

The Disappearance of Religious Socialism in Israel:

A Comparative View

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In the early 20th century, the political map of the Jewish world included a wide and diverse array of political and ideological positions. Beyond the dichotomy of Zionists and non-Zionists there was a wide and complex map of political and ideological movements spanning the gamut from left to right. In the Religious camp the political map was also diverse, while there is a tendency in scholarship to view Orthodox politics as homogeneous that is not the case. One interesting case is the socialist left. Like other religions in Jewish communities in the period socialist interpretations of religious texts emerged and just like other religious groups political organizations that promoted socialist ideals for religious reasons were established. This paper examines the reasons for the demise of these groups after the second world war and the establishment of the state of Israel. It is easier to say that in the second half of the 20th century Orthodox politics became more homogenous than it was but why? specifically why did socialist groups with a religious element disappear? to answer this question I wish to use a comparative approach looking at the disappearance of the religious left in the U.S. and Britain.

It seems that beyond the identification of socialism with the anti-clerical views of Marx and others the centrality of violence in Socialist thought deterred the development of religious interpretations of socialism.