

Historia Judaica

THE SECESSION FROM THE FRANKFURT JEWISH COMMUNITY UNDER SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH

By * * *

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE religious and cultural development of German Jewry in the past century has not yet found its Graetz or Dubnow. After the decline of the German Jewish community in the years of modern barbarism, there exists no institution that would systematically collect and preserve the raw material for future historians. When the first article printed on the following pages was submitted to the editor for publication, he instantly recognized its value as a historical document. It is a lecture by Mr. Saemy Japhet, formerly Chairman of the Board of Jews' College in London, now in his ninety-first year, delivered in 1935 before the students of that institution. Mr. Japhet is very likely the last survivor of the memorable period in the history of the Jewish Community of Frankfurt am Main of which his study treats. His lecture appears here without editorial changes except for a few explanatory additions enclosed in brackets and the omission of an appeal which was made to the students at the end of his address, upon a specific occasion. Professor Isaac Heinemann, formerly of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau and editor for many years of the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, also a native of Frankfurt, now residing in Jerusalem, spontaneously offered the "Supplementary Remarks," which are published as the second article. To round out the historical picture, the editor deemed it advisable to invite another native of Frankfurt, Mr. Jacob Rosenheim, one time leader of independent Orthodoxy in Germany, who is now in his eighth decade, to contribute his historical reminiscences of the secession from the Frankfurt Jewish Community under Samson Raphael Hirsch. His exposition appears as the third article. [Mr. Japhet wants his name mentioned in an editorial note only.]

In making the historical material contained in these three articles available to scholars, the editor wishes to direct the readers' attention to the principle pointed out on the back cover of every issue of HISTORIA

JUDAICA, namely, that "every contributor is fully responsible for his paper." "HISTORIA JUDAICA attempts to publish only articles which, as a result of unbiased scientific research, make actual contributions to scholarship." Publication in HISTORIA JUDAICA does not imply any approval or disapproval by the editor of the authors' opinions or of their specific evaluation of historical material for whose presentation they are alone responsible.

GUIDO KISCH

IN 1876, because of new legislation, a number of orthodox members of Frankfurt Jewry declared on account of conscientious objections their withdrawal from their community, the "Israelitische Gemeinde zu Frankfurt a.M.," which they considered a reform community. They were mostly members of the "Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft" and were known henceforth as "Austrittler" or "secessionists." Those of their contemporaries who doubted the wisdom of this drastic step and remained under changed conditions within the Community ["Gemeinde"] were known as "Anti-Austrittler" or "Kompromissler."

I have often been asked to give a narrative of the events which took place on that occasion, because I belong to the few survivors of that most exciting epoch which was marked by stern strife and severe dissensions.

Up to the present day I have declined the request, being of the opinion that publications of this kind are better made by scholars or competent research workers. But reliable literature on the subject hardly exists. This explains why the student can only find more or less dressed-up descriptions of facts, but no correct reasons or adequate motives for the unhappy development in those days.

However, people tell me the time has come to lay before those who may be interested, a concise survey of the secession movement or, as it was called, the "Austrittsbewegung," and so I shall try to tell what I know, and this in full frankness.

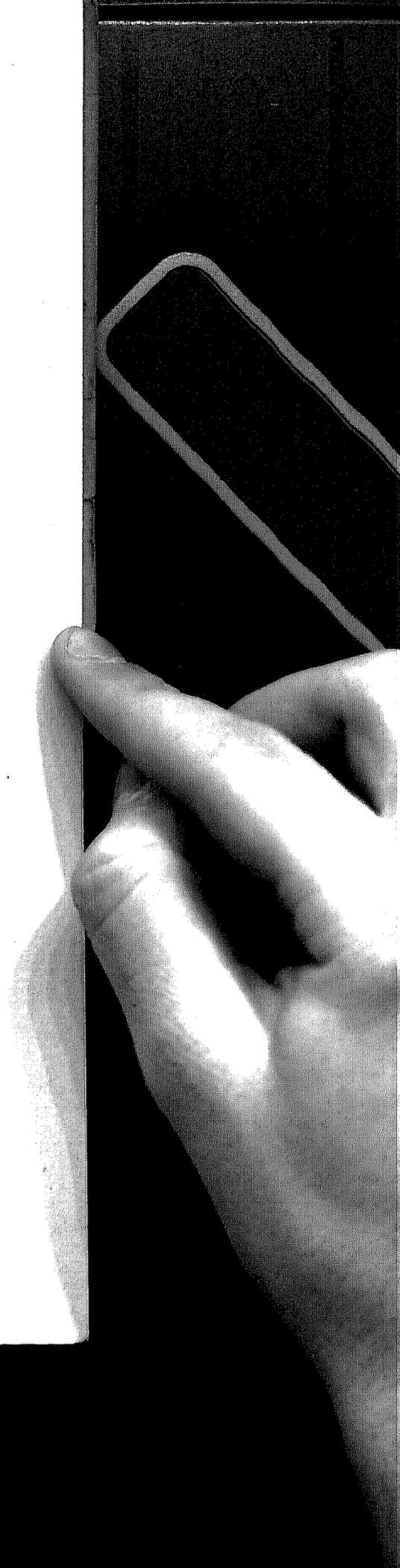
To understand this movement and its consequences, we must look for its genesis, we must study the underlying conditions in Frankfurt and must find out *why* everything hap-

pened and *how* it developed. In doing this it will be necessary to go back a very long stretch of time.

We all know how the deplorable social position of German Jewry improved in a miraculous way during the period preceding the French Revolution. Just as the art of printing had quickened science and brought humanism into existence, so the encyclopaedists drew the veil from the minds of those who were silently but ardently longing for enlightenment. To them the doctrines of Montesquieu, of d'Alembert, Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire came as a revelation.

At the same time Lessing and Mendelssohn appeared on the scene. Lessing's "Nathan the Wise" and Mendelssohn's translation of the Bible into German had a sensational effect on the Jews. It seemed to them as if the gates leading into a new and beautiful world were opened. They realized that general knowledge and modern education would promote wisdom, refinement, self-reliance, strength and influence, in short a distinct improvement in a social respect. The ecclesiastical elements discouraged such tendencies and tried to frustrate any attempt to acquire secular knowledge.

With elemental power however events broke forth. Soon the Cheder had lost its sway. Schools were opened in many places, amongst them one in Frankfurt, which still exists and flourishes under the name of Philanthropin. Rabbi Pinchas Horwitz put the school under Cherem but the founders went on. In recent years they had felt the magic power which radiated from the great orators of the French Revolution. Their hero was Mirabeau who, as early as 1787, in an essay about Moses Mendelssohn had paid homage to the unappreciated Jewish genius. Fascinated, they had read the eloquent speeches of Malesherbes, Clermont Tonnère and St. Etienne; spellbound they heard of the powerful appeal in favor of the Jews, with which Abbé Grégoire roused the feelings of the French Parliament, when he hurled the glorious words at their ranks: "Tonight fifty thousand Jews will go to bed as slaves and pariahs; it is for you to let them rise tomorrow as free men!" Ecstasy seized the souls of our coreligionists on hearing the wonderful news. They felt the breath of liberty. Was it to be wondered at that soon the



sense of freedom filled their hearts and that they were inspired by it in their actions?

This determination was stimulated by political issues. Invited by the French notables, two Frankfurt men attended the opening of the Sanhedrin in Paris on February 2, 1807. They returned enraptured by the atmosphere of freedom and from that hour dates the energetic open fight for Jewish emancipation in Frankfurt.

Napoleon had by now granted equality of rights to the German Jews. True, the Congress of Vienna, where foreign diplomats were lavishly entertained in the salons of Jewish society ladies, partly reversed the position, but discriminated between Jew and Jew. Metternich himself declared: "Who is a Jew is for me to decide." He conferred nobility on the Rothschilds to the utmost delight and rapture of the Frankfurt Ghetto. One old man was so affected by the news that he exclaimed with tears in his eyes: "Die ganze Judengasse ist geadelt."

Now, what happened in Frankfurt?

The Frankfurt community held a high position in German Jewry. Its age, the size of its congregation, the wealth of its members, and the distinction of many of its individuals gave it a world-wide preponderance and influence. It was a homestead of Jewish tradition. The majority of the community was still conservative and they held the reins in their hands and tried to stem the onslaught of the young liberals. The Ghetto in the old sense did not exist any more, but it took generations before it completely disappeared. I still remember three synagogues in the *Judengasse*. Many private people lived there. Big grocery shops and coffee houses, etc. remained.

However, youth had left the Ghetto. Youth emancipated itself from the control of the ruling education system and went over to other regions of learning. Youth strove for assimilation. Youth joined the freemasons. Youth formed unions on the Gentile plan. Youth migrated into the world and lastly youth demanded the recognition of its lofty views.

So far the word "Reform" was not mentioned, they spoke only of "liberals." Under the influence of youth and

its pressure, however, perhaps as a concession to the new ideas, liberalism had changed into reform. This is the genesis of the movement and these are at a glance the conditions at Frankfurt.

Time went on. The teachings spread by Friedländer, Jacobson, Salomon, etc. and vigorously taken up and completed by Jost, Geiger, Holdheim, Philippson, Herzfeld, fascinated still wider circles, opposed only by a limited number of orthodox rabbis, most of whom were no match for the reformers. Only one man in the orthodox camp towered far above them, surprised the world by the perspicuity of his writings, a man of whom secular scholars said he was the most forceful polemic writer since Lessing: Samson Raphael Hirsch.

More years passed. The progressive section of the Frankfurt community soon went somewhat too far in using their new liberties. Religious authority having once been thrown over, many deserted their religion and the number of conversions rose appallingly. The orthodox became daunted and felt subdued and the liberals, having attained their ends, became less concerned with the further evolutions which were henceforth directed chiefly by the hierarchy in Jewry. As far as the public was concerned laxity increased.

Towards the end of the first half of the last century it could be seen that the effect of the reform movement had become weaker. Originally, appealing to the longing for enlightenment and freedom, the new orientation had stirred the hearts of the young. But this did not last and even Eduard Gans, one of the pioneers in reform, complained already in 1823 that the latent spirit of contradiction had gradually grown into negative enlightenment, consisting in contempt or abuse of tradition without, however, making any attempt to give the now empty abstraction a new meaning. The rising generation had only one ambition: to appear as educated citizens in the eyes of the world. What we call the Jewish atmosphere faded away, but at the same time so did the belief in the redeeming effect of reform.

The reformers had built handsome temples and engaged brilliant preachers. But they were to realize that what they

had to offer did not attract worshippers for long. Their beautiful synagogues became empty. Fresh efforts were made by convoking several synods. In 1841-42 they formed in Frankfurt a society called "Friends of the Reform." They contemplated nothing less than a new *Shulhan Aruch*. Yet, at that time communal institutions like the hospital and *shebitab* were still conducted on traditional lines, but there was the danger that this would change.

Now, it must be clearly understood, that both, the fight for reform and the defense of traditional Judaism, were conducted by individuals. The management of the Gemeinde tried to remain at least outwardly impartial, and they had in Rabbi Salomon Trier the strictest defender of orthodoxy, but the religious aspect was more or less meaningless to the wardens, and they busied themselves with the management of affairs only. The number of the adherents to conservative principles had in the meantime been steadily shrinking, but there were still a large number of highly educated and deeply religious and learned members of the old Frankfurt community. After the synod of Brunswick and that of Frankfurt in 1845 this circle became alarmed. The "Gemeinde" had in the meantime slightly changed its attitude and engaged a reform rabbi; further fresh activities of the reformers now spurred the orthodox on to resistance; they closed their ranks and after long and protracted preliminaries, they formed in 1851 the "Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft," and selected as their spiritual leader Samson Raphael Hirsch.

As much of what interests us centers round this great figure, it will not be out of place to say something about the personality and character of Samson Raphael Hirsch. Born in Hamburg, the son of cultured parents, he was brought up as a child of the early Mendelssohn era. Haham Bernays, who was one of the first Jewish preachers to deliver his sermons in an advanced German, was his teacher. Samson Raphael Hirsch received his university training at Bonn, where incidentally Abraham Geiger was his fellow student. Hirsch was already in his younger years a man of the world. He made it a point to appear always in faultless apparel, almost stylish, according to the fashion of the period. Nothing in

his manner or figure was to be strange to the crowd. This remained so during his whole life and I can still see him as an octogenarian, immaculately dressed in the finest black suit and top hat, like a born aristocrat. A striking feature was his head, so well shaped and adorned with the most beautiful and brilliant eyes, which kept their fiery lustre up to the last moments of his life. I think nobody could ever forget his countenance, animated by the magnetic glance. And whilst his outward manner was prepossessing and attractive, his character showed a strength and earnestness uncommon for any man, almost too earnest. He did not freely make friends and even his friends he kept at a distance; nor was he easily approached, his serenity and dignity warded off intimacy. Bold and fearless he upheld his convictions. Only once did he yield to outside pressure, when—in Oldenburg—he allowed *Kol Nidre* to be abolished. In later years he made no concessions, no adjustment of views was possible and, in questions of principle, he never accepted any compromise, nor did he permit any of his communities to interfere with his opinions and beliefs.

All this led to frequent clashes and we saw him sever his relations with Geiger, his fellow student, and with Gaetz, his pupil, and of course with Frankel he waged a bitter feud. History and literature were taught in our school—the “Realschule der Israelitischen Religionsgesellschaft,” (according to English standards a secondary school), commonly called “The Hirsch-Schule”; I passed through the school (1863-1872); later I became a student of the Frankurt Handelsschule—according to Hirsch’s views. The names of Maimonides, Spinoza, Mendelssohn and Graetz were never even mentioned. But in his writings Hirsch branded Graetz’s *History of the Jews* as “a product of detestable wantonness and frivolous superficiality”; he spoke with contempt of the Rabbiner-Seminar in Breslau, pitying in advance the communities which should select pupils of Breslau as their leaders. There was never a *Beth Din* in the Religionsgesellschaft. To use a commercial term, it was to all intents and purposes a one-man business. Rabbi Hirsch laid down the law according to his conviction. He was opposed to any form of Jewish

nationalism as well as to Zionism and one of his versions of the translation of "*ki mi-Zion*" was "from where the *Tauvoh* emanates, there is my Zion." He sternly rejected the order B'nai B'rith.

As a scholar he lived his own life. His intercourse with other scholars was scanty. He did not need them. Feared as an antagonist, he was a born fighter and he hit hard. Mendelssohnian tolerance was unthinkable for him. He lived in his study amidst his books and papers, where the air was thick with smoke clouds, issuing from his long much-loved pipe.

Needless to say, the Religionsgesellschaft was very proud of their rabbi. His reputation as one of the greatest living scholars was a source of the deepest satisfaction, but it was in the first place his eloquence that thrilled their minds. He spoke always spontaneously, without any notes; all his addresses were presented extemporaneously. He was a marvelous orator; his noble language, the rapid flow of his speech, the originality of his thoughts, the force of his arguments, together with his whole personal appearance, made his sermons irresistible and secured him a magic influence.

In their relations with the "Gemeinde," the members of the "Religionsgesellschaft" had, however, never been able to remove the chief source of their discontent. By law they belonged to the Gemeinde and were liable to taxation. But they had no influence whatever on the management of the Gemeinde, especially in ritual questions. Yet, as the Gemeinde treated them rather fairly, they had an earnest desire to avoid any possible friction. What the Gemeinde denied to them, they provided themselves regardless of financial sacrifices. They set themselves the task of creating model institutions to satisfy all requirements of strictest orthodoxy plus the demands of cultured citizens.

They started with great energy. A great beautiful synagogue was built—the money was given by the Rothschilds, and (thanks to the generosity of the small body of supporters) a secondary school was opened on modern lines. The synagogue was an attraction, the school was still more important. It was conducted by a splendid staff of first-class Jewish teachers and was to be the spiritual home of Germany's

new orthodoxy. Enthusiasm and happiness ruled all round, membership increased and even the reformers did not withhold their respect for Samson Raphael Hirsch's achievements. For years harmony crowned the work—golden days for Frankfurt orthodoxy.

But gradually conditions underwent a change and this for two reasons.

Rabbi Hirsch was not satisfied with the role his Society has to play. He wished his Religionsgesellschaft to outshine and to eclipse the ancient Frankfurt Gemeinde. He wanted to separate from the old chief body and to raise the Religionsgesellschaft to the rank of an independent community with fiscal rights. By word of mouth as well as by his writings he prepared the ground. Always referring to religious objections he tried to familiarize his followers with the idea of separation. It was an ambitious scheme, which in no way appealed to the majority of his congregation. Devoted as they were to their leader they did not want a separation and Hirsch realized it was a delicate problem. He decided to bide his time, but one could not help feeling that he had brought uneasiness into the minds of many.

The second question was of a different nature. It transpired that Rabbi Hirsch contemplated a permanent dual-leadership of rabbinate and rectorate of the school, so as to establish a dynasty; his first successor was to be his son. Nobody, I believe, would have opposed the scheme, had there been fair play. But there was not. In order to pave the way for the successor, several Jewish teachers with university degrees had to be removed, they were partly replaced by Christians, who were not eligible for the post of principal, and the congregation deplored the fact that their orthodox institution now preferred Gentiles to Jewish teachers. It was widely and deeply resented.

This digression was necessary to explain how it was possible that the rabbi who was adored in the beginning, made many enemies.

There were now two factions in the Religionsgesellschaft: the partisans of Hirsch and the disillusioned section. The latter, peace-loving as they were, trusted from year to

year in the beneficial influence of time which would help them to forget unpleasant events; but it turned out differently.

In 1873 it happened that as a consequence of the so-called "Kulturkampf" which Bismarck waged against the Roman Catholics, a bill was introduced in Germany allowing members of a church to leave it on account of conscientious objections without ceasing to be Christians. Protected by this law, Bismarck tried to disintegrate the Catholic communities.

Now Rabbi Hirsch saw his chance to do the same. Through the medium of Edward Lasker, the famous Jewish lawyer and deputy, he laid his case before Parliament. He had worked Lasker's mind into ecstasy, but alas, misguided ecstasy in religious affairs has often been responsible for untold suffering and injustice. Lasker himself was a Jew only by name.

Subsequently Rabbi Hirsch caused several of the old orthodox rabbis—amongst them the venerated Dr. Israel Hildesheimer—to exercise their influence with the younger members of the clergy by asking them to sign the petition to grant to the Jews the same religious facilities as to the Roman Catholics. Hildesheimer supported Hirsch, because he loved peace; many of the old rabbis took up the same attitude. A number of the younger orthodox rabbis declined to endorse Rabbi Hirsch's petition, among them Marcus Horowitz; they questioned the necessity of going to this extreme.

Let us hear just what Marcus Horowitz wrote about it: "In the autumn of 1873 my great master, Rabbi Dr. Hildesheimer, forwarded to me the draft of a petition asking the Prussian Diet to issue a law, by virtue of which Jews should be allowed to resign membership of their communities without ceasing to be Jews, and he asked me in the name of Rabbi Hirsch to sign that petition. I answered without delay that I did not believe such a law would serve the true interests of Judaism. I proposed instead a law compelling each community to arrange their religious institutions in such a manner that even the minorities could be fully satisfied. I formulated my suggestion in an explicit proposition, which I sent to the revered master. He answered that, whilst personally fully

agreeing with my proposal, he would imagine that all this could be better achieved if and when the law of secession had been passed. At the present stage he was afraid communities were not inclined to grant new demands. Anyhow, continued Hildesheimer, I advise you to send your report to Mr. Lasker." This answer provides sufficient proof that Hildesheimer considered a secession law merely as a means of bargaining. "I approached Lasker, who replied that he had given my proposal most serious consideration and he thought it a very good one. But he himself (and here we see the lawyer) could scarcely be the right advocate for me, having already bound himself to Rabbi Hirsch. Lasker recommended to engage Mr. von Denzin, M. P., as my parliamentary representative; but this gentleman declined, reasoning that he could hardly hope for success in a Jewish affair, when his opponent was an authority of the rank of Edward Lasker."

The law was passed on July 28, 1876. The members of the Religionsgesellschaft received it with mixed feelings. The Frankfurt-born members loathed the idea of secession. Deep-rooted affection for beloved traditions and innate loyalty formed ties with the Gemeinde, which they did not intend to break. Many, on the other hand, among them rabbis, considered the bill a potential instrument to extract concessions from the community. Others again saw beyond their own circle; they did not engage in parish pump politics. They foresaw the ruin and break-up of many small Jewish communities, because their members, on the strength of the that bill, could escape the burden of maintaining their societies, and as a matter of fact, within a few years more than a hundred small Kehillas disappeared. Synagogues and school buildings had to be sold. In Niederursel, for instance, and in other places they had to bury the *Sifre Torah*, which they were unable to sell. It happened as it had been predicted.

Rabbi Hirsch ignored all warnings and difficulties, rejected every suggestion of peace with the Gemeinde and steadily pursued his plans.

On September 17, 1876, he celebrated his twenty-fifth jubilee. Answering the ovation which was enthusiastically offered to him, he maintained that this was in reality the

jubilee of the congregation and he suggested solemnizing it by leaving *ad hoc* the mother community and escaping once and for all the influence of the reformers. But nobody seemed inclined to follow his advice.

This appeal was repeated from the pulpit on *Simbath Torah* in a passionate sermon and now it transpired that Rabbi Hirsch, his sons and several members of the council had in fact informed the lawcourts that they had withdrawn from membership of the Jewish community of Frankfurt.

The news came as a bombshell. By far the great majority of the members of the Society never intended to separate from their old community, and now their rabbi himself had done it without making the slightest effort to obtain the recognition of their just demands, without any struggle for their rights. It seemed incredible to them. They quoted the Bible and reminded him that even in actual warfare one was obliged to offer peace by negotiation to a city which was to be attacked. They wanted to act as practical men and not as zealots.

Those who opposed secession convoked a general meeting of the Religionsgesellschaft. This took place on October 15, 1876, and was presided over by the chief of the Hirsch party, Emanuel Schwarzschild, who under the influence of his leader refused point-blank to negotiate with the Gemeinde, claiming that secession was a purely private affair and therefore there was no reason for treating the matter officially. For years, he said, the Gemeinde had deliberately suppressed orthodoxy. For years the members of the Religionsgesellschaft, which he considered the only true guardian of traditional Judaism, had complained; now they should act and leave the Gemeinde. Mr. Michael Mainz, a scion of one of the oldest Frankfurt families and son of the revered Rabbi Moses Mainz, opposed secession. He admitted the various sins of omission on the part of the Gemeinde, but warned against an open breach. Wholesale secession would leave all power in the hands of the Gemeinde, all the institutions, the management of the charities, including the hospital and cemetery, would be left to their arbitrary power, whereas by means of negotiation much could be gained and some-

thing built up that would be a *Kiddush Hashem*. If properly approached, the Gemeinde would be sensible, and he proposed the election of a committee to treat with the Gemeinde. The chairman rejected this, but suggested individual "Austrittler" ("sessionists"), on giving legal notice, should inform the Gemeinde that they were ready to pay also in the future to the various charitable institutions including those involving burial rights. Now this shows clearly beyond any doubt that even the chairman of the Religionsgesellschaft was not yet prepared to sanction a complete break. Mainz warned them again, saying the Gemeinde would not accept a *dictum* and asked them to put his motion to the vote. This the chairman emphatically refused; he said this was not a matter which could be decided by a majority. In point of fact he knew only too well that the majority was against him.

The meeting ended without result. Some people signed the declaration recommended by the chairman, but the great majority refused.

And yet the meeting was a memorable one, because from that date hostilities on the part of the Hirsch party against the Gemeinde became more and more pronounced. This campaign was pursued for years in an unworthy manner; the weapons of the Austrittler were a grave distortion and gross travesty of true facts, false rumors and a perversion of the truth, creating confusion and unhappiness all round.

Whilst his partisans disgraced themselves by their outrages, Rabbi Hirsch himself shot his bolts from the pulpit. His arrow was his eloquence.

The first action of the Hirsch party was to spread the news that the Gemeinde had accepted the notorious Schwarzschild formula. Surprising as this seemed, it created delight in the ranks of the adherents because it meant peace and several of them did now, what had been intended by the circulation of the alleged news, they signed the formula.

The rumor was a deliberate lie and the Gemeinde made that clear. Subsequently they addressed a letter to the Religionsgesellschaft stating that, whilst they must positively refuse to deal with Austrittlers, they were inclined to grant far-reaching concessions to those who would remain members

of the Gemeinde. The Religionsgesellschaft's answer was non-committal in form and ambiguous in matter, to such an extent that the Gemeinde considered the correspondence terminated.

Those who decided to remain members now communicated with the Gemeinde and formed a committee to find ways and means to avoid in future any responsibility for the management of such institutions as synagogue and Philanthropin, which were not conducted in an orthodox manner, and yet remaining within the brotherhood under full and ample guarantees for the satisfaction of their demands.

No sooner had Rabbi Hirsch heard that the Gemeinde was seriously inclined to grant concessions than he declared: "Never mind what the talks between the parties may be, it is an *issur* to remain in the old Kehilla," and Emanuel Schwarzschild informed the Committee accordingly. Their spokesman, the learned Dr. Heinemann, a noted *lamdan*, who already at the early age of 21 possessed *Hatarath boraah*, answered that the whole orthodoxy would willingly submit to Rabbi Hirsch, if he could prove the *issur* from the *Shulhan Aruch*. Schwarzschild duly reported this answer; the reply came from the pulpit in one of those sermons which amazed the world. It was the Sabbath of *Parshat Toledoth*. Rabbi Hirsch spoke with unparalleled vigor; he scorned Heinemann's request, stating that things which are self-evident are never mentioned in the *Shulhan Aruch*, for instance, that Jews should not embrace Christianity. He strongly protested against the misuse of rabbinical knowledge; he called the Gemeinde *minim ve-appikorsim*, (heretics and dissenters), and stigmatized anyone who remained with them as being a *min* himself. He concluded his sermon with the words: "You *must* listen to my words. *Ki sifthe kohen*. For the lips of the priests, etc." [Mal., 2, 7].

Whilst Hirsch remained adamant, the Gemeinde showed great understanding. Negotiations went on in the Committee, but Hirsch's party went on fighting. Yet the progress of segregation was slow. New stunts were required. On *Parshat Vaychi* Rabbi Hirsch said, beginning quite mildly: "I come today not as a preacher, but as a friend, as your father."

He quoted the words, *ve-shimu el Yisroel avichem*, and he went on: "If the man appointed to teach the truth errs, the responsibility is his, but the community must obey." In fact, a kind of declaration of infallibility.

The pourparlers between Gemeinde and Committee made progress. To destroy this effect Hirsch's partisans resorted to strange methods. They influenced the butcher, a man named Sundheimer, who provided meat for the hospital, to declare his withdrawal from the community, anticipating that the Gemeinde would retaliate and cancel their contract and this would incidentally constitute a breach of the new agreement, which *inter alia* stipulated that meat for the hospital should be bought from a butcher of the Religionsgesellschaft. But the Gemeinde rose to the occasion. Spontaneously they decided to reorganize their own *shebitha* and to put it under the sole agency of the Committee; until then they would continue to buy from Sundheimer. Much was due to the conciliatory influence exercised by the various members of the Mainz family, and Hirsch saw in their senior, R. Moshe Mainz, his most feared adversary.

Rabbi Moshe Mainz was the doyen of Frankfurt's *lamdanim*, a man of extraordinary learning and of ascetic piety. He was one of the eleven founders of the Religionsgesellschaft, who had extended a call to R. Hirsch to be their spiritual leader, but not to crush that Gemeinde which they still honored.

Mainz emphasized over and over again that segregation from the community would jeopardize the true interests of Frankfurt Jewry, and would especially injure the charitable societies and all other humanitarian institutions; and he had frequently declared that the casuistic arguments of R. Hirsch on this question were not conclusive; and the public believed him, as it was known that he was the greater *lamdan* of the two.

To conquer the opposition of Moshe Mainz and to win him over to their side, the Hirsch party approached Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger of Würzburg, commonly known as "the Würzburger Rav," who had in 1872 signed the so-

called Spitzer declaration and who had recently, when consulted, expressed himself in favor of secession.

Bamberger was the greatest living talmudist in Germany. He was a perfect saint, a man who in the proverbial way taught peace and pursued it. It was for the sake of peace that he had advised some friends to submit to the dictum of Hirsch, whose partisans now tried to force the hands of Bamberger and make him fight their battle.

Two secessionists, Isaac Bing and Adolf Dann, were rushed to Würzburg, to invite Bamberger to Frankfurt, so that he should influence Mainz and break his resistance. The most dramatic phase in the whole movement was reached.

Bamberger heard now *for the first time* the full story of the case and this even from the Hirsch party. He was not convinced; he too had so far considered the problem rather as one of expediency, because he was led to believe that a divorce from the reformers in Frankfurt was in the interest of orthodoxy. After having closely interrogated the messengers, he did not at all feel sure that his previous views would continue to hold good, especially when he should have heard those of a mastermind like R. M. Mainz. He refused to go, but when his visitors, deeply disappointed, exclaimed: "So our journey has been in vain," Bamberger tried to comfort them and proposed they should go back and give him all their arguments once more in writing. He would then study the position again and consider what was to be done. Bamberger received in due course a series of notes, signed by Bing, *but not by Dann*. Soon afterwards when a Mr. Eisenmann repeated a pressing invitation and Rabbi Fromm, the son-in-law of Bamberger, supported Eisenmann, Bamberger went to Frankfurt to meet R. Moshe Mainz.

He went reluctantly. The result of the momentous meeting between the two Gaonim was the following: Rabbi Moshe Mainz refuted all the talmudic arguments of Hirsch, one by one, and proved that adherents to the community under the proposed new agreement would not commit any *issur*, because the Gemeinde pursued many and various laudable purposes besides synagogue and school.

The most essential point, however, which was unknown

to Bamberger, was that the Gemeinde had already yielded to the well-known objections of the conservatives.

Whilst Bamberger accepted the deliberations of Mainz, as far as they were based on talmudic grounds, he now wanted to know what practical advantages for orthodoxy could be expected from a covenant with the Gemeinde.

The answer was given in precise terms:

1. The Gemeinde will reorganize the *shebitha* on traditional lines together with the sale of meat.
2. The Gemeinde is to build a ritual bath.
3. The Gemeinde gives guarantees for the orthodox conduct of hospital, conservative synagogue service and cemetery.
4. No part of the taxes paid by the subscribers to the new covenant are to be spent on expenses for liberal service or liberal schools.
5. The Gemeinde puts all its religious institutions under the management of a "Ritual Commission," consisting of seven members; two of them to be delegated by the Gemeinde, but five from the ranks of the orthodox members, for life, and the decisions of that commission should be final.
6. A *Dayan* is to be appointed who must have *hatarath horaah* from a recognized orthodox authority, to inspect and to control all these arrangements.

Bamberger, having now heard both parties, declared that no blame could be put on those who remained within the Gemeinde under this new agreement.

The effect produced by this decision was overpowering. The Hirsch party had counted on Bamberger implicitly. They were furious and stigmatized Bamberger's declarations as a breach of faith. Rabbi Hirsch arraigned Bamberger in a pamphlet written with the full force of his brilliant dialectics and called his action a *bêtise*, maintaining that it was not permissible that one *Talmud bacham* should negative any legal decision of a colleague, but he ignored the fact that *his own people had asked Bamberger for his opinion*.

Bamberger replied. His answer breathed truthfulness, but he was not a match for Rabbi Hirsch. Whilst Hirsch's challenges were built up on the logic of illusion, poor Bam-

berger's answer contained facts only. He proved the negative value of Hirsch's assertions, he showed the mistakes in Hirsch's statements. The scholar could follow Bamberger's account, but the layman found his story weak, his language almost apologetic. In connection with the Spitzer case Hirsch had charged Bamberger right out with duplicity; in vain Bamberger protested that the problems of Vienna and Frankfurt were not analogous Bamberger begged to discontinue further public controversy and asked for arbitration, stating that since time immemorial, divergencies between *talmide bachanim* had been settled by consultations with the various great men. Indeed the basis of our halachic literature was *sheeloth u-teshuvoth*. In vain!

Rabbi Hirsch, in a second pamphlet hit out once more, hammered pitilessly on his adversary: he unearthed a certain statement which Hatham Sofer had written sixty years earlier, but which was according to grammarians not quite correctly translated; he called Bamberger's suggestions childish and his intimations grandfatherly admonitions. And from the pulpit, on *Shabbath ha-gadol* he shouted into the room: "For a lifetime I have considered that stalwart in the old city on the Main a pillar of strength in orthodoxy. I looked up to him with reverence and deep respect. I regarded him as our great master, but that I should live to see this man support *avodah zorah* wounds me to the core." His words were: "Dass ich diesen Mann der *Awaudoh soroh* die Stange halten sehen muss, tut mir in der Seele weh!" This passionate outburst certainly secured some more "Austritt" declarations, but it alienated scores of educated young men from orthodoxy and this for ever. Bamberger was never forgiven. When a year later he died, hundreds of rabbis followed his coffin. Jews and Gentiles vied to show their respect, even the Prince-Regent of Bavaria sent the horses for the hearse. Neither Rabbi Hirsch nor the Religionsgesellschaft were represented at the funeral.

The Gemeinde took no notice of all these outbursts. They conducted the negotiations in a statesmanlike manner and the new covenant was signed by both parties in Feb-

ruary, 1877. An atmosphere of mutual confidence was established.

For the members of the Religionsgesellschaft the position was in the meantime as follows: In the beginning "Austritt" seemed a practical step; later Rabbi Hirsch turned it into a religious duty. After Bamberger's *Halachah* this did not hold good any more. So they stamped it a political question and the deplorable feud in Frankfurt's orthodoxy, which undermined the peace of a peace-loving community, became more and more aggravated.

It was therefore a purely political move when R. Hirsch asked his community to acquire a cemetery of its own; he knew a Kehillah without a cemetery is not independent and he wanted to wipe out any association with the reformers. But this time there seemed to be no response to the suggestion. Once more he entered the pulpit. He started his address calmly in a matter-of-fact form and went on to tell the audience, the first question after death, when you appear before God would be: "Are you 'ausgetreten'?" (Have you left the community?), and he asserted the necessity not only of secession but of having a cemetery of their own. Stronger and stronger became his entreaty, like thunder sounded his challenge, and his tirades culminated in the fearful words: "Rather be buried in Sachsenhausen under the sign of another faith than in communion with those." (The Christian cemetery was in Sachsenhausen.)

The whole congregation trembled. We were shaken with excitement. That day we left the synagogue in grave apprehension and we asked ourselves, was this the voice of the very same man to whom we were used to listen rapturously when he expounded the beauty and greatness of Israel's eternal laws and their religious and ethical values? Was it necessary still to brandish the rod when the Gemeinde offered the olive branch?

And now the moment has arrived when *two important facts must be recorded*. One gives information about conditions at the time of the formation of the Religionsgesellschaft; the other throws more light on the actual result of the "Austritt" movement.

1. In sermons and in writings, when dwelling on the marvellous achievements of his young Kehilla, Rabbi Hirsch loved to emphasize that eleven men built up the Religionsgesellschaft. Well, in their unbounded loyalty, his followers granted to his genius the privilege of publishing his own version, which was so often repeated that soon nobody doubted the correctness of the story; it became a beautiful legend. But nobody can tell anymore with certainty who all the eleven were. The names perpetuated in the entrance hall of the synagogue on a bronze memorial tablet differ from those which came to us by the contemporaries. And yet, people who know next to nothing about Frankfurt, know the tale of the famous eleven. But it is a fallacy. The eleven were the signatories of the petition which had to be presented to the government. Behind them stood a body of many distinguished, high-minded, orthodox, Frankfurt-born *baale batim*. I feel I must give you some names, of course outside the eleven:

Wolf Bass, M. H. Bass, Meier Goldschmidt sen, Benedict Goldschmidt, David Rapp, Luder Rapp, Moses H. Schiff, Juda Kulp, Moses Michael Oppenheim, Mich. Mainz, senior, Meier Mainz, M. Is. Oppenheim, Baron Anselm Rothschild, Baron Willy Rothschild, M. J. Kirchheim, Menko Kulp, Nathan Marcus Oppenheim, M. B. Kann, Elias Schuster, Herz Weiller, Ph. Abraham Cohen, and scores more.

These gentlemen soon formed the backbone of the new society, and without their support, there would not have been a Religionsgesellschaft, nor would Rabbi Hirsch have been invited to come to Frankfurt. The first general meeting of the Religionsgesellschaft dealt already with eighty members, not with eleven.

2. The second point is likewise most instructive. I mentioned the increase in the membership of the Religionsgesellschaft, but the new members were nearly all newcomers to Frankfurt and not Frankfurt-born people. It was the time when the influx from the provinces into the big cities was considerable, and those Jews who were religious were attracted by the Religionsgesellschaft, by its service as well as by its school. All these new arrivals had not the slightest interest

in the Gemeinde of which they had automatically become members. No memories connected them with the *Beth Olam*, no tradition with the old Gemeinde; therefore they could have left it with a light heart, the more so as the law of secession would have meant for them financial relief. Even of these, only a small number answered the command of Rabbi Hirsch. When the official list was published, it was disclosed that of 355 members—this figure represents the number of members of the Religionsgesellschaft previous to the "Austritt" movement—of the Religionsgesellschaft, only 85 had left the mother institution. An analysis of this figure showed that the list was composed of officers of the society, the staff of school and synagogue, and others dependent on influential members, and a number of people who had come to Frankfurt from the provinces. But for this motley crowd, the Austritt movement in Frankfurt—as it was originally planned—would have been a complete failure.

We cannot get away from the fact that 75% of the congregants did *not* obey the command of their rabbi.

Rabbi Hirsch himself never found the way to the old Frankfurt Jewish inhabitants. And, what was worse, he never sought it. Rabbi Hirsch was never a member of the ancient and celebrated *Shash-Hevrah*, he never joined any of the many learned Jewish societies, he never took part in the management of the various humanitarian and charitable institutions; on the other hand, he belittled the so-called Frankfurt *minhagim*, he kept aloof from everything which was not strictly connected with his own community. He even boycotted the orphanage because he disliked its synagogue service.

The Gemeinde carried out their contract faithfully. The appointment of the new *Dayan* was proceeded with; it offered difficulties because the candidates were intimidated by the Hirsch party and withdrew almost immediately on hearing of the wrath of R. Hirsch and the risks of their prospective position. One candidate, a Dr. Plessner, inquired to which faction Baron Rothschild belonged, he was anxious to know on which side the bread was buttered.

When in the end [Rabbi Marcus] Horovitz was elected

as a rabbi of the Community he received scores of threatening letters and many warnings: even friends feared that through his presence the feud would flare up afresh. One man wrote: "Beware, when Hirsch hates, his hatred knows no mercy." Rabbi Hildesheimer felt likewise uneasy and afraid of further trouble. Only two men congratulated Dr. Horovitz unreservedly: Dr. David Hoffmann and Professor Jacob Barth.

Horovitz's election was a lucky one; his activity was crowned with success from the start. His community increased enormously and soon the Gemeinde had to build a new orthodox synagogue and it was in this wonderful house of worship that a few years later on one of his begging tournees Dr. Israel Hildesheimer, now wholeheartedly with Horovitz, delivered first a rabbinic discourse and later a halachic lecture. This was deeply resented by Rabbi Hirsch and he could not abstain from attacking even Hildesheimer in a sermon. With caustic comment he derided the methods of the wandering parson, who thanks to his physical strength is able to appear everywhere. "But," he added, "*lo be-hayil ve-lo be-koah ki im be-rubi*" ['Not by might nor by power but by my spirit'].

It is not my task to put on record more examples of the acrimonious manner in which the strife was waged, but it is highly interesting to note that the *whole position was essentially altered*. It was not any more the fight between conservatism and neology, it had changed into a clan quarrel between orthodox and orthodox: brothers were against brothers, fathers against children, pupils against masters, and the air was filled with venomous slander. The institutions under the control of the Ritual-Commission were at once declared *pasul* and taboo for the members of the Religionsgesellschaft.

Today after sixty years when events belong to history, the question is raised, was all that necessary? The answer is bluntly: "No."

For nearly twenty-five years Rabbi Hirsch strove to crush the Gemeinde and to gain the lead in Frankfurt's religious affairs. Was it piety that prompted him in his action,

or was it ambition? It is not for me to judge. Even historians so far seem disinclined to pronounce a sentence; they write comparatively little about the movement and they studiously avoid going into details. Some critics, amongst them Louis Ginzberg of New York, who ought to know something about Frankfurt, have rejected Hirsch's attitude in this separation question in plain words.

I repeat, I cannot judge, I can only speak of the results of the fight, and paradoxical as it may sound, to that very same Gemeinde which no effort was spared to reduce, new lustre was added, new life was infused. The Gemeinde was strengthened more and more, and in due succession three distinguished pious and learned rabbis, each one an adornment of his profession, were working there with splendid success, endearing themselves to their community. New orthodox institutions were established which formed, as Mainz had predicted, a *Kiddush Hashem*. Above all: actual recognition of uncurbed orthodoxy on traditional lines within the old Gemeinde was procured. Today the Gemeinde has three orthodox synagogues and two orthodox rabbis, and of course an orthodox *Beth Din* and orthodox religious classes; the Ritual Commission still fulfils its functions and the conservative party is adequately represented on the council of the Gemeinde.

The movement as such was a matter of the past. It came on like lightning and was carried out precipitately and the chief action lasted only from September to February. The movement was revolutionary in all its aspects. Nothing betrayed thoughtfulness, nor discretion and it was pushed on recklessly regardless of the consequences. Consequences? In 1852 the young Religionsgesellschaft was a circle where harmony ruled and there was unity and enthusiasm. In 1877 it presented the picture of a cockpit, where spitfires displayed their passions. This was one of the consequences of the Austritt movement.

Samson Raphael Hirsch made one mistake. He worked on the surface only and did not enter into the depth of the problem. He worked for the immediate future only and did not do full justice to the nobler feelings of his flock. For once

the great and world-renowned master missed that clear vision in which he used to excel in all his doings and he ignored the time-honored words of our sages: "*Al tifrosh min ha-tzibur*"; "Do not separate thyself from the community and do not use the Torah as an aureole wherewith thou canst aggrandize thyself."

The evolutions of a whole century have been before us. First we saw just one generation after Mendelssohn's death, liberals inspired by cherished ideals fight for emancipation from the alleged yoke of old pietism. One generation later we saw conservatives, who in the meantime had gained worldly education and accomplishment, rally under the flag of neo-orthodoxy, struggling for a place in the sun against liberal pretensions. And when another generation had gone by, we witnessed the noisy movement of secession, which appears now as a passing episode. Finally, however, we saw things right themselves, thanks to the conquering force of common sense. Liberals and conservatives of the old Frankfurt Gemeinde once started the contest as earnest antagonists; they ended by being friends, who now, though on different roads, are walking hopefully and harmoniously together towards a common and honorable goal.