

SUPPLEMENTARY REMARKS ON THE SECESSION  
FROM THE FRANKFURT JEWISH COMMUNITY  
UNDER SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH

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[Translated from the German by HILDE KISCH]

TO the memoirs of Mr. Japhet I wish to add some supplementary remarks on the rise and development of the Frankfurt community statutes. In so doing I am relying on notes and reports written by my late father, Dr. Heinrich Heinemann, (1844-1898), school principal and rabbi in Frankfurt, who participated in the negotiations between the "orthodox"<sup>1</sup> members and the executive board of the "Gemeinde" in a leading capacity and who later was a member of the Ritual-Commission. In addition, I am making use of my own reminiscences (I left Frankfurt in 1919) and of material kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. Willy Mainz, a former member of the executive board of the Gemeinde and of the Ritual-Commission.

The men who after the issuance of the "Austritt" law contacted the Gemeinde board did not originally think of founding a unitary community ("Einheits-Gemeinde") in the later meaning of the term. They did not intend to separate from Rabbi Hirsch and the institutions of the "Religionsgesellschaft." They had also to take into account the fact that in those days the majority of the orthodox rabbis in Germany considered "Austritt" from a community de-

<sup>1</sup> The opponents of the Austritt movement did not like to designate themselves as "orthodox," but rather as "traditional" or "gesetzentreu" (Torah-true). In the English language the term "orthodox" is less sharp. The English word "fundamentalist" corresponds to the German usage.

sirable if the latter maintained a synagogue where a reformed prayerbook was used during services, and this even if that community otherwise provided for the religious needs of the orthodox members. They merely wanted to keep up the then prevailing conditions, that is, to use the institutions of the Religionsgesellschaft as well as the charitable institutions, the hospital, and the cemetery of the Gemeinde. For the time being they desired only a change in the legal status. After the legal obligation to membership in the Gemeinde had been removed, they desired, according to the records of my late father, to decline unequivocally any responsibility for its reformed institutions by "stepping out of the Gemeinde and becoming members of a larger community." As members of this body, they had to pay lower taxes, had to forego franchise and eligibility for the various communal bodies but obtained, on the other hand, the right to vote in the Gemeinde as well as eligibility for the Ritual-Commission, mentioned by Mr. Japhet. When it became necessary to secure the meat supply for the hospital independently of the Religionsgesellschaft they demanded the appointment of an orthodox inspector with rabbinical qualification for the supervision of *shebita* and the hospital. Had they restricted themselves only to these demands the character of the Gemeinde as a liberal community, which in some points complied with the desires of its orthodox members, would not have changed at all.

To understand the later development, it must first be clarified why the leaders of the "Gemeinde-Orthodoxy" group in contrast to their rabbi declined to separate from the Gemeinde. In his knowledge of rabbinics a man of the caliber of Rabbi Moses Mainz was not outshone by Rabbi Hirsch; as far as "orthodoxy" was concerned, he even surpassed him: he took serious offence at wearing a rabbinical robe and "Bäffchen" as was done by Hirsch; choral singing was against his liking.

In the records of my late father it is often mentioned that his group, because of its orthodox point of view, would not consent to leave the commonly used institutions of the Gemeinde which, up to that time, had been administered in an unobjectionable manner "to the arbitrariness of the lib-

erals." In reading the essays and writings of Rabbi Hirsch on the "Austritt" question, it becomes clear that the difference of opinion between the members of that group and their rabbi had deeper roots. Only through the knowledge of this difference can one understand why Hirsch did not restrict himself merely to the demand for Austritt from the communities but going far beyond many of his close associates wished to cut the cloth completely between the orthodox and the "neologists" in all matters Jewish.<sup>2</sup>

The basic sentences of Hirsch's formulation of the idea of Austritt are the following: "Prior to emancipation the Jewish communities were occasionally of a mixed political and religious character. Since the civil equalization of the Jews there exist only Jewish religious associations ("Religionsgemeinschaften"). In all civil matters the Jew has been absorbed by the general civil and state community of his dwelling place and his country."<sup>3</sup> To judge from the context this surely means above all that the *state*, disregarding all controversial points between orthodoxy and liberalism, would not recognize Jewish communities without a synagogue. The first words about the Kehillah before the emancipation, however, clearly prove that Hirsch considered the community as nothing else but a religious association of like-minded people. From this it followed that an association lost its meaning as soon as the likemindedness of its members on which it was based, had ceased.<sup>4</sup>

This conception of the Jewish community, however, was not in accord with the historic reality or with the feelings of

<sup>2</sup> Hirsch has expressly stated that he only objected to the "religions-gemeindlichen Zusammenhang mit dem Abfall" ("the religious connection of the community with the defection"), advocated from the pulpit and in the schools; Hirsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Frankfurt a.M., 1902-12), IV, p. 388. In fact, though, Hirsch has declined all cooperation with Jewish organizations that were not conducted in a strictly orthodox manner, for instance, with lodges and relief societies. In this respect he went even further than the followers of Israel Hildesheimer.

<sup>3</sup> S. R. Hirsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, p. 299.

<sup>4</sup> In this connection Hirsch's attitude toward Jewish "nationalism" cannot be considered. It cannot be believed that in rejecting the national idea his standpoint was and remained so close to that of Geiger as Max Wiener, especially, has tried to prove in his valuable book, *Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emanzipation* (Berlin, 1933). The national tinge of his conception did not influence his attitude in the question of Austritt.

many orthodox Jews. The medieval communities were not "occasionally of a mixed political and religious character"; those among them which were fully developed, represented, rather, "political bodies," and "exercised all functions of a medieval municipal authority except the military."<sup>5</sup> It was this character of the communities which caused the Jew to consider them not only as associations of like-minded people but as living members of the organism of *Klal Israel*. This feeling was and continued to be especially strong in Russia; that is why the "Austritt" ideology was never understood there; the unity of the communities remained untouched, even after the establishment of a number of reform synagogues and of a net of secular schools, which were outspokenly anti-religious.<sup>6</sup>

In so far as Hirsch's conception differing from that of the Russian Jews was the result of a sympathetic attitude toward European civilization he might have been backed by a great number of his confrères in Germany, especially from his Frankfurt congregation. Partly, however, his rejection of the medieval conception of the Jewish community was rooted in a trait of his character bound to meet with strong opposition in the very city of Frankfurt: that is, his absolutely unhistorical way of thinking. It goes without saying that Hirsch was strictly orthodox; but he was in no way conservative. To him the teachings of Torah and Talmud were untouchable; but historically hallowed customs did not mean much to him. When, one generation later, a liberal rabbi<sup>7</sup> asserted that by "Thauro" ("Torah") Hirsch understood "all Jewish institutions down to the last unimportant custom" his Frankfurt opponents knew better. My father, a native of Oldenburg, knew that the young "Landesrabbiner"

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Baer, "Gemeinde," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, VII, p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> In 1912 a member of the Frankfurt Gemeinde with separatist leanings asked Rabbi Ch. O. Grodzenski if it was permissible according to religious law to retain membership in it. This took place after the executive board had made a statement, not approved by the orthodox group, in reference to the "Richtlinien zu einem Programm für das liberale Judentum." Rabbi Grodzenski declared that this matter had nothing to do with Halacha ("dass es sich hier nicht um eine Frage der Halacha handele").

<sup>7</sup> Caesar Seligmann, *Geschichte der jüdischen Reformbewegung* (Frankfurt a. M., 1922), p. 95.

had abolished the *Kol Nidre* prayer.<sup>8</sup> Raphael Kirchheim reproachfully pointed out to Hirsch that it was offensive to tradition to perform marriages in a synagogue, that is, to allow men and women to be present there in the main room at the same time. Above all, it was Rabbi Salman Geiger, the codifier of the Frankfurt ritual customs, who surpassed himself in alluding rather maliciously to the new "Gaon," who unscrupulously disregarded everything that was considered law in the Jewish life of Frankfurt.<sup>9</sup> The feeling for the historic ties with the old Jewish community of Frankfurt happened to be strong just in those very circles that were leading the opposition against Hirsch's view on the Austritt question, especially in the Mainz family which had settled in Frankfurt for several generations.<sup>10</sup> However painfully the defection of the old community from Jewish tradition was felt by these men, they tried nevertheless to keep up the relationships as far as their conscience permitted them to do so. That is why the Frankfurt ritual was practiced much more strongly in the orthodox synagogues of the Gemeinde, especially those on Börne Square and Hermes Road, than in those of the Religionsgesellschaft.<sup>11</sup>

This historic feeling for *Klal Israel* and for the hometown community at first caused the orthodox members of the Gemeinde only to maintain the *status quo*, to avail themselves too of the communal institutions of the Gemeinde as far as they were untouched by reform. How did it come about, however, that the Gemeinde founded additional institutions which were intended for the adherents to tradi-

<sup>8</sup> The impression which this step made in Hirsch's native town Hamburg is described by one of Hirsch's former students, young Graetz, in his diaries, M. Brann, "Aus H. Graetzens Lehr- und Wanderjahren," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* XXVIII (1920), p. 144 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Processions carrying Torah scrolls on the eve of Simhath Torah may not be customary: רק החנוני מקיף (allusion to Hirsch's occupation as a merchant in his youth and to Mishnah, *Avotb*, III, 16. Certain other rites of the Religionsgesellschaft may not exist either: לפני שב"ר גאון (allusion to the disapproving verse Prov., 16, 18; שמשון בן רמאל = שב"ר . Both quotations were called to my attention by my late father.

<sup>10</sup> In 1807 Michael Mainz signed a memorandum of the community submitted to Prince Dalberg; I. Kracauer, *Geschichte der Juden in Frankfurt*, II (Frankfurt, 1927), p. 367.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *infra*, note 15.

tion only, and thereby created an "Einheitsgemeinde" in a special sense of the term?

The first step in this direction was made by the executive board of the Gemeinde through its resolution to establish a ritual bath. This decision is in no way to be considered as a concession to the orthodox group while negotiations were carried on with the latter. The orthodox group was willing to use the ritual institutions of the Religionsgesellschaft also in the future. In that action the will of the Gemeinde became apparent to save future newcomers from the necessity of becoming members of the Religionsgesellschaft by giving them the opportunity to lead a traditional life within the Gemeinde.

The second step was the appointment of Dr. Marcus Horovitz as rabbi.

If Hirsch may be considered as the most passionate representative of the Austritt idea, Horovitz's lifework is based on his belief in the organizational unity of Judaism. Whereas Hirsch was backed up in his views on communal politics in principle by the overwhelming majority of his orthodox colleagues, Horovitz stood almost alone in the eighteen-seventies. It is true that a man like the Distriktsrabbiner Salomon Baer Bamberger in Würzburg had declared it permissible to remain a member of the Gemeinde of Frankfurt in consideration of the concessions made by its executive board, but in principle he had approved of Austritt from "Reform congregations." Horovitz, on the other hand, was one of the very few orthodox rabbis who refused to sign the petition for the Austritt law. In this attitude he also differed from his highly esteemed teacher, Israel Hildesheimer, who even dissuaded him from accepting the position in Frankfurt. If he did not follow this advice, it was not because of material considerations. The position was not for life and not highly paid. Moreover, the prospect of having such a ruthless polemist as Hirsch for his adversary was not at all tempting. The determining factor for Horovitz was the hope of being able to justify in a conspicuous place the correctness of his conception, namely, to prove that different religious convictions can exist in one and the same community, and that especially

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a strictly "Torah-true" Judaism can develop fully and purely in an "Einheitsgemeinde."

The contrast between these two men may partly have its root in the difference of their personalities. Despite all the firmness he had to show to people standing left or right, Horovitz was of a conciliatory nature in that he did not disdain "moral conquests" even if he could not fully convince. Above all, Horovitz, who was regarded as an excellent talmudist and had gone through a rabbinical training after the old pattern, showed much more sympathy for the historic formulation of the *Klal* idea as it was alive in Russia than for the confessionalism on which Hirsch's communal politics were based. He therefore always professed Jewish "nationalism" in public, as for instance in his argumentation and modification of the well-known declaration against Zionism<sup>12</sup> and also in the circle of his students.<sup>13</sup> The experiences he had had in his youth with Hungarian separatism could only serve to strengthen him in his views; for to Hungarian orthodox Jews all secular education of a rabbi was taboo. This is why men like his teacher, Hildesheimer, and himself could not feel at home in either of the two groups in which Hungarian Jewry was divided.<sup>14</sup> Not artificial cleavage but the maintenance of the unity of Judaism regardless of all difference of opinion seemed to him a necessity. For this reason he also endorsed obligatory religious instruction, since he did not look at it from the orthodox angle exclusively but also from that of a general Jewish standpoint.

The main question was, of course, whether the guiding idea could be put into practice, that is, whether consideration for the whole did not make a sacrifice on the part of orthodox ideology imperative. Horovitz answered this question through the example of his activity in Frankfurt. To

<sup>12</sup> *Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des Rabbinerverbandes* (1898), p. 19 ff. I have dealt in greater detail with Horovitz's attitude toward nationalism in the Hebrew periodical, *Sinai* (1944), p. 166ff.

<sup>13</sup> Communication by Rabbi Dr. Isak Unna.

<sup>14</sup> Hirsch's like-minded grandson, Dr. I. Breuer, did not belong to any congregation in Jerusalem—neither to *Kneset Yisrael* because of its collaboration with neutral Zionist organizations, nor to the so-called Ashkenasic community because men with a European education are considered there as second-rate Jews.

anticipate the result, the following must be said: the fact that he could serve Jewry there as a whole while adhering strictly to his own conviction gained recognition for his point of view far beyond the confines of Frankfurt.

Horovitz made his acceptance of office dependent on the condition that the Gemeinde build a larger synagogue where the traditional ritual was to be observed<sup>15</sup> and he would have to officiate; he also wanted to be regarded as "Gemeinderabbiner" as was the rabbi of the liberal synagogue. This demand was perfectly in line with the efforts of the executive board of the Gemeinde to enable all new-coming fellow-believers to satisfy their religious desires within the Gemeinde, independently from the Religionsgesellschaft. Therefore, the erection of a synagogue was sanctioned and soon carried through. A remnant of the originally planned conditions for his appointment was recognizable merely in the fact that Horovitz, according to old tradition, was only obligated to be in the pulpit on the Sabbaths before Passover and Yom Kippur. In fact he always delivered a sermon on the first holiday and, in addition, once a month on a Sabbath.

Horovitz's work was not at all limited to the institutions established for followers of his religious ideology. He deployed vast social activities not only in behalf of local institutions but also for Palestine associations and the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden, etc. He took care of the badly neglected religious instruction of pupils attending municipal or state schools. The society, "Israelitische Religionsschule," which he founded is to be credited with the erection of two school buildings including synagogues. Under his leadership the "Verein für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur," as well as a conservative and a neutral youth organization came into being. Among the members of the B'nai B'rith lodge, in which he was the only Frankfurt rabbi, even men who had

<sup>15</sup> In his letter to Mannheimer, printed in *Matte Levi*, II, 92 a, Horovitz stresses the fact that the executive board had promised him the retention of the "old Frankfurt ritual" in the synagogue where he officiated. This letter is very informative for judging Horovitz's conception of his office. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 2 b. (against the saying of Kaddish collectively, a custom contrary to the Frankfurt ritual).

nothing to do with religious activities became his sincere admirers.<sup>16</sup>

This work in behalf of the "Gesamtgemeinde" was limited, however, in two respects by a barrier distinctly set up by Horovitz himself: he had no relation of any kind to the liberal synagogue. Though the executive board had invited him to perform marriages there (probably before the completion of the new synagogue), Horovitz declined this offer. It is true that he let his sons attend classes in secular subjects at the Realschule of the Gemeinde, but it was only on condition that they be exempted from religious instruction. On the other hand, he made it a point to be asked for his competent judgment in all matters related to other Gemeinde institutions, and it goes without saying that he always decided them according to his religious conviction. Not only did he guarantee the ritual management of the hospital, but he also gave his expert opinion on the admissibility of performing dissections which he approved if any progress could be expected making it possible to save human life. When, upon the construction of a new liberal synagogue which was entrusted to a non-Jewish firm, the intention became apparent to go on with building on the Sabbath, his standpoint was especially characteristic. Horovitz stated that, as long as the synagogue had not been taken over by the liberal "Kultuskommission" the "Gesamtgemeinde" was responsible for it. In his opinion it was not permissible for the Gemeinde to violate the Sabbath publicly.<sup>17</sup> This was accepted by the executive board.

Horovitz's activity which was in accordance with his obliging but at the same time firm behavior in personal intercourse, mitigated considerably the attacks of his adversaries on both the left and right. If the liberals had originally complained about the "black clouds" covering the horizon

<sup>16</sup> Ismar Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life* (Philadelphia, 1945), p. 410, emphasizes the special significance of the Frankfurt Gemeinde during the period immediately preceding the First World War; among its rabbis he calls attention only to the "scholarly, versatile and energetic rabbi," Marcus Horovitz.

<sup>17</sup> For evidence, cf. *Matte Levi*, II, 10 b.

of the Frankfurt Gemeinde,<sup>18</sup> they could no longer deny that the precipitation out of these "clouds" had benefitted the "Gesamtgemeinde." Even though Austritt was urged now as before from the pulpit of the Religionsgesellschaft, the latter nevertheless entrusted the chairmanship of its executive board to a man who was a member of the "Reformgemeinde."

The greatest importance, however, must be attributed to the fact that the obliging attitude and understanding shown to Horovitz by the executive board had a strong influence on the inner relations of the orthodox members toward the Gemeinde. It is true that from the beginning they had relied on the board's faithfully keeping its promises; but a condition of real trust had originally not existed. For it must not be forgotten that in previous years the executive board had attacked orthodoxy in such a systematic way as to cause Hirsch to compare the membership of an orthodox Jew in a reform congregation to that in a missionary institution (not in a Christian congregation). Besides, Horovitz's followers were cautioned by the circumstance that the Berlin Gemeinde conducted its educational institutions exclusively according to liberal principles. In order to prevent the board from assuming an influential position, the orthodox group at first did not accept any subvention from the Gemeinde; it was only decades later that such support was asked for and granted, as the expansion of the institution had made greater expenses necessary.

The flourishing of the Frankfurt "Gemeinde-Orthodoxy" was also favored by the fact that Horovitz, during the last years of his activity, had been successful in inducing the orthodox group to worship more often in his synagogue. Although the men who had appointed him made use of the ritual institutions under his supervision, for the most part they attended services in small synagogues or in that of the Religionsgesellschaft. The younger generation, however, especially the members of the aforementioned orthodox youth

<sup>18</sup> I remember having read this expression in *Monatsblätter zur Belehrung über das Judentum*, edited by A. Brüll, the liberal teacher of religion at the Philanthropin.

organization constituted the nucleus of regular worshippers for the new Gemeinde synagogue.

Outside of Frankfurt, too, a change in favor of Gemeinde-Orthodoxy and in disfavor of separatism made itself felt.<sup>10</sup> In the large communities of Germany and in many of a medium size, synagogues were founded which practiced a reformed ritual. They were sometimes established in addition to others of a traditional character. Only in few communities, however, a separation was effected through Austritt, and only a few Austritt communities really flourished. It became more and more apparent that it was impossible to build up orthodoxy on a separatist basis. The orthodox Rabbinerseminar in Berlin declined to bind its graduates to adopt the Austritt point of view. The *Jüdische Presse*, the organ of Hirsch Hildesheimer, openly took sides with Horowitz. If in the eighteen-seventies he had stood almost alone, now the "Verband traditioneller Rabbiner" ("Association of Tradition-Observing Rabbis") founded by him in 1896 was at least equal to the "Verband orthodoxer Rabbiner" ("Association of Orthodox Rabbis") under the leadership of Hirsch's successor.<sup>20</sup>

This change inside and outside the Gemeinde brought about the new Gemeinde statute of June 7, 1899. According to it, the taxes of such Gemeinde members "who for orthodox-religious reasons entertain scruples to contribute to the support of the Realschule and main synagogue" are to be put on a separate account and not to be used for the mentioned purposes. However, "franchise and eligibility are to be preserved for those members." In this way was removed an inner contradiction which lay in the fact that the Gemeinde actually had to accommodate both groups whereas only the members of one took part in the administration. At the same time it was stipulated that in case of new elections the Ritual-Commission had to supplement itself on the

<sup>10</sup> In this connection it is impossible to describe even briefly the background against which this development took place, the steadily increasing collaboration of men with differing ideologies in general Jewish associations and the abatement of the pugnacious mood in the Jewish liberal circles.

<sup>20</sup> The change in the estimation of the "Gemeindeorthodoxie" was not limited to Germany. When in 1925 the Gemeinde advertised the position of an assistant rabbi, there were also representatives of the Hungarian "separatist orthodoxy" among the applicants.

basis of its own proposals, thus keeping up its orthodox character. Its influence on the administration of the hospital and the cemetery was again confirmed. The appointment of the rabbi to be charged with the supervision of the ritual institutions was to be made according to the proposal of the Ritual-Commission. It was also to be consulted before the appointment of all other rabbis holding office in conservative synagogues. Moreover, its approval was required for the appointment of all officials in the ritual institutions.

Only through these regulations, put into force on April 1, 1900, did the Frankfurt Gemeinde become an "Einheitsgemeinde." This was effected in keeping with all the principles laid down in the reorganization statute of the eighteenth-seventies. The tradition-observing character of the institutions used in common with the orthodox could not be affected by the composition of the executive board—Bamberger had already considered this as the decisive characteristic of the reorganization<sup>21</sup>—and they were removed from the sphere of influence of the liberal rabbis. Whereas for instance in Breslau rabbis of both groups belonged to the ritual commission and only institutions having ritual functions were subordinated to its authority, the Ritual-Commission in Frankfurt was of a strictly orthodox character. It had the right to participate in the decision on matters concerning all institutions to be used in common with the other faction (hospital, cemetery). Moreover, it had a decisive influence on the religious orientation of the rabbis holding office in synagogues of the tradition-observing type, while, for instance in Berlin, it was possible for liberal rabbis, too, to officiate in such synagogues up to the last time. It goes without saying that no estrangement between the two factions was brought about in this way. In front of Rabbi Nobel's pulpit there sat also men who had nothing to do with traditional Judaism. Men and women of all factions worked together in the various committees and since 1912 also on the executive board. The unity of the community was preserved not through effacement of its factions but while their individual character was distinctly stressed.

<sup>21</sup> In his "Offene Antwort," printed in Hirsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, IV, p. 532.