding what took place at Evanston on the subject of Israel. And since that article makes certain statements about myself which, if credited, might be extremely damaging to the work of my colleagues (and myself) in the Jerusalem Bishopric, I must ask you to allow me an opportunity to reply.

May I first point out a certain discrepancy? The article says on page 198 that 'the problem of Israel cropped up unexpectedly'. But on the next page it is stated that 'an attempt had been made . . . to find a place for the discussion . . . either in the report of section 2 . . . or in the report of the main theme'. The same paragraph goes on to refer to two recommendations which were circulated to groups, and to the preparatory volume *The Church and the Jewish People*. How, then, was the raising of the problem unexpected?

On page 201 the writer states that 'they' (the Continental delegates) 'seemed hypnotized', 'were bewildered' and 'were puzzled by the intervention on the anti-Israel side of Dr Stewart, Bishop in Jerusalem, whose very title should have made him a champion of Israel'.

I must protest most vigorously against the two-fold *petitio principii* involved in the last sentence. The title of Bishop in Jerusalem (or anywhere else) should make a man a champion of truth and of justice, and a dedicated servant of the spiritual Israel, the Christian Church. ('We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.') But it does not, and should not make him a champion of any race, any state or any political creed. Similarly, to describe a vote against the particular proposal that was before the Assembly as a vote 'on the anti-Israel side' is to beg the whole question, and betrays the very pre-supposition which bedevilled the whole controversy—and was the very reason why I for one was against 'references to Israel'. If the Continental delegates were 'hypnotized', 'amazed', 'bewildered' and 'puzzled' at the reaction to their proposals, we who have lived for nearly a generation at the heart of the problem were not. We knew exactly what would happen, and that was why we were anxious that the question should not be raised. To suggest that our attitude was therefore anti-Semitic is simply untrue, and frankly insulting.

It is further stated on page 201 that I opposed even a proposal that the issue be studied further. As a matter of fact, I most emphatically stated that *of course* it was desirable that the Study Department be asked to go further into the theological question of the relationship between Old Testament prophecy relating to Israel after the flesh and New Testament doctrine relating to Israel after the spirit. I said that I should be the last man in the world to discourage such study, and that the very fact that Christians differed on the subject was sufficient reason on the one hand that we *should* study it further, and on the other that we should make no pronouncement until we had studied it further.

And here, perhaps, there may be some chance of clearing up a misunderstanding. Mr Smith says it was proposed from the chair that the Central Committee should study the issue further. If it was, I certainly was not aware of it—nor to my certain knowledge were many others. So far as I knew, I spoke and voted against the acceptance of the 'Declaration by 24 Members' quoted earlier in the article. (Mr Smith is definitely wrong in saying that it came *after* the vote: it was before us throughout that particular session, and in my hand when I spoke.) I voted against it, less because I was opposed to the document itself, though its logic seems to me sadly astray, than because the Assembly had already voted 'to delete all reference to Israel', and I deprecated any attempt to evade or reverse that vote.

I am glad that Mr Smith, on page 203, tries to disentangle the 'fundamental issues', though frankly I do not know what he means by 'the missionary issue' in this connexion. Does, or did, anyone, at Evanston or elsewhere, question the obligation of the Church to evangelize the Jew as well as the Muslim or the heathen? Or does Mr Smith suggest that that obligation is less towards the Muslim and the heathen than towards the Jew?

And, finally: 'There is the issue of nationalism. Every Jew is a living witness against the idolatry of nationalism.' I wish that my experience enabled me to echo that statement. If he would amend it to 'every Christian Jew', I would gladly do so.

Yours faithfully,

WESTON
Bishop in Jerusalem.

ST GEORGE'S CLOSE,
JERUSALEM.