Religious Protest and Police Reaction in a Theo-Democracy: Israel, 1950-1979

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All religion begins in mysticism and ends in politics.
Ch. Peguy

The problem of religion and state has been one of the longest lasting issues in the relatively short history of the modern State of Israel. Ironically, except for a few isolated cases involving Israeli Muslims,[1] the bulk of the controversy has been Jewish in character, and entails such questions as who is a Jew, who may perform marriages, whether to allow public Sabbath desecration, who may be exempted from the army draft, and a host of others. Given the deep-seated and pervasive character of these issues, one is not surprised to find a large amount of literature on the entire topic. Almost invariably, however, the controversy is addressed from either a coalitional/legislative standpoint,[2] a legal/

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1. When, for example, Israel prosecuted bigamists in 1954, Israeli Muslims charged religious persecution. The High Court of Justice ruled that the law did not involve any such thing, since Islam does not command bigamy as a religious duty but merely permits it; see *Supreme Court Rulings*, vol. 8 (1954), case 49/54, pp. 910-17. For a more in-depth discussion of religious discrimination between Israeli Jews and Muslims, see Amnon Rubinstein, *Ha'mishpat Ha'Konstituzioni Shel Medinat Yisrael* [The Constitutional Law of the State of Israel] (Tel Aviv: Schocken Books, 1974), pp. 173-83. The study that follows finds that non-Jewish religious protest in Israel is almost nonexistent; see Table 1, p. 495.

2. See Ervin Birnbaum, *The Politics of Compromise: State and Religion in Israel* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970); Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Religion and Coalition: The National Religious Party and Coalition Formation in Israel," in *The Elections in Israel—1973*, ed. Asher Arian (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1975), pp. 255-84; S. Zalman Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976); and Shulamit Aloni, *Ha'hesder* [The Arrangement] (Tel Aviv: Otpaz, Ltd., 1970).

juridical perspective,[3] or, less frequently, is presented from a cultural/sociological point of view.[4] These approaches mirror the usual lines of inquiry on the issue of church and state in the general literature.[5]

The religion-state struggle, however, takes place not only in parliament or the courts. The street constitutes an important battleground as well (for political as well as public relations purposes), especially in a country like Israel, which has such a high rate of extraparliamentary public protest.[6] The first goal of this study, then, is to discover which—and to what extent—Israelis have been willing to demonstrate their concerns and desires on this controversial topic. The initial assumption was that, given the relatively higher intensity of feeling on religious issues as compared to other issues, there were more protests at higher levels of violence concerning religious matters than concerning their social, political, and economic counterparts.

Perhaps of even greater interest is the reaction of the authori-

3. Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma;* Yehoshua Freudenheim, *Government in Israel*, trans. M. Silverstone and C. I. Goldwater (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1967), pp. 85-117; Rubinstein, *Constitutional Law*, pp. 79-154; and Zerah Warhaftig et al., eds. *Dat U'medina Ba'Khakika* [Religion and State in Legislation] (Jerusalem: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1973).

4. The works of Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya are the best illustration of this approach. See, for example, Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "The Symbol System of Zionist-Socialism: An Aspect of Israeli Civil Religion," *Modern Judaism* 1 (May 1981):121-48; Liebman, "Myth, Tradition, and Values in Israeli Society," *Midstream* 24 (January 1978):22-34; Liebman, "Likrat Kheker Ha'dat Ha'amamit B'yisrael" ["Toward a Study of Israeli Folk Religion"], *Megamot* 23 (April 1977):95-109 [Hebrew]; and, Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *The Civil Religion of Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

5. For example, see Donald E. Smith, ed., *Religion and Political Modernization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). One of the articles therein (Norman L. Zucker, "Secularization Conflicts in Israel," pp. 95-115) is offered alongside a number of others that cover the same patterns of political and legal conflict in different countries over the same religion-state issue. It is not to suggest a uniformity between religions and/or countries on the issue, but rather that the analytical typologies are usually either coalitional, legal, or cultural.

6. For an in-depth analysis of the general protest phenomenon in Israel, see Sam Lehman-Wilzig, "Public Protest and Systemic Stability in Israel: 1960-1979," in *Comparative Jewish Politics: Public Life in Israel and the Diaspora*, ed. S. Lehman-Wilzig and B. Susser (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), pp. 171-210. One does find occasional references to religious-issue protest in the literature, but these are brought to illustrate or highlight a specific point and do not constitute a systematic attempt to deal with the specific topic. Even Ephraim Tabory, "State and Religion: Religious Conflict Among Jews in Israel," *Journal of Church and State* 23 (Spring 1981):275-83, whose work has a number of cogent points to make on the question of religious protest, does not investigate just how much of such protest exists, who does the protesting, and how the protesters are handled. See also Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma*, pp. 230-36, for a brief discussion of the phenomenon.

ties to such public protest. "Reaction" here means the handling of protesters on the part of the police or other government authorities at the scene of protest. While it is true that the political system responds at times to protest—through legislation, edicts, and the like—it is virtually impossible to judge to what extent such an ultimately *political* response is a result of external pressure and not internal political machinations. The reaction of the police (and others coming into direct contact with the protesters),[7] contrastingly, is immediate and direct, and through it one may better understand the norms of Israeli society and the political authorities, especially with regard to tolerance on such a sensitive issue as religion and state. Given the relatively low proportion of religious policemen in Israel,[8] the assumed higher incidence of protest violence on religious issues, and the danger of social cleavage resulting from religious-issue protest, the initial hypothesis here is that the authorities' reaction is harsher vis-à-vis religious protest as compared to others. This assumption is reinforced by the fact that a major proportion of such protest is initiated by a group of ultrareligious Jews who do not even accept the legitimacy of the State of Israel.

In order to gain a relatively exact picture of religious-issue public protest, all issues of *Jerusalem Post* from January 1950 through December 1979 were reviewed—a discrete thirty year period which was broken down into decades and other time periods in order to discern trend patterns.[9] Among the various variables investigated, two are centrally significant to this study: the intensity of protest (peaceful, obstructive or disruptive, violent against property, violent against people, generally riotous)

7. Depending on the area and the problem, one may also find the border patrol (*mishmar ha'gvul*) or the civil defense corps (*ha'ga*) dealing with public protesters. In very unusual circumstances even the army might be involved. These groups have been lumped all together, and the terms "authorities" or "police" are used interchangeably to represent any state force with legitimate policing powers. In any case, it is estimated that the real police handle over 90 percent of all protests.

8. There are no available official statistics on the proportion of religious policemen, but that a problem exists was early recognized by the religious camp itself. See, for example, the editorial in the NRP newspaper *Ha'tzofe*, 3 February 1954, p. 2, which called on more religious men to join the police force.

9. As a control, a few random months of *Ha'aretz* were scanned and virtually no difference was found with regard to the number of events reported or the variables within each event. For a detailed explanation of the methodology used—i.e., what was counted, how it was classified, and so forth—see Lehman-Wilzig, *Comparative Jewish Politics*, pp. 175-79. It should be noted here, however, that while street demonstrations constituted two-thirds of all protest events, all other group forms of such public expression are included: "political" strikes, "invasions" of governmental offices, hunger fasts, indoor protest meetings, and others.

and the authorities' reaction (none, noncoercive, through arrests, violent, guns fired). As can be seen, the latter five roughly correspond to the former five, and it is this correspondence which enables an assessment not only of the actual response but also of its correctness as well.

Religious-Issue Protest in the Israeli Context

The religious-issue configuration in Israel is not a simple one. One can roughly differentiate between four Jewish sectors: a very small but zealously religious group of anti-Zionist Jews called the *Neturei Karta* ("guardians of the gate");[10] a much larger Orthodox sector which is either non-Zionist (*Agudat Yisrael*) or pro-Zionist (National Religious Party [NRP]);[11] an equally large secular group of Jews, many of whom support the dissolution of the state-religion apparatus; and the largest sector of all, Jews who identify themselves as "traditional" and are either apathetic or relatively satisfied with the present arrangement. This latter sector is not a force indulging in significant public protest on the issue of religion.

10. For a scholarly, albeit idiosyncratic analysis of the *Neturei Karta* (the author supports his subject and thus not once uses the term "State of Israel"), see Emile Marmorstein, *Heaven at Bay* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). For a self-exposition of this sect, see I. Domb, *The Transformation* (London: privately published, 1958). It should be noted that, while *Neturei Karta* adherents probably number less than one thousand, there are a few thousand others who belong to the *Edah Haredit* ("community of zealots") and who are of similar mind on religious matters although not as fanatic in their anti-Zionism. They are included as well under the *Neturei Karta* rubric for purposes of religious-issue protest, although there are differences between the two groups. For a short description of these sectarian groups, see Menachem Friedman, "Religious Zealotry in Israeli Society," in *On Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Israel*, ed. Solomon Poll and Ernest Krausz (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1975), pp. 93-95.

11. Many would dispute the possibility of placing these two camps in the same sector. While it is true that each is represented by distinct political parties and that the sociological integration into Israeli society of each is quite different, the fact that the *Agudat Yisrael* (and, of course, the NRP) accept the authority of the state and even play by the rules of the political game means that, for the purposes of this essay, the two represent the same interest group on the religion-state issue. The size of this second sector is approximately 30 percent, according to most opinion polls concerning religious self-identification, although in electoral terms it does not surpass 15 percent.

There are, in addition to these mainstream Orthodox Jews, another two "religious" sects—Conservative and Reform. Despite the fact that they constitute the vast majority of affiliated Jews in the Diaspora, these groups have no official recognition or power within the Israeli religious establishment, this fact due in part to their relatively meager membership in the Holy Land. These two sects have been exerting pressure lately to gain greater status, but their efforts have not as yet manifested themselves in protest demonstrations and the like. Should they turn in the future to such means of extraparliamentary pressure, Israel will face a new phenomenon: protest on the part of one or two religious camps against another religious camp.

Table 1

Religious-Issue Protest by Groups: Israel, 1950-1979

	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	Group Total
Neturei Karta	47 (67.1%)	30 (35.7%)	61 (44.2%)	138 (47.3%)
Agudah & NRP	20 (28.6%)	44 (52.4%)	54 (39.1%)	118 (40.4%)
Secularists	1 (1.4%)	6 (7.1%)	12 (8.7%)	19 (6.5%)
Traditionalists	1 (1.4%)	3 (3.6%)	10 (7.2%)[2]	14 (4.8%)
Other[1]	1 (1.4%)	1 (1.2%)	1 (0.7%)	3 (1.0%)
Period Total (% of all-issue protests, N=)	70(17.5%;N=399)	84(19.5%;N=430)	138(10.9%;N=1271)	292(13.9%;N=2100)

1. Muslim and/or Christian protest
2. The rise of such protests is a result almost entirely of religious-nationalist groups who have on occasion demonstratively tried to pray on the Temple Mount which is now occupied by a Muslim mosque. These are not necessarily Orthodox Jews (indeed Jewish religious law strictly forbids setting foot on the Mount due to ritual impurity), but rather Jewish nationalists who have seized upon a religious issue for political purposes.

In light of the rather pervasive nature of Israel's state religious legislation and institutions (e.g., almost no public transportation on the Sabbath, exclusive rabbinic control over marriage and divorce, and restrictive abortion and autopsy legislation), it is surprising to find that the secularist sector has not utilized public protest on a large scale. Data reveals that only 6.5 percent of all protest over religious issues is of the antireligion variety. In great part this trend is due to the lack of formal interest group organizations and institutions through which such protest could coalesce (only one such group exists today—the Israel Secular League—which has replaced the now defunct League Against Religious Coercion). By and large, this type of protest is reactive; when another blow to "freedom from religion" is possible, the secularists may get together to protest. Lacking any new provocation, secularist initiative is rare. On the whole, however, there seems to be a noticeable increase (relative to all other religious-issue protest) over the three decades, indicating that frustration is rising, at least on the part of the secularists. Such frustration, however, is still of very small scale.

"Mainstream" Orthodox protest constitutes a far larger proportion of the overall phenomenon (40.4 percent), but nowhere near the percentage one would expect in light of its overwhelming demographic dominance among all religious Jews in Israel. This trend, however, is understandable given the fact that the official religious establishment (the Ministry of Religious Affairs, religious councils, and army chaplaincy) is already under orthodox control. Periodically, controversies arise over a host of issues, but at base this camp is the authority (the NRP has been part of the government almost continually since 1948, while *Agudat Yisrael* has been only during certain periods); its protest potential is circumscribed by its coalitional responsibilities.

The *Neturei Karta* and its sympathizers have no such restrictions; despite their small number (a few thousand at most), they protest in systematic fashion without respite. Of all religious-issue protests in Israel, theirs has comprised almost half (47.3 percent). This group belies the conventional wisdom regarding the connection between religious and political activism. As Harry Hiller has remarked: "Much of the sociological literature dealing with religious fundamentalism stresses its conservative, right wing, and frequently apolitical character. Lipset, for example, argues that fundamentalist religion 'drains off' energies and activities that would normally be channelled into political protest ventures."[12] The fundamentalism of the *Neturei Karta* has a dual

component. Their anti-Zionism does not stem from a refusal to countenance any sort of Jewish state but rather is opposed to the naturalistic (political), non-Messianic way in which the State of Israel was established. Their eschatological beliefs, therefore, prevent them from any formal participation in Israeli politics, even for the higher cause of reinforcing Orthodoxy. As a result of their physical presence within the state, however, they must oppose and prevent the infiltration of secular values into their midst. The only route open, therefore, is extraparliamentary protest that communicates messages to state authorities without in any way legitimizing those authorities. Thus, as Guenter Lewy has noted: "The acceptance of the omnipotent role of the deity can lead to fatalism and inaction, but it can also spur people to mighty effort because of the conviction that God is on their side."[13] The *Neturei Karta* exemplify the potential combination of political fatalism and activist zealotry at one and the same time.

Just as problematical for these zealots is an internal political element—a war of strength against those who are as religious as they but participate in the Israeli political system, i.e., the *Agudat Yisrael*. One of the latter's principal advantages is government financing of their *yeshivot* ("religious schools"). The *Neturei Karta's* major weapon in keeping and attracting adherents is the proof of their "holier-than-thou" attitude. Their public protest, then, while outwardly directed at the nonreligious authorities, has an internal component as well.

This internal political element becomes especially clear when one compares the number of *Neturei Karta* protests for the two and a half years before the *Agudat Yisrael* joined the governing coalition in late June 1977 with the two and a half years thereafter. In the former period, the *Neturei Karta* had only five protests. In the latter, when *Agudat Yisrael* was in the position of extracting greater financial resources for its *yeshivot*, the *Neturei Karta* initiated twenty-three such protests (against secular sources), as if to accuse its rival of "collaboration" with the secular

12. Harry H. Hiller, "Religious Fundamentalism and Political Change," in *Religion and Social Change*, International Conference on the Sociology of Religion, 31 August-4 September 1975, Lloret de Mar-Espagne (Lille, France: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975), p. 389.

13. Guenter Lewy, *Religion and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 553. Lewy also notes how modern scholarship "considers the Maccabee revolt less as an uprising against foreign oppression, than as a civil war between the orthodox and reformist parties in the Jewish camp," p. 70. The same holds true for the *Neturei Karta* today.

authorities, of which the *Agudah* had now become at least a junior partner. Of course, this whole internal-external battle is by no means a new phenomenon in Jewish history, as Lewy points out: "The bitter factional disputes among the defenders of Jerusalem in the Jewish war against Rome . . . can be traced in part to the desire of men engaged in a holy war to institute a reign of virtue."[14] The *Neturei Karta*'s traditionalism obviously extends beyond pure formalistic religious practice.

While the contemporary Israeli controversy over religion does not approach the *Kulturkampf*[15] dimensions of its political predecessor two millennia ago, it is a significant part of the political landscape. Of the four issues of general protest, however—political, economic, social, and religious—the latter in Israel constitutes the smallest portion of such extraparliamentary activity—only 13.9 percent of all protests over the full thirty year period.[16] This fact clearly disproves the first hypothesis; i.e., in reality religious-issue protest is not relatively widespread. Israelis seem to be far more concerned with social problems (38.5 percent of all protests) and political issues (27.8 percent). Even over

14. Ibid., p. 243; see also Yonina Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium: The Relation between Religion and Social Change," *European Journal of Sociology* 3 (1962):134-35.

15. This term is the one most widely used in the Israeli religion-state literature as well as the popular press. Some analysts have gone so far as to define certain periods of public turbulence on this issue as *Kulturkampf* periods. Moshe Samet, for example, highlights 1950-52 and 1958-67 as such times due to a number of highly acrimonious public debates that occurred during these years; see Moshe Samet, *Religion and State in Israel* (n.p.:n.d.). The data of the present study does not lend much support to such a classification. During these two ostensible *Kulturkampf* periods there were .61 religious-issue protests a month on average, as compared to .95 per month during the "quieter" years. In addition, while the size of religious-issue protests was a bit higher during the 1950-52 and 1958-67 years, their intensity level actually dropped. These facts are not to suggest that the years were not marked by a higher level of public debate on religious issues; the subjective feeling is that they were. There was, however, no significant spillover into the realm of active public protest. Indeed, the data suggests that as long as such issues are kept in the public eye by the establishment (whether it be the political leadership or the media), those who care the most about religion and state (and therefore are most prone to indulge in protest activity on this issue) keep the peace. It is only when this "central" issue (for them) begins to get lost in the shuffle that they take to the streets.

16. Social issues lead the pack with 810 protest events (38.5 percent); political issues caused 585 events (27.8 percent); and economic problems caused 415 events (19.7 percent). It must be pointed out that the relatively low percentage of religious protest is not a function of any different attitude (toward protest) on the part of religious Israelis as compared to their secular counterparts. In a public opinion poll conducted in December 1981 (DAHAF—Mina Zemach Institute) of a representative sample of 1250 Israelis (excluding Arabs and *kibbutzim*), virtually no difference was found with regard to the legitimacy of protest: only 24.3 percent of "religious" Israelis did not legitimate it, compared to 23.8 percent and 23.2 percent of "traditionalists" and "secularists," respectively. Much the same holds true for actual participation in protests: 20.1 percent of the "religious" respondents acknowledged having participated at least once, 19.6 percent of the "traditionalists," and 23.2 percent of the "secularists."

economic concerns, where there are other means of expressing discontent such as economic strikes (not considered in this study), Israelis protest more (19.7 percent) than on religion. The latter, in short, is not a highly salient factor for many Israelis most of the time.

The "intensity of protest" percentages, however, strongly support the second part of the initial hypothesis. Whereas only 9.4 percent of all nonreligious issues involved violence, 38.4 percent of religious-issue protest did. In addition, the size of such religious demonstrations was somewhat larger: 54.8 percent were of medium size (a hundred to a thousand participants) compared to 45.2 percent of the nonreligious issue events, while 38.3 percent of the latter were small (less than one hundred protesters) compared to only 29.5 percent of all the religious-issue protests.

When broken down by decades, the trend merely reinforces these proportions and intensity figures. Whereas religious-issue protest constituted a substantial 17.5 percent of all protest in the 1950s—even more than the 14 percent figure for political protest—by the 1970s, this proportion had plummeted to 10.9 percent. In other words, only one of every nine protests in Israel recently has a religious issue behind it. Part of the reason for this trend stems from the NRP's attempt to broaden its appeal during the past decade by addressing itself to nonreligious issues (in 1977 an NRP official became minister of education for the first time in Israel's history) or by concentrating on those national issues that have religious elements (settling the administered territories).[17] This attempt tended to deflect the attention of NRP supporters in the 1970s from religious issues to nonreligious ones, as can be seen in Table 1. The strategy succeeded too well, however, and ultimately backfired as many supporters in 1981 turned to those nonreligious parties whose central platform position was retention of these territories. Indeed, while religious-issue protest dropped in relative terms during the 1970s, political-issue protest (concerning e.g., more settlements and opposition to peace treaties) rose dramatically from 14 percent in the 1950s to 31.4 percent in the latter decade.

Despite a drop in the violent nature of nonreligious-issue protest (from 17.6 percent in the 1950s to a mere 7 percent in the 1970s), however, its religious counterpart retained the same pro-

17. For an analysis of such issue expansion, see Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "The Politics of the Religious Parties in Israel," and Shmuel Sandler, "The National Religious Party: Towards a New Role in Israel's Political System?" in *Comparative Jewish Politics*, pp. 110-37, 158-70.

pensity towards violence (37.2 percent to 37.7 percent). Overall, then, this trend suggests, that while some groups interested in the religious issues have turned their attention to pseudoreligious (nationalist) concerns, and others have become more satisfied or at least have accepted the situation over time, the issue itself has lost none of its potential for divisiveness whenever it occurs. A socioreligious *modus vivendi* of sorts may have been achieved in Israel,[18] but it in no way has moderated the intensity of feeling that the interested parties feel on issues of religion and state.

Reaction of the Authorities

Given the corroborated fact that religious-issue protest in Israel has a greater tendency to become violent than other protest events, the authorities' reaction was expected to be firmer vis-à-vis this type of protest. Not only is there a greater threat to the public order when such events occur, but violent protest in general creates a situation over which the police have less control; officers tend to ignore regular procedures due to heightened stress and confusion.[19]

Here again, however, the results clearly indicate the reverse. The intensity of protest for each event (religious and nonreligious issues) was compared with the intensity of the authorities. Thus, for example, if the former was disruptive and the latter did not react at all, the event was scored as a mild underreaction; if the former was peaceful and the latter involved "guns fired," the event was scored as a severe overreaction. An "Index of Reaction" was devised to account for the overall degree of underreaction or overreaction in order to complement and refine the percentage totals of such events.

As can be seen from Table 2, the reaction of the Israeli authorities to all protest events is remarkably "correct." In only 14.3 percent of the cases was there an overreaction, while only 14.9 percent registered an underreaction. In other words, 70.8 percent of the time the authorities reacted as they should have.

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18. The events of summer 1981—especially with regard to the uproar over the city of David archaeological excavations (which uncovered Jewish bones, suggesting an ancient cemetery)—seem to belie this assessment; such may be the case. Israel, however, has always suffered from sporadic eruptions of this sort. The real question concerns what is happening over many years. Only a follow-up study in the mid- or late-1980s can corroborate or negate the conclusion of the essay on this point.

19. Herbert M. Kritzer, "Political Protest and Political Violence: A Nonrecursive Causal Model," *Social Forces* 55 (March 1977):630-40. Kritzer notes that "the primary determinant of violence by one side is violence by the other side" (p. 638).

TABLE 2

REACTION OF POLICE AUTHORITIES TO PROTEST: ISRAEL, 1950-1979

Period	"Correct" Reaction Intensity		% Overreaction		% Underreaction		Index of Reaction[1]	
	Religious Protest	Other Protest	Religious Protest	Other Protest	Religious Protest	Other Protest	Religious Protest	Other Protest
1950-1979 (Combined)	70.8%		14.3%		14.9%		-0.225	
1950-1979 (Differentiated)	55.4%	73.3%	15.8%	14.2%	28.7%	12.5%	- 4.9	+0.625
NRP & *Agudat Yisrael* in Opposition	85.7%	76.6%	14.2%	14.5%	0%	8.8%	+5.325	+2.025
NRP in Government, *A. Y.* in Opposition	53.8%	74.6%	18.3%	14.0%	27.9%	11.4%	-4.025	+0.95
NRP & *A. Y.* in Gov't. Coalition	55.0%	69.7%	6.7%	14.6%	38.3%	15.9%	-10.825	-0.525
Non-NRP Minister of Police	55.5%	72.8%	18.4%	14.6%	26.3%	12.8%	-2.6	+0.825
NRP Minister of Police	55.8%	75.4%	3.8%	13.0%	40.3%	11.5%	-12.0	+0.475

1. *Index of Reaction Categories:*
Protest Intensity - Peaceful (1); Disruptive (2); Violence against property (3); Violence against people (4); General riot (5).
Reaction Intensity - None (1); Noncoercive (2); Arrests (3); Violence (4); Guns fired (5).

The "Index of Reaction," which runs from -100 to +100, shows a minute -0.2 (a negative score means an underreaction, a positive score an overreaction). When broken down by issues, however, the picture changes dramatically. Nonreligious-issue protest registers a 73.3 percent "correct" reaction, whereas religious protest entails only a 55.4 percent "correct" response of the authorities. The major question remains, however: Are the remaining "incorrect" reactions a matter of overresponse or the reverse?

The proportion of overreaction to religious protest is slightly higher than its nonreligious counterpart (15.8 percent to 14.2 percent). The incidence of police underreaction to religious-issue events, however, is huge by comparison to other issue protests: 28.7 percent to 12.5 percent. The "Index of Reaction" is even clearer on this point. While nonreligious protest scores a tiny +0.6, religious-issue events have a -4.9 index. This trend is all the more remarkable when one considers the dearth of religious policemen in Israel who might have underreacted for reasons of ideological or sociological affinity with the protesters. Indeed, many religious protests occur on the Jewish Sabbath (at the hands of the *Neturei Karta*), and on this day absolutely no religious policemen are at work. Thus, it is a largely secular police force that is handling religious protesters with great care. Why has the police force reacted in such a manner?

William Gamson and Ephraim Yuchtman, in their review "Police and Society in Israel," note the strong links between the ostensibly (politically) neutral police and their civilian (political) superiors. Due to the historical development of the Jewish police force under the British Mandate, "since the inception of the Israeli police, political criteria have been central in the selection of higher officers. . . . Thus, when an issue has implications for national policy, it is natural for top police officials to assume a political orientation from the outset."[20]

While certainly a plausible explanation for the underreaction to religious protest—especially given the fact that at least one religious political party has almost always been in Israel's governing coalition—Gamson's and Yuchtman's theory was never statistically tested. Therefore, the "Index of Reaction" on religious protest was consulted in conjunction with different reli-

20. William A. Gamson and Ephraim Yuchtman, "Police and Society in Israel," in *Police and Society*, ed. David H. Bailey (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1977), pp. 203-4.

gious party constellations within the government. If, for example, the Gamson and Yuchtman thesis is correct, one would expect to find greater underreaction during those periods when the NRP or *Agudat* (or both together) were part of the governing coalition as compared to when they were in opposition. As Table 2 shows, such a political connection clearly exists.

The only time that the authorities overreacted to religious protest was when both the NRP and *Agudat Yisrael* were in the opposition. Indeed, this period's index of +5.3 was the highest of any, including overreactions to protests concerning other issues. Seemingly, the police and/or the political authorities use these rare opportunities to "get at" the religious camp without fear of political repercussions. This trend may be one indication that the NRP is correct in its long-term strategy to stay in the government no matter who the dominant partner may be. When the religious camp has no voice within the councils of state, it is especially vulnerable to the antireligious animosities latent among certain sectors of the society, including, perhaps, the police.

Still, when the two central religious parties are both in the governing coalition, the index registers a strong -10.8, far more blatant than the normal police underreaction to religious protest. Even more conclusive proof for the political control thesis, however, is the score derived from the period when the minister of police came from the NRP (Yosef Burg from July 1977 to the end of this period of study): an index of -12.0. This trend is not to suggest that the minister himself issued any specific order with regard to pampering religious protesters. Rather, underreaction is probably due to the great political sensitivity of the Israeli police. During this same period their slight overreaction to nonreligious protest (+0.5) continued unabated. The Israeli police authorities obviously know what type of reaction with regard to which specific issue is politically consequential—both for their immediate ministerial superior and for the government as a whole. As Gamson and Yuchtman correctly conclude: "Religious demonstrations . . . frequently involve the taunting of police, rock throwing, and other provocations. The potential cost to the police for mishandling such a situation is enormous. . . . The net result is that civilian authorities use the police against religious demonstrators 'with kid gloves' and they expect the police to wear the same gear."[21]

21. Ibid., p. 211.

Conclusion

The findings of this study do not support a number of conventional wisdoms. First, the Israeli political system from its pre-state origins has been one built upon party patronage. In order to succeed, or to be perceived as succeeding, each party felt that it had to fill as many civil service slots as possible with its own supporters. The religious protest data—especially with regard to the authorities' reactions—belies this simplistic conception of Israeli politics. The religious parties, without any direct control over the police (at least until mid-1977), nevertheless have succeeded admirably in their "guardianship" over those who protest on issues close to their hearts.

Second, and perhaps ironic in light of the conclusion, Israeli religious protesters have continually leveled charges of police brutality against those who must deal directly with their highly intense protests.[22] Such charges, as has been shown, are mere propaganda; if anything, it is the secular camp that could claim police discrimination in the relatively tougher treatment meted out to nonreligious issue protesters. In truth, however, the police have reacted quite correctly to most protests, with a little more leniency toward the religious camp.

Third, from the tremendous public uproar that erupts periodically over some religion and state issue, many consider this whole area of controversy *the* festering public sore on the Israeli body politic. Again, findings indicate that this conclusion is not necessarily the case. Guns and butter issues—political and socio-economic problems—are the constant factors underlying public disgruntlement in Israel. Indeed, in light of the religious establishment's pervasive control over some of the most sensitive areas of personal life (marriage, divorce, burial, religious self-identification, and the like), one finds it remarkable that there is relatively little religious-issue protest, and that what there is of it stems almost invariably from various religious sectors who want further extensions of religious control and/or legislation.[23] Given

22. See, for example, the Knesset debate between *Poalei Agudat Yisrael* MK B. Mintz and Police Minister B. Shitrit in *Divrei Ha'knesset* 14 (27 July 1953):2015-16, and also that between *Agudat Yisrael* MK M. Levine and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol in *Divrei Ha'knesset* 38 (21 September 1963):6, 33-34. See also the *Jerusalem Post* reports of *Neturei Karta* demonstrations against police brutality (10 and 13 August 1971), pp. 7, 12.

23. It is interesting to note that the Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef recently issued a religious ruling which declared the participation of *yeshiva* students in protest demonstrations and assemblies to be contrary to Jewish law because it removes them from Torah study. See "Yosef: Study, Don't Protest," *Jerusalem Post*, 19 February 1982, p. 3. It is doubtful that Yosef's ruling will have any impact on religious protest since it is

the average Israeli's penchant for protesting issues large and small, it is difficult to believe from the data that the religion and state controversy is one that overly concerns Israelis generally.

In short, Israel is still far from a *Kulturkampf* situation. Findings, however, do suggest sources for concern. The very high intensity of religious protest when such does occur, indicates that for a minority of Israelis religion *is* the salient issue in their lives. In addition, the overreaction of the authorities to such protest when the religious camp has no governmental representation suggests that a general social quiescence on the issue of religion and state is a somewhat tenuous one dependent in large part on the continued consociationalism of the secular and religious political parties.[24]

In conclusion, then, thus far the system has worked quite well, all things considered. Religious-issue protest has not been endemic, nor have the authorities' reactions been of a polarizing nature. The seeds of great discord, however, still exist. This field is one where the "Children of Israel" will have to work hard in order not to reap the harvest.

limited to *yeshiva* students; in any case, those students who do most of the protesting come from the *Neturei Karta* sect, which does not recognize the chief rabbi's authority.

24. For a discussion of political party consociationalism in Israel as it relates to the religion and state issue, see Don-Yehiya, "The Politics of the Religious Parties in Israel," pp. 134-36.