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# Transnationalism and the New Religio-politics
## Reflections on a Jewish Orthodox Case

*Jeremy Stolow*

> We are a world-wide army of Torah Jews in every part of the globe, organized
> to fight for the perpetuation of authentic Jewishness and the preservation of
> Torah authority as the centrality of Jewish life. (Rabbi Moshe Sherer, past
> President, Agudath Israel of America; Sherer, 1968: n.p.)

IT IS now commonplace to define the contemporary world-scene in terms
of rapid flows of people, information and capital, the unprecedented
porousness of borders, economies and communication systems, and the
ever-deeper penetration of transnational forces of cultural production into
communities, both face-to-face and imagined.[1] A growing sensitization to
these spaces of flow has led many observers to distrust narratives and theor-
etical models that take the nation-state as an unproblematic frame of refer-
ence for understanding the workings of power and authority, the production
of value, or the identification of majorities and minorities, hegemons and
subalterns, the included and the excluded. Such questioning has proceeded
along a number of lines, through competing (and often incommensurable)
discourses about the emerging global order, under such headings as
globalization, cosmopolitanism, neo-imperialism, McDonaldization, uneven
development, the clash of civilizations, multiple modernities, transnational
migrancy, or cultural hybridity. This article seeks neither to bring closure
to ongoing debates about the feasibility of the nation-state as a legitimate
source of collective identity and a normative condition of governance, nor
to determine which theoretical vocabulary can best replace the image of a
world of discrete nation-states. Rather, its aim is to reconsider a specific
thread of concerns that in some measure has held together the quilt-work

of images and theories of a 'post-national' world. This is the narrative strand which traverses the very career of the nation-state as a form of human community that emerged from the darkness of a traditional – and more specifically, a *religious* – world of parochial superstitions, arbitrary authority and secret knowledge, to step into the light of a post-traditional world dominated by the ideals of collective deliberation, scientific detachment and the transparent exercise of power.

Narratives about modernity's supposed transcendence of religion have been considered from various points of view, but they merit our renewed attention because of the recent, and quite dramatic, proliferation of politicized religious movements, often gathered together under the aegis of 'religious revival' or 'religious fundamentalism'. The Iranian revolution in 1979, the consolidation of the Moral Majority in the USA at the close of the 1970s, the more recent electoral successes of the Hindu nationalist BJP in India, or the spread of militant Islamist groups across the Muslim world in the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in the formation of transnational networks like al-Qaeda – these are among the more dramatic signs of a transfigured religio-politics, according to which religious sources of identity, imagination and desire are being animated among large and growing populations, and religious modes of power are expanding within, across and beyond the world system of nation-states. The ascendance of this religio-politics has shattered much of the conventional wisdom about the nation-state as the *locus classicus* of identity formation, legitimate authority or normative vision, pushing new questions about the meaning of religion and secularism on to the agenda of discussions about modernity and postmodernity, or nation-states and globalization.

Of course, the conjuncture of religion and politics has been a topic of concern for some time in scholarly circles, and a considerable literature has already thrown light on the patterns of growth and diversification of religious institutions and social movements in the global present, yielding descriptions of the sophisticated, multifaceted and often transnationally dispersed cultural, communicational and organizational infrastructures upon which religious actors draw in their dealings with the wider world.[2] Such work has challenged the sweeping generalizations one often encounters in the popular media about so-called 'fundamentalism' as a regressive, atavistic social tendency which has failed to embrace modernity, embodied in its icons of hidebound sexual conservatism, its absurd notions about providence, heresy and absolute truth, or the blind submission of devotees to punctilious scholars and rabid prophets. Instead, we have come to appreciate these movements as markedly *un*-traditional: deeply implicated within, and circumscribed by, political, social and cultural formations associated with a modernity that they only appear to oppose.

The prominence of religious actors on the contemporary world stage also compels us to revisit the very idea of secular modernity, a task which remains far from complete. Indeed, the success with which many religious movements have challenged the hegemony of political, scientific,

managerial and cultural elites, cementing new social bonds within and across national boundaries, makes it tempting to regard them as metonyms for an impending, post-national – and post-secular – future. Yet what sort of future is this? To the extent that contemporary religious movements are flourishing within *transnational* spaces, ought we to suppose that they are forging a kind of cosmopolitanism, based on new exchanges of ideas, sentiments, rituals and images? Or have we better reason to conclude that they are relevant within the global system only because they represent a ubiquitous retreat, not into the false security of national imaginaries, but worse, into belligerent and parochial enclaves of theological dogmatism? And does the difference between these two assessments depend upon a conception of the secular nation-state as the normative medium in and through which politics and culture, production and consumption, are organized and enacted?

     In this article I shall pursue these questions with reference to a specific case situated within the world of contemporary Jewish Orthodoxy. By global standards, Jewish Orthodoxy represents a marginal, and in certain respects an exceptional, example of the workings of contemporary religio-politics. But because this cultural formation is located within a transnational space, and because at the same time it has been inscribed within a larger discourse about 'religious fundamentalism' and its apparent threats to liberal civility and the order of nation-states, the case under consideration offers insight into the shifting location of religion in the current world scene. Jewish Orthodoxy today is dominated by *haredism* (the preferred term of reference for Jewish 'ultra-Orthodoxy'), a relatively recent tendency that stresses punctiliousness and stringency in the observance of Jewish law, intensive study and obedience to the authority of a narrowly defined rabbinic elite.[3] Its emergence is intimately tied to the cataclysmic shifts that have defined Jewish modernity as a whole, including political emancipation, intercontinental migration, the Holocaust and the founding of the state of Israel. These set the stage for the post-Second World War scene of Jewish culture and politics, in which *haredism* has developed into a vibrant constellation of communities, institutions, and networks of communication and finance. As a transnational religious community, *haredi* Jews have sustained complicated and seemingly contradictory relationships of competition and exchange, engagement and withdrawal, and identification and exclusion with their fellow Jews, and with the world at large. On the one hand, by defining themselves as the authentic legatees of God's covenant with the Jewish people at Sinai, and as the exclusive interpreters of legitimate practice in defiance of a morally degenerate modernity, *haredim* have eschewed all non-Orthodox forms of Judaism (and all 'moderate' tendencies within Orthodoxy itself), refusing to recognize the legitimacy of other Jewish institutions and cultural formations, both within and outside Israel. On the other hand, many *haredim* have involved themselves in a moral mission to expand the frontiers of *haredi* authority, and to draw the 'Jewish nation' further along a path toward what they define as 'repentance' or 'redemption'.

This mission has brought *haredi* activists into increasingly intimate relations with non-*haredi* (and often 'secular') state institutions and transnational communal bodies, routinizing their social activism and compromising their exclusivist stance with the demands of *Realpolitik* and 'popular appeal'. The competing tactics and goals of the *haredi* movement thus manifest a deep contradiction: one that, I shall propose, lies at the heart of much of the confusion surrounding religio-politics in the world today.

To the outsider, the world of the *haredim* is bewilderingly complex, consisting of numerous, often directly competing, cultural communities, religious authorities, interpretive traditions, educational institutions, political parties and other associations. I shall focus here on one institution which has played a decisive role in the development of *haredism* over the course of the 20th century, and which continues to enjoy significant influence throughout Jewish culture and society: Agudat Israel ('union' or 'band of Israel'). First formed in 1912 through the joint efforts of German, Polish and Lithuanian Orthodox rabbis and scholars, Agudat Israel has served as a confederation for a remarkable array of *haredi* schools and academies, lobby groups, philanthropic societies, political parties, labour unions, newspapers and publishing houses, welfare agencies and community outreach services, a youth movement and even a UN-recognized non-governmental organization.[4] In these ways, Agudat Israel has dedicated itself to the defence and cultivation of *haredi* values and practices, wherever Jews happen to live and wherever questions of legitimate Jewish practice happen to emerge. Presenting itself as the institutional enactment of a 'world-wide army of Torah Jews', strategically situated at the vanguard of a global effort to secure a place for Jewish authenticity in a fragmented and hostile modernity, Agudat Israel has defined its task as one of speaking to and for the community of God's Chosen People. On this basis, the movement has launched a variety of initiatives specific to the contexts in which Jewish communities are located, both within and outside Israel, taking advantage of transnational energies and flows at their disposal, while at the same time embedding themselves in state-centred instrumentalities and institutions of governance.

But in order to make sense of this tension between transnational religious forces and the state structures with which these forces come into contact, one must first review the categories of 'religion' and 'the secular', and the way these terms have taken shape within dominant discourses about the rise of modern nation-states. Only on this basis is it possible to overcome the conceptual barriers standing in the way of a critical understanding of movements like Agudat Israel and the religio-politics in which they are embroiled.

## Religion: Pre-national, National, Transnational

If the recent effusion of scholarship on nationalism has taught us anything, it is surely that the nation-state, as a territorial, juridical or cultural unit is the fragile product of historical struggle. This is especially evident in the

way nationalist discourses seek to re-invent the antiquity from which they claim to have emerged. Even accounts that are triumphalist and celebratory are perched somewhat precariously upon the foundations of older forms of collectivity and solidarity. Assertions of national parthenogenesis or autochthony must therefore work to repress the complex, contradictory and always-incomplete work of nation-building within the interstices of global trade, imperial adventure and colonial rule, or against the grain of local patterns of kinship and gift exchange. This is perhaps why modern national identity typically depends upon the *continual* deployment of instruments that will indigenize the heterogeneous cultural forces of a given national space, inducting constituent communities into the habits and demands of routinized state politics, or hardening their very definition through mechanisms of census enumeration, or classificatory systems of race and language.[5]

It is no great leap to suggest that the social order one finds lurking beneath such narratives of modern nation-building is a quintessentially 'religious' arena of activity: an inverted image of the nation's masculinized, propertied, rationally calculating, self-fashioning, and to those extents, *secularized*, citizenry. With admittedly great local variety, this master narrative of national modernization as secularization has offered a compelling conceptual tableau for situating 'pre-modern' activities, practices and sodalities under the banner of religion, while at the same time pointing dialectically to the current effusion of religio-politics as a sign of modernity's possible sublation.[6] And by identifying the rise of modern nation-states with the inauguration of (at least the basic conditions of possibility of) secular society, one also takes as given the existence of a fundamental breach dividing religious and 'post-religious' experiences of the world – a gap which presumably is narrowed only through atomized sentiments of melancholia, nostalgia or romantic investment among the new generations of 'survivors', for whom religion is now contained within the restricted regimes of domesticity and private confession.[7] On the other hand, wherever undeniably public religious phenomena appear to have 'outlived' the birth of the modern nation-state, and were not banished to the dreamscapes of national memory, they become most readily intelligible by establishing a line of continuity linking pre-modern 'irrationalities' with certain types of reactionary social movement, epitomized in the current conjuncture by religious charismatics and fundamentalists. In this way, customary patterns of religious authority, millenarian outbursts and stubborn folk traditions are all suggestively aligned under a single rubric of 'the archaic', a term which clarifies current religious revivals as returns of the repressed, or to make use of Jürgen Habermas's term, as signs of a 'refeudalization' of modern public spheres (1989[1962]: 195).

It is in fact a standard feature of Eurocentric and, more precisely, Enlightenment discourse to pit religion against the forces which are said to manifest modernity: universal, disenchanted principles of individual rights; standards of verisimilitude embedded in scientific practices of precise measurement and induction; or utopian images of a world governed by

symmetry and rational design. This opposition between religion and modernity is also present in the language of state sovereignty, social contract and national interest, providing a commonsense framework to explain how and why European bourgeois elites were able to 'secularize' traditional societies and secure the rise of modern nation-states: debunking mediaeval ontologies and classificatory systems; expropriating Church landholdings and mortmain wealth; suppressing village witchcraft, 'superstition' and 'savagery'; or imposing a manifold of new juridical divisions between Church and State. Even more fundamentally, the Westphalian cartography of sovereign nation-states – where each state defines itself through the domestication of its interior spaces, and its ability to withstand the external pressures of unbalanced trade, war and 'anarchy' – constitutes the ideal screen upon which images of secular nation-building can be cast, whether these be accounts of the torrid anticlericalism of Robespierre's French Republic, or any of the grand civilizing projects of the 20th-century nationalism, such as Atatürk's Turkey or Nehru's India.

The dominant narratives of nation-state formation have operated within this frame of secularization by focusing on the penetration of the modern state's instrumentalities and disciplinary powers into local spaces of everyday life, and the production of 'national civil subjects' through such institutional mechanisms as schools, factories, prisons, hospitals, transportation systems and mass media. What is too often forgotten, however, is that many of these disciplinary powers are themselves derivations of religious forms of communication and conduct, and that religion thereby provides a key condition of possibility of the nation-state. Readers of Max Weber's studies of the Protestant ethic will find this argument familiar, since Weber famously proposed that modern subjectivity is rooted in the forms of asceticism associated with Puritan ideas of inner loneliness, predestination and rational labour (Weber, 1958). One might expand this argument by suggesting that a religious interior colours the entire spectrum of discourse and practice through which modern nations imagine themselves. Nationalist myths of birth and awakening, of destiny and sacrifice, the cult worship of the 'glorious dead', or the spectre of enemies or hard times, are all parasitic upon religious narratives of creation and salvation, and theodicies of the problem of evil. By the same token, moral missions to organize the health, wealth and welfare of both citizens and colonial subjects have tended to secure their legitimacy through the mobilization of sacred vocabularies, such as in America's proclamation of its 'manifest destiny', or the British Empire's 'special burden', which has always been just as much the burden of the Christian as that of the white man (Hutchison and Lehmann, 1994; Hastings, 1997; Van der Veer and Lehmann, 1999; Smith, 2000). Even more fundamentally, it has been argued, modern conditions of sovereignty, of biopolitical power or the transcendental force of law – so central to the nation-state's self-definition – rest upon much older, mystical foundations of fate, and assumptions about the expiatory character of divine violence (Benjamin, 1978; Agamben, 1998).

However, by pointing to the religious sources of modern nationalism one at the same time risks perpetuating the problematic assumption that the word 'religion' simply refers to a pre-existing set of social relations, epistemologies and normative frameworks that somehow became 'nationalized'. One might propose instead that the very disciplinary practices which helped to form modern nationalisms and modern civil subjects also contributed to the modern idea of 'religion' as an autonomous realm of power and knowledge. This argument is clearest in cases of non-European, non-Christian traditions of interpretation and practice, including Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, which were systematically transfigured into 'religions' on the model of post-Reformation Christianity through debates and competitive struggles among European imperial bureaucrats, Christian missionaries, Orientalist scholars and various indigenous elites (see Asad, 1993: 40–8; Rudolph and Piscatori, 1997: 144–51; Van der Veer and Lehmann, 1999: 27–38). And if, for most of the world, there did not exist a native idiom for distinguishing 'religion' as a body of doctrines, beliefs and rituals radically distinct from the 'non-religious' realms of economic transaction, statecraft and law, or the mundane routines of everyday life, how in these cases is one supposed to identify processes of 'secularization' or indeed, 'religious revival'?[8]

Such questions point to the need to think about nation-state formation and religious imagination and conduct as mutually constitutive processes, situated within a larger field of complementarity and competitive struggle. On the one hand, wherever religious institutions, practices and discourses were implicated in the expansion of the modern state apparatus and the rise of nationalist sentiments – such as in the cases of 'official' or 'established' Churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, etc.) – we might find it more useful to refer, not to projects of nation-state formation, but to the consolidation of what Bryan Turner has incisively called 'nation-church-states' (1992: 112). On the other hand, there are few good reasons to suppose that the nexus of knowledge and power associated with the modern state apparatus in all cases works to *restrain* religious practices and identities, whether by suppressing their legitimacy or enlisting them for caesaropapist or 'national' causes. On the contrary, efforts to restructure religious institutions and modes of identity have often had the unintended effect of creating the conditions for religions to reach across national borders in new ways.

We would be well served by recalling here that European projects of nation-state formation and imperial expansion were coincident with a remarkable flowering of transnational religious mobilization, both at home and abroad. One could cite many cases, but suffice it to note that, far from sounding the death knell of Christianity, European modernity transformed it into a world religion of unprecedented scope, producing new public arenas in which Christians could evangelize along the outer walls of the 'feminized home', or in far-off 'primitive places', minister to the sick, the indigent and the unlettered, or remonstrate with profligates and criminals. If the 16th and

17th centuries marked the age when absolute states of Western Europe rose from the ashes of the Wars of Religion, this was also the period of extra-ordinary doctrinal and ecclesiastical renewal for the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church, as counter-Reformation crusades against ignorance and delinquency, or missions among Chinese 'heathens' and American 'savages', were orchestrated according to new administrative protocols for exerting influence 'among the masses' (Hsia, 1998). These organizational shifts in many ways set the stage for the explosion of Protestant evangelism at the end of the 18th century. Associations such as the London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, seized the opportunities provided by European imperial expansion to propagate a new vision of global space as an infinitely extensive mission field, sewn together by their sentiments of moral outrage, their interdenominational collaboration and their desire to perform good deeds for the glory of God. On this basis Protestants translated and distrib-uted Bibles and other religious pamphlets and tracts, built schools, raised funds, advocated for legal reforms and conducted numerous campaigns to end slavery, to stamp out heathen custom (such as the practice of *sati* in India) and to save souls, wherever European roads and ships could take them, in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas (see, *inter alia*, Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991; Ward, 1992; Van der Veer, 1996). These examples help illustrate that modernity is just as much the age of transnational religious mobilization as it is the age of nation-states. And as we shall see presently in the case of the European Jewish encounter with modernity, this is a story which does not pertain uniquely to Christians.

## To Become a Greek among Greeks? European Emancipation and the Transnational Jewish Public Sphere

When attempting to define modern Jewish public spaces, which first sprouted in the margins of European society, and were later transplanted to the radically different contexts of the state of Israel and the English-speaking world, one cannot so easily locate them within the oppositions of sacred and secular, national and transnational, or voluntary and ascriptive.[9] This is because modern Jewish culture and society were shaped by arrange-ments of the categories of language, territory, ideological formation and collective identity for which the dominant narratives of nation-state formation are not immediately applicable. This terminological difficulty not only has bearing on the initial terms of encounter between Jewish society and the emerging system of modern nation-states on the European stage, it also pertains to the question of how to situate the expansion of *haredism* in the 20th century.

For centuries before the rise of modern nation-states, European Jews inhabited a social space distinct from the world inhabited by their neigh-bours. The corporate character of Jewish society was defined by obligatory membership in geographically and legally constricted corporate communi-ties, known as *kehilot*, which sustained a complex web of local traditions and broad international links, especially among intellectual and economic

elites.[10] However, starting in the late 18th century, these relatively long-standing structures were thrown into disarray by a series of intrinsic and extrinsic social and cultural forces which combined to produce radically new forms of Jewish publicity. The era of so-called Jewish Emancipation,[11] inaugurated in the 1780s, is particularly instructive for identifying the terms on which European Jews entered modernity: through the evolving promises and demands associated with the reorganization of Jewish economic activities, languages, hierarchies of literacy, modes of affiliation and sources of imagined community.

A superficial acquaintance with the most important acts that triggered these transformations – Emperor Joseph II's Edict of Tolerance in Austria (1781–2), and the granting of citizenship to Jews by the National Assembly in France (1790–1) – might lead one to infer that emancipation constituted an attempt simply to enlarge the legal and social franchise in order to include Jews as members of the emerging European nation-states and, by extension, as legitimate participants in public spaces defined by liberal civility and religious tolerance. But a closer examination of the historical record reveals that these gestures toward inclusion were predicated on the *abandonment* of that particularity which marked Jews as such – namely, their ascriptive membership in culturally distinct corporate communities.[12] Thus was the prospect of granting of citizenship to Jews frequently discussed by European elites alongside competing proposals for the dismantling of these corporations, among them expulsion. Even the champions of Jewish emancipation were not particularly inclined to challenge a prevailing consensus that Jewish religiosity – whether defined as a source of individual faith or as a sign of membership in an alien 'nation in exile' – was incompatible with participation in the emerging system of modern nation-states. On the contrary, the pressing question was the extent to which Jews were actually capable of assimilation, or of assuming the duties of citizenship implied by legislative reform. In practice, therefore, emancipation consisted of an effort to 'confessionalize' Jewish social identity – that is, to produce forms of Jewish religiosity that were comparable, and indeed interchangeable, with the modes of religious participation and association that had developed in post-Reformation European Christianity. Above all, the concern was to predicate Judaism's legitimacy upon the disassembly of Jewish corporate structures, the eradication of the diverse transnational links which underpinned mediaeval Jewish society, and the 'absorption' of Jewish populations into their respective host countries. As formulated by Clermont-Tonnerre, a deputy of the French National Assembly and champion of emancipation, 'one must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation, and give everything to the Jews as individuals' (quoted in Walzer, 1997: 39).

Although emancipation appears to have taken the form of a political project aimed at the dispersal of forms of collective membership deemed too menacing, or simply too ambiguous, for the categories of citizenship in the context of European nation-states, it did not follow that Jews themselves

were no longer expected to act collectively. In fact, in its initial stages the Jewish experience of Emancipation was mediated through new communal institutions created by modern European states, which were assigned the task of shepherding Jews through the portals of liberal modernity, such as in the case of the *Consistoire* established under Napoleon, to which all French Jews had to belong. But this restructuring of communal institutions also engendered new possibilities for redefining Jewish affinity and associ-ation, such as were materialized in the diverse initiatives undertaken by emerging cadres of *maskilim* ('enlightened' Jews) to foster new forms of practice, and to consolidate new bases of social authority within Jewish communities that could not be contained within the social logic of the traditional *kehila*.

The *haskalah* ('Jewish Enlightenment') is often considered to be the first coherent attempt on the part of Jewish elites to promote forms of Jewish religiosity in conformity with the confessional structures and liberal sensi-bilities of modern European nation-states. This effort involved revisions to Jewish education and liturgical practice – out of which the Reform movement was born (see e.g. Meyer, 1988) – and amendments to Talmudic scholarship and legal reasoning based on approaches to the Bible common to the discourses of Orientalist historiography, philology and 'higher criti-cism'. Of course, these modernizing projects met with varying degrees of success within discrete regional and nation-state contexts, and they were further refracted by differences of gender, generation, class and level of education, the details of which cannot be accorded in this article the atten-tion they deserve. Suffice it to note that the goal of producing modern, liberal forms of Jewish identity was constrained not only by internal struggles for legitimacy, but also by the limited prospects of emancipation itself. Even where *formal* enfranchisement had been achieved, its promises were signifi-cantly undermined by the failure of most 19th-century Jews to become full citizens of their host nations. Not just religious belief and language, but also place of residence, education, market behaviour and other quotidian prac-tices continued to mark the enormous and often unbridgeable *social* distance between Jews and non-Jews. This was certainly apparent at the close of the 19th century, by which time Jews had come to be viewed through the lens of 'scientific' discourses about irreconcilable racial difference, and through mass-mediated spectacles of anti-semitism, epitomized by the Dreyfus trial in France. In sum, the diminishing viability of efforts to accul-turate Jews into the European nation-state system makes it difficult to suppose that liberal ideologies such as the *haskalah* or the Reform movement constituted *the* basic, centripetal forces leading European Jews from a state of mediaeval communalism to one of modernity.[13]

Turning to the context of eastern Europe, which until the Second World War harboured the majority of world Jewry, it appears even less tenable to characterize Jewish modernization in terms of a progressive process of acculturation to the environment of discrete nation-states. Unlike Western Europe, there was little congruence between nationality (in the sense of

membership in a specific ethno-linguistic group or shared culture or religious identity) and citizenship (in the sense of status conferring political rights in a state). Instead, throughout the 19th century, and with even greater intensity in the post-First World War scene, after the collapse of the Austrian, Russian and Ottoman empires, a variety of 'petty nationalist' movements – Polish, Slovenian, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, etc. – engaged in ongoing competition for territory and control over administrative bureaucracies (see e.g. Hroch, 1985; Hobsbawm, 1990). These struggles betrayed the impossibility of applying the Wilsonian logic of a European continent neatly subdivided into coherent states inhabited by ethnically and linguistically homogeneous populations, and in the worst cases they culminated in programmes of population exchange, mass expulsion or genocidal war. If this climate posed considerable threats to east European Jews, it also heightened their sense of need to assert their collective self-definition through a specifically *dissimilationist* vocabulary, enabling large numbers to move more or less directly from traditional arrangements to new, internationally situated political movements such as Bundism and Zionism (Baron, 1976; Frankel, 1981; Peled, 1989). These heightening tensions also fuelled Jewish emigration from eastern Europe to the West – especially to the United States, which eventually displaced Russia as the leading population centre of world Jewry – and ultimately helped set the stage for the two most dramatic events for Jews in the 20th century: the horror of the Nazi Holocaust and the founding of the Israeli state.

Interactions between Jewish collectivities and modern nation-states have been subject to considerable discussion and debate among Jewish historians and political observers. But for the purposes of this discussion, it is sufficient to conclude that the re-alignment of Jewish populations over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries never fully succeeded in bringing Jews into conformity with the lineaments of the sort of imagined community postulated by modern nation-states. On the contrary, the dissolution of mediaeval Jewish corporations cleared the way for a variety of new visions of collective life and new sources for political activism among the 'uprooted'. One of the most significant movements to emerge within this transnational geography, it is well known, was that of secular Zionism, which sought to 'return' Jewish populations to the land of Israel, embarking upon a colonial project that culminated in the founding of the modern Israeli state. But it is striking that this indigenizing project has failed to capture the majority of the world's Jewish population. Even today, most Jews continue to live outside Israel, despite the latter's designation as a viable Jewish homeland in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The centripetal pull of Jewish migration to Israel is counterbalanced by the continued attraction of other destinations, such as the United States or Canada. And with the accelerating ease of geographical mobility in the post-Second World War period, abetted by new technologies of electronic communication and air travel, and the loosening of the legal frameworks governing Jewish migration, it has become

even harder to locate Israel as the nucleus of collective Jewish life. Indeed, Israel's centrality is attenuated by the growing awareness among both diaspora and Israeli Jews that migration does not have to be an irreversible step, and that the act of 'returning home' can be repeated, even on a daily basis through the medium of computers and telephones. These conditions also help to explain a new confidence in the prospects of Jewish 'survival' in the diaspora, as reflected, for instance, in the declining enthusiasm among North American Jews for Israeli fundraising, in the proliferation of diaspora-based cultural and educational institutions, or in challenges to the prerogatives of Israeli elites to set the agenda for Jewish communal affairs in the diaspora (see Gal, 1996; Troen, 1999; Elazar and Weinfeld, 2000; Gal and Gottschalk, 2000; Moore and Troen, 2001).

These observations suggest that it is only by taking into account the larger, transnational social space encompassing both Israel and the Jewish diaspora, that one can make sense of the proliferation of movements laying claim to Jewish collectivity as a whole. One such movement, demographically much smaller than Zionism, but ideologically no less portentous for the shape of Jewish identity politics in the contemporary scene, has been concerned to *restore* the traditional Jewish corporation, by trying to re-stitch its structures of rabbinocentric authority into the fabric of the modern Jewish imaginary.

## Agudat Israel

The radical changes in Jewish communal existence over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries did indeed provoke a series of legitimation crises for the traditional European rabbinic elites, who had been vested with the authority of the *kehila* structure. Out of these crises emerged what came to be known as Jewish Orthodoxy, organized around the conscious effort to promote 'tradition' against the alternatives suggested by the lifestyles and ideologies of other Jews in the post-Emancipation period. Over the course of its relatively short life, this movement has been factionalized by the interaction of competing regional identities, schools of thought and rabbinic personalities. Nevertheless, the field of Orthodoxy has been increasingly dominated by the centripetal force of *haredism*, a specifically post-Emancipation ideology structured around the refusal of all manner of participation in the consensus proposed by acculturationist or secular-nationalist tendencies in Jewish society. *Haredi* rabbinic elites thus emerged as a dynamic force in response to the dissolving *kehila* structure, availing themselves of new opportunities for organization, mobilization and the exercise of authority. These opportunities were evident in a variety of programmes undertaken by *haredi* elites and movement activists: the founding of autonomous communal associations and consistorial bodies; the reconstitution of the Jewish canon through the redaction of religious texts; the promotion of 'unchallengeable' *ex cathedra* pronouncements within the realm of *halakhic* (Jewish-legal) decision-making; or the intensive involvement of *haredi* activists in popular media, welfare provision and electoral politics.

Nowhere is this convergence of strategies more clearly reflected than in the formation of Agudat Israel: the first truly international organization claiming to speak on behalf of all Orthodox Jews in promoting the authority of *halakhah* (Jewish law) in the regulation of both personal conduct and public life.[14] The founding conference of this movement, held in 1912 at Kattowitz (near Cracow, Poland), concluded with a declaration that Agudat Israel would 'take an active part in all matters relating to Jews and Judaism on the basis of Torah, without any political considerations' (Friedenson, 1970: 14). Under this rubric, hundreds of *haredi* delegates from across Europe flocked to the first *Knessia Gedolah* ('Great Assembly') in Vienna in 1923, and to the second in 1929. Overcoming their often irreconcilable differences in the actual practice of *halakhic* adjudication or in the interpretation of canonical texts, these rabbinic elites gave impetus to an international movement, as evidenced in the formation of local *Agudah* chapters and parties, especially in Poland and Germany, and in the founding of religious schools and *yeshivot* (Talmudic academies), a women's movement (Neshei Agudat Israel), a youth movement (Ze'irei Agudat Israel) and a labour movement (Po'alei Agudat Israel), as well as orphanages, old-age homes and clinics catering to local Orthodox constituencies (see Friedenson, 1970: 16–25; Bacon, 1996).

Organized around the principle of institutional autonomy vis-a-vis other Jewish groups, Agudat Israel worked within a deterritorialized frame of reference that was not bound to any one nation-state. This transnationalism can be illustrated by considering the shifting political orientations and foci of social mobilization of the *Agudah* over the course of its career. In the pre-Second World War situation, when Agudat Israel catered principally to the interests of European Orthodox Jewish communities, it defended its role with reference to a conception of collective Jewish existence based on cosmological explanations of the state of Jewish exile in the world, as had been elaborated in centuries of canonical writings. Among other things, the vocabulary of exile formed the basis for explicit opposition to the project of Zionism and to the prospect of a secular Jewish state in Palestine. *Haredi* elites tended to regard this as an illegitimate attempt to 'hasten the end of time' by organizing a mass return of Jews to the land of Israel without the prior signs of divine approval. Through such a posture, Agudat Israel's principal goal appears to have been to legitimate the arrangements of authority and privilege of the Orthodox Jewish consistorial bodies, thereby curtailing the spread of *goyish* (non-Jewish) influences among constituencies of 'faithful' Jews, including the enticement to emigrate to Israel, or to America, the consummate *treife medina* ('unholy land').

But in the post-Second World War situation, Agudat Israel, like all Jewish organizations, had to countenance the extent of destruction of European Jewish society, the reconfigured geography of a Jewish diaspora now inclined toward the English-speaking world, and the new reality of a secular state organized ideologically and institutionally as a 'Jewish homeland', and proclaimed as a reversal of the centuries-old condition of

exile. Ironically, while the Holocaust precipitated the annihilation of the majority of European Jewry, it also injected new vigour into various strands of the *haredi* movement, including Agudat Israel. Once transplanted to foreign soil, the uprooted survivors of the European disaster not only managed to rebuild demographically and institutionally, but were able to flourish in new ways. In particular, new host societies such as the United States and Canada offered *haredi* elites the benefits of social mobility and a deregulated religious marketplace, allowing for the accumulation of new forms of economic, political and cultural capital. Under these conditions, migration actually enhanced the capacity of rabbinic authorities to form new voluntary organizational structures, to which affiliation and degree of commitment would be determined by individuals, and for which distinct rules and directives could be formulated that would be binding upon those committed members alone. No longer encumbered by the exigencies of competition for authority with 'moderate' elements of the mandatory consistorial bodies to which all Jews had belonged in pre-Emancipation Europe, the post-war generation of *haredi* elites were able to reposition themselves as an institutionally autonomous religious vanguard, claiming to represent the exclusive, uncorrupted and authentic version of Jewish identity and practice (see Friedman, 1986: 77, 1987: 250; Heilman and Friedman, 1991: 206–11; Silberstein, 1993: 206–13).

This autonomous vanguard – captured here in the image of a 'worldwide army of Torah Jews' – was concretized both institutionally and imaginatively in a variety of ways: most strikingly in the measures adopted at the meeting of Agudat Israel's Central World Council at Marienbad (Czechoslovakia) in 1947, which led to the simultaneous creation of administrative centres for the movement in Jerusalem, New York and London. Among other things, this organizational restructuring permitted the *Agudah* to pursue distinct agendas in Israel and the diaspora respectively. In the former case, the pre-war posture of anti-Zionism was converted into a tactical accession to the legitimacy of the modern Israeli state, in order to exercise influence over its key cultural and political institutions, as we might infer from an examination of Agudat Israel's more or less continuous involvement in electoral politics since 1948.[15] Indeed, by entering into the domain of party politics, Agudat Israel has been able to struggle quite effectively for various *haredi* causes, including greater observance of *halakhah* in Israeli public life (e.g. Sabbath and *kashrut* [Kosher] observance), government subsidy of *haredi* education and housing, stipends for *yeshiva* (Talmudic academy) students, or the protection of their constitutional exemption from military service. Beyond this arena, Agudat Israel has also been vigorously involved in the everyday lives of Israelis through intermediary public institutions, including an independent religious primary school system (*Chinuch Atzma'i*), and varied social welfare programmes and cooperative commercial ventures catering to local *haredi* communities and their clients, although it must be acknowledged that in recent years, the *Agudah*'s influence has been significantly attenuated by the pressure of

competition with other *haredi* organizations and political parties. But when these projects are viewed as an ensemble, they confirm the indelible presence of Agudat Israel, and indeed most *haredi* organizations, in the Israeli public sphere, as well as their routinized participation at every level of the state's activities: from prosaic deliberations about municipal zoning or public transportation, to more dramatic debates about what would constitute a legitimate role for the *haredi* community in national service during times of military and humanitarian crisis (see Stadler and Ben-Ari, 2003).

Although demographically, institutionally and imaginatively the state of Israel has functioned as the gravitational centre of the *haredi* world throughout the post-Second World War period, the Jewish diaspora has also been the site of a dynamic evolution in *haredi* cultural politics, not least as reflected in the career of the *Agudah* in the English-speaking world. The case of *Agudath Israel of America* is particularly instructive in this regard. Since its foundation in New York in 1939 (after a failed attempt in 1922),[16] the American chapter has enjoyed influence as an institutional force on the North American continent, by lobbying the US government for federal aid for parochial (i.e. faith-based) education; by supporting schools and bodies for the ordination of rabbis outside the orbit of liberal Jewish confederations; by undertaking various philanthropic and social-welfare initiatives, such as *kiruv* ('outreach') campaigns among unaffiliated Jews; or by publishing monthly periodicals both in Yiddish (*Dos Yidishe Vort*, since 1952) and English (*The Jewish Observer*, since 1963), as well as sponsoring joint publications with publishing houses – loosely, if not directly, affiliated with Agudat Israel – such as *ArtScroll-Mesorah Publications*.

These diverse projects and engagements within and beyond Israel provide evidence of Agudat Israel's inherently transnational frame of reference. This *haredi* world is in fact constituted as a deterritorialized social imaginary, spatially concentrated in metropolitan urban neighbourhoods – in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, New York, Philadelphia, London, Toronto, Moscow, Antwerp, Melbourne, Johannesburg, Buenos Aires and elsewhere – linked by steady flows people and texts, and sustained through adventures in the broader realms of international commerce that make up a bustling *haredi* economy of scribes, kosher licensors, book publishers, diamond merchants and real estate developers like the Toronto-based Reichmann family, best known in relation to London's Canary Wharf project.[17] By taking advantage of the eddies and flows that define this transnational space, *haredi* elites and movement activists are able to intervene in local affairs and link them up with broader, translocal concerns, such as by fundraising in the Jewish diaspora to build schools or support political causes in Israel, or by orchestrating the deployment of teachers and students, prospective spouses, or *ba'alei teshuva* ('converts' to Orthodoxy) across the *haredi* world.

Agudat Israel's deterritorialized imaginary is not simply a product of the transnational dispersion of local *haredi* communities and the cross-border movement of people, money and information. Their specific vision of Jewish peoplehood as a whole is likewise located within a translocal

spatial framework. To understand this, one must first recall that Agudat Israel has always been proclaimed by its proponents as an organizational mechanism for effecting a restoration of the structures of authority of the traditional *kehila* (Mittelman, 1996). Despite its embrace of advanced administrative and communicational protocols, the movement represents itself as an exclusive source of legitimate authority of the Jewish people in its entirety, and a direct legatee of God's covenant at Sinai, faithfully administered in the present by the *Agudah*'s supreme governing body, the *Moetzet Gedolei ha-Torah* ('Council of Torah Sages'). A closer inspection reveals that this claim depends upon a reference to not one, but *two* distinct imagined communities, and two distinct categories of Jews, ordered hierarchically within what may be described as a rabbinocentric mode of production of legitimate public order. In the narrower sense, the *Agudah* speaks on behalf of the diverse local communities of *haredi* Jews who constellate around the great living Torah sages of the present. Within this framework, currently existing *haredi* communities are figured as the *she'erit yisrael* ('the remnants of Israel'), the sole progeny of the original Chosen People who in their everyday lives adhere without compromise to the Jews' covenant with God. Yet at the same time, this community of virtuosi is located within a second and more expansive category that includes *any and all* Jews who have 'not yet' submitted to the *haredi* way of life – and especially the marginal or non-affiliated, who comprise the large majority of contemporary world Jewry, and who are registered in this discourse as the nation's *tinookot shenishbu* ('children raised in [gentile] captivity').

Through this two-tiered definition of Jewish national existence, Agudat Israel has transformed an ancient conception of Jewish peoplehood into a specifically modern discourse about collective identity and public legitimation. The 'Jewish People', it is worth recalling, has always been a polyvalent term, referring at once to genealogical origins, cultural practices, modalities of faith, and notions of political indigeneity and legitimate entitlement to the ancient land of Israel. If being Jewish has never been identified by a single set of beliefs or practices, neither has it ever been located unambiguously within the opposition between a racially ascribed social identity and an affective association of individuals. But for Agudat Israel, the indices of genealogy, faith and territoriality have combined in a discourse about the nature of Jewish existence specifically amenable to the new political and social structures in which Jews found themselves: first in the post-emancipation European world, and then later in the new diasporas created by intercontinental migration, and on the Israeli national stage.

Secular-Zionist ideology and popular memory circumscribe Jewish peoplehood within a specific variant of the myth of exile and return; they posit an original state of autochthony, an illegitimate and villainous period of banishment and disempowerment, and a heroic return and reclamation of the land of Israel, culminating in the founding of the modern state (see e.g. Zerubavel, 1995). For the elites of Agudat Israel, by contrast, Jewish peoplehood can only be clarified by setting the ideas of exile and return

within the framework of promises, rewards, transgressions and punishments that were revealed in God's covenant. Exile is thus divinely prescribed and homecoming is incalculably deferred until the mysterious arrival of the messiah. Among other things, this cosmology assigns Jewish collective existence to a deterritorialized space, made visible through the classificatory order of succeeding generations of rabbinical elites, the distribution of their local places of study, and the communities of faithful Jews who gather around these sages. Within this scheme the land of Israel is still described by *haredim* as the 'Jewish homeland'. But it is more precisely identified as the Holy Land, reserved for God's Chosen People only within the terms of the covenantal framework.[18] The founding of Israel by Zionist elites therefore did *not* reverse the condition of exile imposed upon the Jewish people by the hand of God, and the Jewish people as a whole continue to live under the sign of exile, *even in* the context of the contemporary Israeli nation-state.

In this way, by positing the priority of divine possession with respect to the land, *haredi* discourse works to decentre secular-Zionist myths of autochthony and territorial entitlement, and to relocate the gravitational centre of legitimate collective Jewish identity to the portable text of Torah, and to the myriad local places where the covenant with God has been preserved in anticipation of a future messianic age. Local places outside the Holy Land are thereby accorded significance within the *haredi* imaginary, not simply because they identify the Jewish people in their state of exile, but also because they are the sites of continued faith in the covenant, or of great achievements in Torah scholarship. This helps paint a picture of the world as a quiltwork of potential sites for the performance of virtuous acts and proclamations of allegiance to a rabbinocentric – and more specifically, *haredi* – Jewish imaginary. Rabbi Nisson Wolpin, one of the leading ideologues of the American branch of Agudat Israel, invokes this image of a sacred world order through the following cartographic anecdote:

> An American Jew visiting the Chofetz Chaim [a key founding figure of *haredism*] complained that he had trouble finding his way to Radin – it wasn't even on the map. The Chofetz Chaim replied: 'You consulted the wrong map. On your map, Warsaw, Paris and Moscow – all three national capitals – are marked by stars. Regional capitals, like Kovno, Posen, and Vilna, are marked by concentric circles; and smaller towns, by dots. In the *Shomayim* ['heavens'] there is a different map, based on the *Mishna* in *Megilla*: To be considered a city, a community must have *asara batlanim* – ten men exclusively engaged in Torah study. With less than ten, it is not a city but a village. On the *Shomayim*'s map, Paris, Moscow and Rome are non-existent. Frankfurt has its dot, as does Nickolsberg. But Warsaw, Vilna, Mir – and yes, Radin – these have stars, for each is a Torah capital.' (Wolpin, 1979: 19)

## Towards a New Geography of Religious Movements and Nation-states

It is tempting to take the Chofetz Chaim's heavenly map – superimposed upon, yet fundamentally incompatible with, the world map of modern nation-states – as a model for representing the transnational flows of religious imagination in the world today. However, in so doing one also risks giving credence to a specious division between, on the one hand, projects, visions and sources of affinity that are 'religious' in nature, and on the other hand, the range of 'properly political' activities and concerns that fall within the remit of territorial nation-states. As I have argued in this article, the assumption that religion somehow stands outside the complex of institutions, procedures, calculations and techniques of administration that constitute modern state sovereignty, modern political subjectivity and the imagined communities of modern nationalism has greatly distorted the picture of global religious restructuring. Among other things, it has encouraged an understanding of contemporary religious movements as signs of a new, world-wide upsurge of 'anti-modernism', chipping away at the institutions of legitimate public authority found within modern nation-states. At their worst, such representations resemble what Arjun Appadurai (1996: 141) has described as 'germ theories' of social strife, according to which illiberal, implacable or even violence-prone populations – marked, in this case, by their religious commitments – are made visible as an invading force, sapping the life-blood of their national hosts. Such an approach does not provide a basis for rigorous interrogation into the actual relations of competition and exchange between transnational religions and modern nation-states.

What, then, are the conceptual manoeuvres one must undertake in order to construct a clear picture of the social space occupied by religious movements such as Agudat Israel? The first step is likely to consist of expanding the analysis of 'politics' beyond a narrow study of the spatially contiguous territories and serially bounded identities of nation-states. For if one wishes to gain insight into the sources of contemporary religio-political projects, it is crucially important to acknowledge the degree to which modern nation-states are embedded within a much deeper and complexly interrelated set of social, technological, economic and imaginary flows that define the current world scene. These flows are constituted, among other things, by the electronic circuitry of integrated networks and sustained by the interests and efforts of hypermobile managerial elites (Castells, 1996). But they are also responsible for the current proliferation of overlapping allegiances and political projects that cannot be contained within the geographical constraints of territorial nation-states, including projects which have come to be recognized as 'religio-political'.

A more global perspective would certainly help bring into view the variety of religious movements that now stretch across the world map, penetrating national boundaries and challenging the state institutions which seek

to contain them. In this respect, despite some of the peculiar features of the case considered in this article – the horizon encompassing Agudat Israel, its mobile affinity networks and the opportunities for *haredi* activism in local contexts, especially Israel and the USA – it would be profitable to locate it within a larger, comparative context for the study of transnational religio-politics. We could compare Agudat Israel's position within the transnational Jewish public sphere with the expanding communication systems of other religio-political regimes, such as in the case of the satellite TV networks that have enabled Non-Resident Indians in the West to participate in decisive ways in the circulation of Hindu themes and symbols central to the rise of *hindutva* politics in India (Rajagopal, 2001: 239–70). Similar border-crossing visions can be found in the Islamic discourse of the *umma*, the imagined world community of Muslims, which among other things has provided a normative frame of reference for critiquing 'corrupt' states that are only nominally Islamic, and which has fuelled the *da'wa* ('missionary') work of movements like the *Tablighi Jama'at*, whose activists traverse the globe promoting personal spiritual purity and collective harmony (Masud, 2000; Mandaville, 2001). A transnationally diffused micropolitics of personal conduct is also strikingly present in the Christian Pentecostalist movement, which focuses on individual experiences of deliverance and healing, and the miraculous gifts of spirit, and which has forged an international, polycentric network encompassing such disparate groups as slum-dwellers in Rio de Janeiro, business elites in Singapore, rural workers in China, or urban artisans in Nigeria and Zimbabwe (Lehmann, 1996; Martin, 2001).

In these and other cases, it is noticeable how advanced technologies of transnational communication and geographical mobility are intimately linked with the enhanced ability of religious movements to overturn – or at least try to redefine – the rules of procedural impersonality of modern state governance, the calculus of capitalist exploitation and exchange, or the techniques for obtaining pleasure that many associate with the promise of modernity itself. In this understanding, transnationality provides the key to deciphering the range of disputes that constitute contemporary religio-politics, from local conflicts over bodily practices, property rights and personal conduct, to larger debates about the sources of legitimate authority, and of law, justice and goodness in the world today. By drawing attention to the transnational dimension of religio-political conflicts, one emphasizes the fact that not all social movements equate an involvement in the institutions of state governance with a commitment to their continued existence.

Of course, this stress on the transnational aspects of religio-politics reflects what can safely be described as the reigning consensus among scholars concerned with social, political and cultural dimensions of globalization. Indeed, any survey of recent academic literature is likely to be dominated by references to the transnational processes and institutions and diasporic affiliations that are said to define our current global moment.

Much of this work can be understood as part of a larger project to dismantle state-centric discourses of identity, and the sedentarist metaphysics upon which they depend, such as by deconstructing the categories of inside/outside, majority/minority or native/immigrant, or directly challenging the prerogatives of nation-states to exercise a territorial monopoly over processes of cultural production (see e.g. Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Basch et al., 1994; Clifford, 1994; Appadurai, 1996; Ong, 1999; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002). This orientation to the study of public culture and socio-political life has gained much of its impetus from the abundant evidence suggesting that collective identities are increasingly being worked out within non-state-centred social arenas. These range from deterritorialized, virtual communities created through advanced electronic communication technologies to the very local dynamics of neighbourhood life in urban metropolises, which now routinely bypass the nation-state couplet and enter directly into the network of a planetary, post-Fordist regime of capitalist accumulation (Harvey, 1989; Castells, 1996; Sassen, 1998).

Nevertheless, despite the aura of incontrovertibility in which such observations are often enveloped, it is hardly evident that the proliferation of non-state actors and transnational forces is commensurate with an irreversible shift in the location of 'the political' itself. In the first instance, as many have argued, there is no reason to suppose that social conditions of migrancy, travel, electronic virtuality or cultural hybridity are inherently liberating or 'counterhegemonic', or that they transcend the problems of political domination or scarcity associated with an 'older' geography of nation-states (see e.g. Cheah and Robbins, 1998: 290–328). The mere fact of our reliance upon the word 'trans-*national*' indicates the extent to which our current discourse remains encased within the linguistic imaginary of the territorial nation-state (Appadurai, 1996: 166). This impasse is captured in Benedict Anderson's astute observation that many celebratory representations of transnational diaspora communities secretly rely upon the imperial state machineries of census enumeration, since it is only on their terms that one is able to aggregate the populations of these 'phantom communities', dispersed across the planet's surface (in Cheah and Robbins, 1998: 131; see also Anderson, 1994). And the census represents only one among various technologies of state instrumentality whose presence continues to be felt in an allegedly 'post-national' world.

We would be well served by concluding that the nation-state is not simply a spatial container enclosing populations within its borders. It is also the external product of social and political projects to act upon individuals and populations, incarnated through managerial procedures, techniques of measurement, and tactics for the calculated organization of human forces and capacities. These procedures and techniques of governmentality are markedly transferable from one agent to another, and it is on the basis of this communicability that we might advance our understanding of the way transnational religious movements become trapped by the very logic they appear to oppose. Indeed, however much movements like Agudat Israel

decry the legitimacy of the national imaginaries and state institutions with which they come into contact, it is also striking how their 'merely tactical' involvements draw them ever-deeper into the social logic of modern, state-centric governmentality, and its panoply of mechanisms for securing territory, producing subjects and ruling over populations. This is clearest in the examples of *haredi* involvement in politics in the narrow sense of parties, pressure groups and voting blocs. But it is in fact present in the full range of techniques upon which *haredi* activists depend to distribute social goods such as education, housing, health care, child care or family counselling, or to marshal human forces and capacities according to advanced methods of recruitment and promotion, and strategies for maximizing success and governing risk that mimic the work of the modern state apparatus.

It seems that we have yet to escape entanglement in the paradox of a globalization that on the one hand reaches across the frontiers of nation-states, creating and thickening new boundaries defined by sacred visions, but on the other hand subjects populations that supposedly have been freed from the prison of secular national imaginaries to forms of governance modelled on the instrumental logic of the state. One approach to this paradox would be to suggest that the current effusion of transnational religious movements is based upon relatively ephemeral networks of advocacy and exchange, which in the long run can only be sustained within the context of the state apparatus and its mechanisms for securing legitimate authority. In this understanding, Agudat Israel's cynical approach to state politics would constitute a 'performative contradiction' (Habermas, 1990), according to which *haredi* claims to truth and rightness, and their terms for coordinating plans of action, rest upon unacknowledged relations of debt to those very state-centric forms of governmentality which have propelled them to the forefront of the modern Jewish imaginary. However, we should also bear in mind that not all *haredi* intellectuals are innocent of their complicity in the social structures and discourses which they claim belong to *others*. One of the founding figures of the modern *haredi* movement, the *Chazon Ish*, once argued, with reference to the Biblical passage Gen. 32:25 ('and he wrestled with him . . .') that *embracing the other* is not equal to *recognizing the other's legitimacy*: 'for this is the manner of two who struggle to overthrow one another, that one clasps [the other] and knots him with his arms' (Finkelman, 1989: 240).

Can we take this argument seriously? Is it possible for *haredi* activists to avoid entrapment in the instrumentalities of state power? Are there any grounds for supposing that transnational religious movements like Agudat Israel will succeed in carving out and sustaining 'post-national' spaces of identity? Or are such religio-political projects fated, either to collapse under the accumulated weight of their own inertia, or to succumb to the very social logic of state power they seek to enlist 'for their own purposes'? These are, of course, speculative questions concerning the course of the future, and therefore we would be best served by preparing ourselves for various, even surprising, answers.

*Notes*

1. Among the many persons who helped shape my thinking for this article, I especially wish to thank Michael Brown, Danielle Filion, Barbara Godard, Victoria Heftler, David Lehmann, Ato Sekyi-Otu, Dennis Soron, Nurit Stadler and Bryan Turner. My thanks also to Mohammed Bamyeh, Mike Featherstone, and especially to the anonymous reviewers, who read an earlier draft and offered invaluable criticisms. This article was written with the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

2. See, *inter alia*, Brink and Mencher (1997), Hadden and Shupe (1989), Kepel (1994), Lawrence (1989), Marty and Appleby (1991–5), Riesebrodt (1993), Rudolph and Piscatori (1997). For symptomatic examples of the recent moral panic about the spectre of 'religious fundamentalism', see Barber (1995), Huntington (1996) and Kaplan (2000).

3. The term *haredism* derives from the Hebrew *haredim*, literally 'those who tremble': a scriptural reference to the righteous ones who fear the word of God (as in Isaiah 66.5). Vexing problems of historical periodization and provenance, ideological ambiguity and cultural specificity have plagued scholars in their efforts to produce a consistent definition of *haredism*, or clear criteria for membership to the category of the *haredim* (although there is general agreement that the *haredim* comprise a minority of religiously affiliated Jews, who in turn are a minority of contemporary world Jewry – perhaps not more than a half million people). Given these definitional ambiguities, the use of the terms *haredism*, *haredi* and the *haredim* in this article is figurative, referring to a loosely articulated cultural formation. For key studies, see Berman (2000), El-Or (1994), Friedman (1986, 1987), Heilman and Friedman (1991), Jaffe (1993), Katz (1986), Shilhav (1984, 1989), Silber (1992), Silberstein (1993), Soloveitchik (1994), Stadler (2002).

4. On the rise of Agudat Israel in Europe, see Bacon (1996) and Mittelman (1996). For an insider's account of the movement, see Friedenson (1970). Countless articles about the career of Agudat Israel can also be found in its official English-language periodical, *The Jewish Observer*.

5. Among the now innumerable accounts of modern nationalism, it has become impossible to ignore Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991), to which this discussion is also indebted.

6. The claim that modernization brings with it the decline of religion constitutes one of the most pervasive biases in the social sciences since the 19th century. It would be a lengthy and tedious exercise to enumerate the social and historical studies which begin with some version of this 'secularization thesis'. Although a more recent generation of scholarship has challenged key assumptions about secularization (e.g. Casanova, 1994), it still provides a typical point of departure for most accounts of 'post-traditional' society. For a useful summary of the major lines of debate surrounding the idea of secularization, see Hamilton (2001: 185–214).

7. Although it has been commonplace to situate secular nation-state formation along the axis of an increasing privatization of religious sensibilities and modes of affiliation – that is to say, a shifting centre of gravity of religious discourses and practices to the arenas of domesticity, family and interpersonal relations – it is striking that the prior distinction between public and private spheres is itself rarely accorded explicit discussion. How precisely, we might want to know, is the apparent retreat of religion figured within a symbolic order that demarcates a secular public

sphere from the non-public – and often specifically feminized – domains of the domestic, the familial, the voluntary, the personal and so on? And what sustains this demarcation?

8.  It is not my argument that non-Christians traditionally had no way to distinguish between 'religion' and 'politics'. In the case of mediaeval Islam, for instance, there was a variety of historical relationships between temporal dynasties and the *ulama* (the traditional Islamic 'clerisy'), ranging from symbiotic alliances to open conflicts. The mere existence of two separate lexemes in Islamic discourse – *din* and *dawla* – suggests that Muslims have always been able to distinguish between affairs of 'religion' and those of 'the state' (Mandaville, 2001: 59). Nevertheless, the normative underpinnings for the legitimate exercise of authority within mediaeval Islamic societies – or, for that matter, many other parts of the non-Christian world – were strikingly different from those of post-Reformation European Christianity, which was unique in having drawn a radical distinction between the realm of the sacred and the temporal world governed by autonomous laws of natural mechanics, rational labour and the sovereign power of the state.

9.  The ensuing discussion assumes an *ashkenazicentric* (i.e. a central and eastern European) perspective with regard to modern Jewish culture and history, and thus does not offer much insight into the modernization of *sephardi* (Mediterranean) and *mizrahi* (Middle Eastern and Asian) Jewish communities (for a useful summary of the modernization of Jewish identity in the Arab world, see Wettstein, 2002: 150–63). My approach might be legitimated by arguing that the key forces which have made *haredism* (the ultimate focus of this discussion) ideologically and institutionally effective are of distinctly *ashkenazic* provenance, and thus demand sustained attention in their own right (as argued by Friedman, 1987: 252, n. 12).

10. For a comprehensive account of social life in European *kehilot*, see Katz (1993[1957]).

11. This term must be used with the caveat Jacob Katz makes, namely that it is a linguistic anachronism to refer to Jewish 'emancipation' before 1828, the operative terms up to that point being 'naturalization', '*régénération*' or '*Bürgerliche Verbesserung*' (Katz, 1973: 191; see also Katz, 1964: *passim*).

12. One cannot ignore the extent to which a trope of conversion circulated freely within the broad spectrum of (supposedly secularist) Enlightenment discourses on Jewish emancipation. This was poignantly displayed in the readiness on the part of Enlightenment *philosophes* and state administrators to link the extension of civil rights and citizenship to Jews with expectations of conversion to Christianity, as in the case of Henri Grégoire, a prominent French advocate for granting citizenship to Jews who strenuously argued that 'Jewish rehabilitation' must eventually lead to their conversion (Katz, 1973: 72). Of course, not all Enlightened legislators went so far as to insist upon conversion. Many followed the path of Voltaire's rationalistic deism, and were at best unsympathetic to efforts to convert Jews. Nevertheless, as with the case with Voltaire himself, anticlerical sentiments did little to attenuate the attacks launched against the supposedly primitive and subordinate character of Judaism in comparison with 'Christian' European society (see Hertzberg, 1968: 280–313).

13. See, *inter alia*, Hyman (1995), Lederhendler (1989, 1994) and Frankel and Zipperstein (1992), for provocative reconceptualizations of 19th-century emancipationist movements and their impact upon European Jewry.

14. This is not to suggest that all *haredi* Jews *saw themselves* as potential members of Agudat Israel. On the contrary, large factions within the *haredi* world, such as the Satmar hasidim, have remained quite distant from Agudat Israel both ideologically and institutionally from its very inception. Other *haredim* parted company with Agudat Israel after the founding of the State of Israel, citing the 'dangerous compromises' to which the Agudah had fallen victim in its decision to join coalition governments. See also footnote 15, below.

15. Agudat Israel in fact joined in numerous coalition governments in Israel: in 1951, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1977, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1996. This long-standing involvement is complicated, however, by the fissiparous nature of Israeli electoral politics, which in the *haredi* case has given birth to breakaway parties from the original Agudah umbrella – most notably Degel haTorah and Shas – dividing the *haredi* vote along the lines of ethnic origin and rabbinic allegiance. In fact, the latter of these parties, Shas (a *sephardi* oriented *haredi* party) has now outstripped the other *haredi* parties by a wide margin, having captured 13 percent of the popular vote in the 1999 election to become the third-largest party in the Knesset, and a major player on the contemporary Israeli political scene. This trend was somewhat reversed in the 2003 election, when support for Shas declined significantly, and all *haredi* parties were excluded from the coalition government Prime Minister Ariel Sharon presented to the 16th Knesset (for voting data, see www.knesset.gov.il).

16. On the situation of pre-Second World War Orthodoxy in the United States, see Joselit (1990) and Gurock (1996).

17. On *haredi* 'ghettoization' as a spatial strategy, see Friedman (1986) and Shilhav (1984, 1989). On *haredi* philanthropy, see Heilman (1991); on the Reichmann family, see Bianco (1997). On the role of non-profit organizations and government subsidies as institutional economic infrastructures supporting *haredi* communities, especially in Israel, see Jaffe (1993) and Berman (2000). On *haredi* strategies for legitimating economic survival 'without work', see Stadler (2002).

18. It is important to distinguish here between the notions of political indigeneity and autochthony. While, historically, Jewish discourses have consistently situated ideas of collective existence in relation to claims of legitimate entitlement to the land of Israel – as elaborated through the myriad Biblical references to divine promise – this was not the same as propounding a myth of autochthonous origin, as one finds in other nationalist discourses that link blood and belonging to a specific territory. Even in biblical narrative, one should note, the Jews are defined as a people coming *to* the land of Israel *from* somewhere else. Both Abraham and Moses had to leave their birthplaces in order to make their way to the Promised Land. See e.g. Boyarin and Boyarin (1993) and Berkowitz (1994).

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