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THE 1912 RICHTLINIEN

HISTORICALLY AND THEOLOGICALLY CONSIDERED

Roberto D. Graetz

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts in Hebrew Letters and Ordination

Referee, Prof. Dr. Jakob J. Petuchowski

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DIGEST

Following the Rabbinical Conferences of the 1840's the center of the Reform movement in Judaism left the European continent and took roots in the United States. The following period in the history of Reform Judaism in Germany has long been neglected. It is the purpose of this study to examine the development of German Jewish liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

After an attempt to revive the spirit of the Conferences at the Augsburg and Leipzig Synods, reform entered a period of stagnation mainly due to a lack of inspired leadership and committed followers. This state of affairs came to an end at the beginning of the twentieth century with the creation of new lay and rabbinic organizations dedicated to the modernization of Judaism.

The creative period that followed extended until the outbreak of the First World War. The Liberal movement of this age was an heir to the Reform movement of the previous century yet not identical with it. In order to set the stage for that twenty year period we shall review the development of religious liberalism in Germany towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The leading figures of the period that followed attempted to shape a movement out of a mass of Jews who no longer could associate with the more traditional currents. Through the publication of a journal, Liberales Judentum,

and regularly held conventions they succeeded in revitalizing Liberal Judaism in Germany.

In order to give direction to the movement the rabbis undertook, in what constituted the most ambitious project of this period, to lay down guide lines for its members to follow.

Through a study of the most important rabbinic figures of that time we shall determine what their precise intention was when they drew up the Richtlinien zu einem Programm für das liberale Judentum, which was adopted by sixty-three rabbis in 1912.

After establishing the rabbis' position with regard to the Richtlinien I shall analyze the document, which contained one section of basic principles, one dealing with personal practice and a third one dealing with congregational activities.

I shall continue the present study with a discussion of what transpired at the Posen Convention of 1912 when the rabbis presented their program to the laity for adoption as the magna carta of their movement. I shall conclude with an analysis of the reasons that led to the rejection of the Richtlinien by the movement and the following decline in creative activity within German Jewish liberalism.

Dedicated in grateful appreciation to the two men who have helped and influenced me most through my years at the Hebrew Union College.

To Rabbi David H. Wice, who took an interest in my well being and aided me with his counsel. In his rabbinate I found a model for my own.

To Rabbi Dr. Jakob J. Petuchowski, who taught me and advised me. Through his writings and the hours he dedicated to me he has shown me the path towards a meaningful Liberal Judaism.

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CHAPTER I

Historical Background

In order to understand the problems of German/Jewish religious liberalism at the beginning of the twentieth century, and more important for our study, the problems of the rabbinic leadership of that period, one must go back to see the peculiar conditions of German Jewry and the Reform movement during the second half of the nineteenth century. It was during that period, after the original goals of the earlier reformers had been accomplished, once the Jew had achieved a great deal of emancipation, becoming integrated to the political, cultural and economic life of Germany,[1] that all the problems took shape which the German liberals of the period that most concerns us would have to deal with.

Together with the process of emancipation of the Jew the old organizational structures of the Jewish communities fell. The new structure began to take shape first by state law, and only afterwards by organizational efforts within the Jewish community. The basic structure was set up by the Prussian law of 1847 in which compulsory membership in the Jewish community was dictated.[2] By this law any Jew who wished to be recognized as one had to be affiliated to the Jewish community in his region. That community in turn had the legal right to tax its members. Those who chose not to affiliate (i.e. did not pay their tax) would not qualify as Jews according to the state definition and would have no rights to participate in Jewish functions or be buried in Jewish cemeteries.

The most important effect of this law was to maintain the Jewish community under an umbrella organization, unified in structure if not always ideologically. Groups of Jews who might have been dissatisfied with the religious atmosphere of their community would have given a second thought before separating themselves from the central organization. The option remained open for them to set up parallel structures but it would automatically have implied double taxation since it was doubtful that the central organization would have supported it, while the individual members would still be obliged to pay their taxes to that organization, in addition to paying his dues in his new congregation. In a few isolated instances this did in fact occur, i.e. the Reform Congregation in Berlin[3] and the small Orthodox Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft founded in 1851.[4]

Given this organizational unity, a spirit of compromise permeated the work of German rabbis during this period. This spirit of compromise kept many from enacting thorough reforms which--some thought--could have attracted those who were abandoning Judaism either by conversion or simply by indifference. Immersed in modern German culture, assimilating the teachings of science and modern philosophy, a large segment of the Jewish population who had no interest in Jewish education. The ignorance that resulted bred indifferentism. In most

cases, out of respect for parents or simply by not being able to accept the teachings of Christianity, baptism was not the salvation sought by the emancipated Jew. With the passage of time this segment became increasingly larger, posing the greatest danger and challenge for the survival of Judaism in any form in Germany during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The social agencies created within the kehillot, the institutions of learning that were being created, and the large number of periodicals of Jewish interest that were appearing at the time were supported by a minority of the Jewish community. It was the contribution of a single individual which allowed the creation of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, not the interest and the money of the large Jewish community.

It was this spirit of indifferentism, which permeated German Jewry since the the breaking down of the ghetto barriers, that the rabbis had tried to combat earlier by means of the Rabbinical Conferences. Abraham Geiger had pioneered the idea when he first called for such a conference in 1837. It was thought that the people's movement away from Judaism could be stemmed "If, however, a number of rabbis make unanimous declaration as to the non-essentiality of this or that observance, thus loosening the bonds of formalism."[5]

It appeared that in the post emancipation period

the rabbis, in their zealous clinging to rabbinic Judaism, had failed to bring the Jews close to their religion. Now the pressure was mounting to bring Judaism close to the Jews. The goal was not achieved. The Rabbinical Conferences gathered in Brunswick, Frankfort and Breslau in the years 1844, 1845 and 1846 respectively were rich in theological debate and afforded the non-orthodox rabbis an opportunity to verbalize and legitimize their own positions, which though not totally in accord with rabbinic Judaism were still far from where the indifferent layman stood.

The decisions taken by the rabbis at these conferences with regard to liturgy, Shabbat, holidays, marriage law, religious education, etc. constituted landmarks in the development of the Reform movement, it is none the less difficult to agree with Philipson's lofty evaluation that "It was here that the spirit of Jewish tradition and the spirit of modernity met each other face to face in public view and became welded in firm embrace."[6] The orthodox movement attacked the conferences in the most virulent terms, the radical elements in the Jewish community decried the fact that the rabbis had not gone far enough in their reforms. The conferences, with all the publicity they received failed to bring any closer to Judaism the mass of indifferent Jews that stood very much in the periphery of the Jewish world.

Although these conferences were to meet yearly the

one called for 1847 to gather in Manheim already did not materialize. Interest was fading and there were already voices calling for a synod to take the place of the conferences since "the people should and must have a voice in the deliberations and decisions."[7]

The following twenty years showed a great decrease in activity among reform Jews. The political upheaval of 1848, the activities of the separatist orthodoxy, and the conservative influence of the Breslau Seminary all militated against continued reform.*

The next Rabbinical Conference would have to wait until 1868, when it would gather at Cassel. Here it became clear that the conferences could no longer achieve positive results. Few rabbis answered the call to assemble. When the conference finally convened only twenty-four rabbis attended. Considering that during the previous years quite a few rabbis had been ordained from the Breslau Seminary, it was an indicator of the tendency of that school that none of its recent graduates participated at the conference in Cassel.

The main purpose of this gathering was to achieve a certain degree of uniformity in liturgical reform, but the wide gap that separated the opinions of Abraham Geiger and M. Joel, a one-time member of the faculty at Breslau, made it impossible to reach this goal in

*A fuller discussion of the Rabbinical seminaries will be found later in this chapter. R.G.

wide areas.[8] Only in some few points could all assembled agree. All other topics which had been brought up at the conference were referred to committees which would have to report at a synod to be called by this conference.[9]

It had been the feeling of those assembled that "no definite action should be taken on any of the other subjects presented in order to disprove the frequently preferred charge that the rabbis had hierarchical ambitions; this conference was to be considered merely preparatory to a synod."[10] In order to give some content to the upcoming synod, the Cassel Rabbinical Conference set up four committees designed to prepare reports on the subjects of liturgy, ritual laws, marriage laws, and schools and religious education.[11] These reports were to be sent in advance to the delegates appointed to the synod to be discussed there under procedures to be decided during the opening sessions.

The first synod finally gathered under great expectations in Leipzig from June 29 until July 4, 1869. Even though the majority of the delegates came from within Germany their numbers were disappointing; many of the organizations that had favourably received the idea of a synod failed to send delegates. In addition to the German congregations represented, delegates from several European countries and from the United States took part in the proceedings. The most distinguished

lay thinker of Germany at the time, the philosopher Moritz Lazarus, was elected to preside over the meeting.[12]

It was not noticed immediately that it would be difficult to achieve consensus in a wide variety of subjects, since many opinions were represented. In the liberal end of the spectrum were Geiger and Philipson, while the conservative trend was represented by Joel and Landau; besides there were disagreements as to the nature of the meetings, some viewed the synod as an assembly to decide on matters of a practical nature (Philipson), while others thought that the assembly should only discuss theory while practical matters should be left to the individual congregations (Geiger).[13] In order to bridge these gaps Philippson submitted a resolution expressing a philosophy to which all could agree. This "statement of Principle" read as follows in its final form:

> The synod declares Judaism to be in agreement with the principles of modern society and of the state as these principles were announced in Mosaism and developed in the teachings of the prophets, viz., in agreement with the principles of the unity of mankind, the equality of all as far as duties toward and rights from the fatherland and the state are concerned, as well as the complete freedom of the individual in his religious conviction and profession
>
> The synod recognizes in the development and realization of these principles the surest pledges for Judaism and its followers in the present and the future, and the most vital conditions for the unhampered existence and the highest development of Judaism.
>
> The synod recognizes in the peace of all religions and confessions among one another, in their mutual respect and rights, as well as

> in the struggle for the truth--waged, however, only with spiritual weapons and along strictly moral lines--one of the great aims of humanity.
>
> The synod recognizes, therefore, that it is one of the essential tasks of Judaism to acknowledge, to further and represent these principles and to strive and work for their realization.[14]

Upon reading this resolution one could hardly say that it contributed to identify those assembled, or that it helped clarify the issues. It avoided mentioning possible reforms in order not to antagonize the conservative wing represented at the synod. The Synod pretended to represent all segments of Jewry when in fact it should have realized that it did not. This unrealistic approach was destined to hamper the proceedings and its ability to act, and would eventually lead to the realization that little good could come from further gatherings of this nature. If the intention of the Synod was to unify all of German Jewry behind a program it had failed before it even started since it failed to receive an endorsement from Orthodoxy, whose most prominent spokesman, Samson Raphael Hirsch, had violently attacked the gathering. If the purpose was to adopt reforms of significant import, it had to fail since the conservative elements represented would not go along with any such program.

From the practical point of view the synod adopted two important resolutions presented to the forum by committees established at the Cassell Rabbinical Conference. The first one dealt with the problem of schools and religious instruction. It encouraged the development

of good religious schools for youth of both sexes, for the training of teachers and for the establishment of institutions of higher learning in the science of Judaism. But once again the confused character of the assembly could be seen from a reading of the fifth paragraph of that resolution:

> The assembly declares that religious instruction in the school must avoid the critical method; the idealistic outlook of the young should not be blurred by the suggestion of doubts. For this very reason, however, the assembly expects our teachers to be wisely discreet in not ignoring the results of science, but to anticipate and prevent a conflict which may arise later in the soul of the growing young between religion and the commonly accepted scientific point of view.[15]

(One can't help but pity the teachers that had to be in charge of putting that resolution into practice within the halls of learning!)

The second item of importance dealt with at this first synod was the subject of liturgical reform. There was little on this subject that could be added to the very rich discussion held at the Frankfort Conference. Again the representatives were divided as to whether to consider the theological aspect of the service or the practical changes that should take place. Geiger, once again favoring theory and abstraction was clearly outvoted. The synod decided on paper in favor of the one year cycle of Torah reading--going back on the Frankfort resolution which had favored the three year cycle!, the elimination of prayers dealing with restoration of

animal sacrifice, the return to Palestine and the reference to a personal Messiah. Instead the new versions should emphasize the nature of the mission of Israel and the universalistic tendencies present in the Jewish continuum.[16]

Due to lack of time during this first synod all other resolutions proposed, including the reports of the committees on marriage and ritual law, had to be postponed until the next synod.

The Leipzig Synod closed leaving among the participants a false sense of accomplishment. Much of what they had discussed had previously been dealt with at the Rabbinical Conferences. Then and now the solutions hinged on how they would carry out their resolutions in the congregations represented. Then and now representatives to conference and synod failed to carry out much of what had been decided, leaving the gathering in a vacuum, not integrated to the lives and activities of German Jews.

The work of the first synod was to be continued the following year, but the Franco-Prussian war and its aftermath made it impossible to organize an event of this nature. The second synod had to wait until 1871, when it gathered in Augsburg. Fewer delegates from European countries other than Germany participated in this event, and the German delegation was considerably smaller than the one that had attended the previous

synod. Moritz Lazarus was again elected to preside over the meetings. In his opening remarks he voiced a frustration that must have been felt by many of the representatives: Two years had passed since the Leipzig synod and little or no action had been taken to carry out its resolutions or to revitalize the spiritual state of the German Jewish community in the spirit of the assembly.[17]

The fact that more work was accomplished at this gathering than at the first one may be attributed to its smaller membership. Even though highly influential rabbis and lay leaders participated at the gathering in Augsburg, some of the notables of the previous synod were conspicuously absent (i.e., Philippson).

The first order of business in Augsburg was to deal with the subject of marriage law. For a long time the practices of German society and emancipated Jewry in this area had not been consonant with rabbinic law. Already in 1844 the need to revise marriage law in Judaism was indicated by the fact that a commission to study the problem was appointed at the Brunswick Conference, but it did not report on either of the following two conferences. It was in this area where one could point to legitimate, innovative action on the part of the second synod. The problem was not tackled by deciding on guiding principles that would indicate what had to remain and what had to be abandoned from the traditional practices, instead points of special interest, practices that

caused particular problems were discussed and changed.

One of the main intentions of the reformers in this area was to grant women the same rights as they enjoyed in the rest of society. Therefore the synod endorsed the practice of exchanging rings--one must say endorsed and not innovated since this practice had been in use for some time among the reform Jews of Berlin and Frankfort.[18] The synod also abolished chalitzah and the prohibition of marriage during the period of s'firat ha-omer. During the course of the discussion of marriage laws other reforms were adopted, all with the intent of liberalizing marriage laws among Jews.[19]

The second area which demanded much consideration at the Augsburg synod was the one dealing with the revitalization of Shabbat. This area had been considered at great length at the Breslau conference of 1846, and there was little that the Synod could add in depth or range to that discussion. The synod dealt with the permissibility to travel on Shabbat, to engage in acts of charity, and to play the organ in the Synagogue during that day. The decisions were all in accordance with those adopted at Breslau twenty-five years earlier.

Even though no specific action was taken, there is one area of considerable interest that was discussed during the Augsburg synod. Rabbi Dr. Wassermann submitted a resolution calling for a revision of the Shulchan Aruch.[20] Despite the lengthy discussion on this subject it never

came to a vote. For various reasons it met with a great deal of opposition. On the one hand there was a group that maintained that to adopt a revision of the early code would have meant a tacit acceptance of rigid codes to rule the life of the community; this group suggested that a more appropiate action for the synod to take would have been to abolish the Shulchan Aruch outright. On the other hand there were spokesmen present that defended the code as an expression of the state of the law at the time it was written, admitting that later responsa, and even the resolutions of the synods and Rabbinical Conferences had the effect of revising the older code, thus making a total revision quite unnecessary. The thought was also expressed by some that a revision of the code to bring it up to date with the laws as they were being practiced by most German Jews would have left very little of the original document!

In retrospect it was probably wise for Rabbi Dr. Wassermann to withdraw his resolution and for the synod not to vote in favor of a revision. It would have suffered the same fate of the other reforms instituted by the synod, those that were already practiced by the community had little need for the legitimation process of a synodal vote, while those that were not accepted practice prior to the synod had little chance of being carried out after the closing of the assembly.

At the end of the second synod it was evident

that this type of assembly was not meeting the needs of the German Jewish community. The attempt to bring the laymen to participate in these events had failed. Respresentation of laymen was small at the first synod and even smaller at the second. The very subjects brought up for discussion made lay participation difficult. It was the theoretical and the highly specialized which concerned the synods, matters of which the lay Jews knew little and sometimes cared less. It was inevitable that the rabbis would dominate the proceedings as they did.

The third synod which was to come together in 1873 was never organized. In Seligmann's words:

> The synod that was to gather in 1873 never took place because of the death of Geiger, Aub, Low and others, and also because of a lack of interest. No manifestation worth mentioning--whether out of love or hate--followed, no loud echo was heard in response to the deliberations and resolutions of the synods. Neither congregations nor rabbis followed the recommendations of the synods. Thus the synods took place at a time that did not palpitate with the same rhythm that predominated during the rabbinic conferences, and came to an early end. Only as a seed for the future could they be considered of historical significance.[21]

Several factors combined to end temporarily the process of reform that had persisted in Germany for over fifty years. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was dedicated by German Jews to organize political and social institutions to combat a strong current of anti-semitism.[22] At the same time, due to the passage of the Lasker Law lay leadership attempted to stay away

from religious reforms in order to please the more traditionalist segments of the community and thus avoid the formation of congregations separate from the central kehillah and the drainage of funds that would accompany such a trend.

The principle of compulsory membership established by the legislation of 1847 was broken for the first time in 1876. Rabbi Samson Ralphael Hirsch, the appointed spiritual leader of the Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft, felt that the orthodox needs of his followers could not be met by the community. Hirsch claimed that the differences between the "Torah-true" Jews and the reform Jews were deeper than those splitting the Christian denominations.[23] With the help of Israel Hildesheimer of Berlin he convinced Eduard Lasker, a prominent member of parliament, to champion his cause there. Lasker presented the case arguing for liberty of conscience, and the Secession Law won parliamentary approval in July 1876.

Few occasions in the history of this period caused a stir comparable with the one raised by the Law of Secession. Not even all of Hirsch's followers in the Religionsgesellschaft were willing to seceed. The long tradition of a unified German Jewish community would not fall easily. Fellow orthodox rabbis gave hallachic decisions against secession, and throughout the campaign to get the law enacted the Deutch-Israelitische Gemeindebund,

a loose confederation of German Jewish communities, fought against it.[24]

After the Secession Law was passed several separatist-orthodox communities were established in Berlin (1869), Cologne, Hamburg, Strassburg, Königsberg, etc.. But a majority of the traditionalist Jews of Germany remained within the central community.

With the exception of the separatist-orthodox synagogues the rabbi was hired by the kehillah, not only as the rabbi of a synagogue but as the spiritual leader of the whole community. In the large centers of Jewish population, where the kehillah had more than one synagogue it could occur that orthodox and liberal rabbis were hired to serve different segments of the community, but in the cases of small communities the rabbi had to minister to all, compromise with all in order to keep the community intact. After the secession law compromises became more usual in an effort to avoid further schismatic occurrences.

> Since the fifth decade of the past century these individual schismatic efforts, which admittedly became more effective in the middle of the seventies, after the Lasker law, were like a paralysis acting on the lively spiritual movement of the forties. It allowed the supremacy of a theology of compromise, not concerned with the internal reconciliation of contradictions so much as in keeping the peace in the community. The whole second half of the eighteenth century, which carries the imprint of this peace policy, must be seen as a symptom of religious decadence since it did not produce as a result an internal peace but served only external politics.[25]

By the end of the nineteenth century most congregations in Germany were being served by rabbis ordained at three Rabbinical Seminaries created in the country between the years 1845-1873. Through the initiative of Ludwig Philippson and Abraham Geiger a commission had been set up at the Frankfort Rabbinical Conference to study the possibility of establishing a seminary for the training of rabbis. This commission reported its findings at the Breslau Conference of 1846, when it stated that it had found a wealthy Jew from Breslau who had made the funds available for the founding of such a seminary.[26] It had been assumed that the leader of such a seminary would be Geiger, but much to the disappointment of the reformers, the board selected to bring the seminary into existence chose Rabbi Zecheriah Frankel, who earlier had walked out of the Frankfort Conference over an argument related to the use of Hebrew in the liturgy, to be the first head of the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminary finally established in 1854. The intent of those who chose Frankel over Geiger as first head of that seminary was that he would be better able to represent more truly all of German Jewry, not being identified as a reformer and having been hailed by the orthodox rabbinate after his walk out from the Frankfort Conference.[27] The fears of an orthodox attack were justified, for soon after his appointment the orthodox published a list of questions, "Vier Worte des Glaubens," which they addressed to the

newly elected rector of the seminary.[28] To preserve the peace Frankel did not immediately answer those questions, but the break with orthodoxy was only a matter of time. It finally materialized when in 1861 Frankel published his volume Darke Mishna which came under violent attack from the orthodox rabbinate and earned Frankel the qualification that "his principles separate him from the association of Judaism and leave him no participation in the community of Israel."[29]

Disappointed with the conservative outlook that emanated from the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, Geiger worked for the founding of another institution for the training of rabbis. Again with the support of Philippson and Lazarus he arranged the founding of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums, later known as the Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums, which began operating in 1872 under the chairmanship of Lazarus, with Geiger himself as a member of the faculty for the rest of his life.[30]

After the strong dispute raised by Frankel's Darke Mishna and the creation of the Lehranstalt it became evident that the orthodox segment of the community would also create its own institution for the training of rabbis. This occurred in October 1873 through the efforts of Hildesheimer, who had been called to Berlin to lead the orthodox segment of the community and who became the first head of the Rabbiner Seminar für das

Orthodoxe Judenthum.[31]

A period of rest from rabbinic agitation for reform was the distinguishing mark of the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. The original aims of the early reformers had been achieved, the spirit of indifferentism which Conferences and Synods had fought against still prevailed in the religious life of the German Jew. Antisemitism and the rising Zionist movement involved the Jews of this period. It is interesting to note that during this period, conspicuous in the history of reform Judaism in Germany for its lack of conferences, assemblies and synods, laymen took the initiative to assume political control over central organizations. These initiatives did not always succeed, or their success was not necessarily permanent, but it demonstrated a growing awareness--which was lacking in the previous era--on the part of the laymen of the roll they could play in the process of reform. If there was a segment which identified with Judaism and whose interests were not being met by the community, that segment had the possibility to take over the leadership and change the system. This recourse had been always available, but rarely used by the laymen, who preferred to leave matters of religion to the rabbis.

The closing years of the nineteenth century also saw a new upswing in liturgical reform. Either for the use of their congregations, or under commission from the

regional organizations, prominent liberal rabbis compiled new prayerbooks. The most important efforts were the ones undertaken by Leopold Stein, Heinemann Vogelstein and M. Joel.[32] The latter two efforts were variations to the left and to the right of Geiger's earlier liturgical work. All these efforts showed that the liberal rabbis were still hard at work trying to imbue their congregants with a "liberal" religious spirit, yet pointed again to the fact that the total movement could not yet agree to a unified worship service for all.

At the end of this period of religious apathy and disorganization there appeared in Germany several organizations, the Union of Liberal Rabbis of Germany in 1898 and the Union for Liberal Judaism in 1908, among others, which will occupy us in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II

From 1898 to the Nuremberg Assembly

The last few years of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of a renaissance for Liberal Judaism in Germany. This period of renewed activity and enthusiasm would continue uninterrupted until the First World War. It was quite different from the early Reform movement in Germany and so were the reasons that brought it about.

The mainstream of liberal rabbis came out of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau. One generation after, the ideological battle between Abraham Geiger and Zecheriah Frankel had been resolved in favor of the latter. The liberal rabbis did not attempt to emulate the Reformgemeinde in Berlin, it stood alone; nevertheless the graduates from the Breslau school felt as strongly as any of the early reformers the wide gap that separated Jewish teaching from the life led by German Jews. The young graduates began to react against the strong grip with which orthodoxy controlled the life of the community. They did not desire a total break, as will be made abundantly clear in the present chapter, neither did they want to replace the orthodox monopoly with a liberal monopoly, but they strove to obtain equal rights for all--the liberal elements should have the opportunity to co-exist side by side with orthodoxy.

The Rabbinical Union of Germany, founded in 1884, could have provided an outlet where rabbis of different

persuasions would resolve their differences. Liberal and traditionalist Jews were assembled there, but had to carefully follow a rule that stated: "In the meetings of the board, the committees and in the general assemblies of the Union only those religious questions can be raised which will not infringe upon the traditional decisions. . .,"[33] thus making impossible any attempt to come to grips with the problems that beset German Jewry.

One of the few areas where apparently this Rabbinical Union could reach agreement was in its opposition to the growing Zionist movement. At the board meeting of the organization in 1897 a resolution was passed opposing the gathering of a Zionist Congress in Germany. The following year, at the general assembly--after the Congress had met in Basel rather than in Munich--the board asked for an endorsement of that resolution. Of the more than ninety rabbis assembled in Berlin only two voted against that resolution; it is interesting to note that one of these dissenting votes was cast by a young Leo Baeck.[34]

The only rabbis who had not joined this Union were those who led the separatist-orthodox congregations. In 1897 the traditionalists that belonged to the Union began to gather in a separate organization, and finally in 1898 thirty-four members of the General Union under the leadership of Rabbi Heinemann Vogelstein banded

together in the Union of Liberal Rabbis in Germany.

The first meeting of this Union took place in Berlin in 1899. The subjects that came under discussion, among others, were the prohibition of marriages during the period of s'firat ha-omer, the ceremony of Bar Mitzva and the subject of cremation. The discussions were free and open, the decisions not very innovative since many of these subjects had been previously discussed in Conferences and Synods. By American standards of Reform, the liberal rabbis in Germany were quite conservative in their outlook, and prominent American rabbis could hardly understand the shyness of their German counterparts.[35] It must be kept in mind that these German Rabbis, liberal as they were, attempted to maintain the unity of the Jewish community. They were interested in attracting back to Judaism the mass of indifferent Jews that were lost in the secular world, but not at the expense of unity in the German Jewish community. They were not radical reformers; the paths that American and German reform of this period followed were quite different.

During the second meeting of the Union, Rabbi Vogelstein brought the subject of chalitza up for discussion. The assembly did not pass any resolution on the subject, yet it was made clear that this as many other ceremonies would pass out of practice with disuse and the passage of time. Once again David Philipson could not comprehend why Jews of his age could spend

time discussing such a subject:

> Truly, there were too many burning questions involving the very life of Judaism itself to engage the attention of rabbis in meeting assembled for them to waste their deliberations on such an outgrown subject as chalitzah, of the very existence of which few Occidental Jews knew.[36]

Some of Philipson's despair can be understood if we recall that chalitzah had been extensively discussed and abolished at the Augsburg Synod, which had been attended by Rabbi Vogelstein. Yet it is further proof of how slow these rabbis were willing to move in order not to incur the wrath of their more conservative colleagues. All along the liberal rabbis of Germany wanted to be reasonable, not realizing that in any instance where even the slightest dot was changed the traditionalists would be offended. For an orthodox Jew it was change that was threatening, it did not make a difference whether a dot was being changed in a law or the whole Shulchan Aruch was being abolished. This important consideration was not understood by the liberal rabbis at the end of the nineteenth century and would not be understood by their successors in the twentieth century either.

The non-orthodox laymen moved in a different direction. By the end of the nineteenth century they were increasingly discontent with orthodox control over the Jewish communities of Germany, uninhibited as they were due to the Friedenspolitik tacitly carried out

by the liberal rabbis. Great political turmoil was produced in Berlin when Gustav Levinstein began his campaign for Sunday morning services. The liberal rabbis opposed his various proposals, but under ever increasing pressure a liberal party--neither orthodox nor extreme reform--began to acquire power and even win several elections. This lay political mood extended almost simultaneously to Frankfort and other centers of Jewish population, thus creating independent local parties that strove towards basically the same goals.[37]

It was up to the rabbis at this point to unify all these parties into a national movement. The elder rabbi of the liberal rabbinical association, Heinemann Vogelstein, with the support of many of the younger rabbis who were increasingly dissatisfied with the Rabbinical Union, issued a call in 1907 towards the formation of a Liberal Union. The façade of unity maintained by the Rabbinical Association had broken down, even though it met regularly, all segments of opinion, orthodox as well as liberal had independent organizations, in addition to this the orthodox segment had already organized a lay union. Years of frustrating meetings in the Rabbinical Union filled some of the younger liberal rabbis with energy and committment towards the new cause.[38]

> A gap, deep as the sea, had opened between Jewish theory as maintained by theologians and Judaism as it existed in practice among the great

> majority of German Jews. The abandonment of Judaism and the religious indifference became ever more frightening. Living Judaism stood in danger of becoming a religion which was to be found only among the rabbis.[39]

Thus, Caesar Seligmann, one of the leading rabbis of the liberal group described the state of German Jewry during that period.

Two meetings of select lay leaders and rabbis, in the autumn of 1907 in Frankfort and in January 1908 in Berlin, took place to lay the groundword towards the founding of the Vereinigung für das liberale Judenthum in Deutschland. This committee sent out two thousand copies of an invitation to the founding gathering that was to take place in Berlin at the beginning of May 1908. It read:

> Liberal Judaism is based on the recognition of the progressive development of Judaism, which makes possible the change or even elimination of some of its time bound appearances at times when that which is of the essence is in crisis.
>
> Standing firmly on the ground of Jewish loyalty, filled with an inner love for the great Jewish past, and with an unshakeable hope in its future it strives in the present time to chart a way which will combine the inherited religion, its ideas and statutes, its forms and institutions with the thought, the perception and life's possibilities in our time. . .
>
> . . . If Judaism is to become once again a living force for the majority of our German coreligionists, if it is to be preserved as a faithful inheritance for our children, then we must place ourselves firmly and unequivocally on the ground of Liberal Judaism, we must give Judaism new power through spiritualization and deepening it through science, through stimulation to spread in our religious schools the results of science, as well as through popular institutions

> and in particular through the establishment of religious services which will be able to move and elevate the heart and the soul of today's German Jews.
>
> With this in mind we call all those which stand on the same ground with us to form a large Union which shall include all of Germany. Through it will liberal ideas gain a powerful sounding board, force and authority will be provided to the liberal claims in the life of the community, and the liberal leadership shall know that a large mass of people stands behind them.[40]

All that which had not been accomplished by the Rabbinical Assemblies or the synods due to lack of support, a difficult political situation and the almost total indifference of the Jewish masses, was what this new Union would attempt to carry out through the combined efforts of rabbis and lay leaders: The bridging of the gap between Jewish life as it existed and Jewish teaching.

The initial invitation was answered by more than five hundred German Jews, including over fifty rabbis. Of these over two hundred laymen and thirty-two rabbis gathered in Berlin from many Jewish communities around the country for the founding meeting of the Union.[41]

In charge of the presentations leading to the first resolution were some of the founding members, Rabbis Vogelstein and Seligmann, Breslauer--the lay chairman of the Union--and Dr. Blau. Vogelstein's opening speech is an attempt to find a justification for change and reform in tradition. He correctly points out the non-monolithic nature of German orthodoxy, being different in 1908 from what it was one hundred years earlier, or even

from what it was in 1908 in Poland or Russia. He continues: "He who denies the development of Judaism and its ability to adapt, or who does not want to admit these things for the future must retire to the Judaism of the medieval ghetto, or declare himself guilty of irrelevance, become a victim of self-delusion and set himself, through his conduct, in contradiction with his own theories."[42] Vogelstein ends his presentation with a plea for tolerance, indicating that liberalism should not be a threat to orthodoxy, asking that liberals be allowed to carry out their program without attack from the non-liberal segments of the community.

Seligmann's speech, analyzing the state of German Jewry and outlining the program for the new liberal movement followed. He began by analyzing some of the "cures" prescribed for the ailing community. He expressed some sympathy for the growing Zionist movement, "Zionism is a search for a new home for the spirit in a home that is no longer a home; Zionism was in fact for many the way back to Judaism,"[43] but there is a dangerous tendency for that movement to become nothing more than a nationalistic or racist one. There are many who say that Judaism must be Zionism or it will be nothing, "but I say that Judaism must be religious or it will be nothing!" Thus, according to Seligmann, Zionism could have been part of the cure, but not if it insisted in reducing Judaism to a national concept without religion.

The second cure that was being proposed, according to this speaker, was to be "true to the law," if Judaism was anything it had to be orthodox. Traditional Jews attacked liberalism as a decadent movement, yet they failed to recognize that liberalism appeared only as a result of decadence in the community. Liberalism did not attack orthodoxy, it simply attracted those who had abandoned it. Orthodoxy was good during two thousand years,

> But today this form has lost its power over the masses. In ever greater numbers the succeeding generations have moved away from this Judaism. Woe, if there would have only been one unmoveable orthodoxy, and no other Jewish way of life in Germany! How many of the 600,000 Jews of Germany would have survived until today? Woe, if the abandonment of orthodoxy would have meant at the same time the abandonment of Judaism! Would not then by necessity, arrive the hour when Judaism would have to stand as a mother abandoned by all her children? There is no other way: The mother must move to meet her children; the mother, who loves her children, shall not say "they are no longer my children," rather she will follow them in their path and will softly attract them back.[44]

Rabbi Seligmann made clear that neither Zionism nor orthodoxy were enemies which liberalism wished to combat. Liberalism was not to be equated with comfortable religion, it stood against the masses of indifferent Jews who claimed that they were liberal, these the movement wished to fight. Liberal Judaism was to be based on solid historic Jewish ground. The attempt of liberal Judaism would be to bridge the gap between personal religion and historic religion, between internal religious feelings

and outer appearances. He concluded with a plea for unity and the adoption of the program in order to avoid utter subjectivism which would stand in the way towards possible action.

The program as it was presented at this opening assembly consisted of a few paragraphs which outlined what the Union would attempt to accomplish, why they needed to reform and through which means they would try to reach their goal. It spoke in favor of the resolution of contradictions between modern life and historic Judaism, the modernization of the religious service, the improvement of religious education through the use of findings made by the science of Judaism, and the full participation of women in religious activities. These goals were to be achieved by the publication of a periodical, educational speeches and their distribution, and through the creation of liberal Jewish youth organizations.

In addition to this program the committee that organized the Union submitted a resolution. This document appears simple, and almost unnecessary, but the debate it caused among the participants makes it necessary for us to take a closer look at it:

> Religious liberalism in Judaism finds its justification in the essence of Judaism and its historic development. It thus sets up, next to orthodoxy, a fully justified alternative in the life of German Jews.
> Just as religious liberalism recognizes orthodoxy's right to rule its religious life and does not coerce it in any way, it demands the same right and the same freedom. The recognition

> of this basic principle sets the stage for peaceful cooperation within the community. Our program contains the demands which Jewish liberalism makes upon itself, and as it wants them carried out in the communities. In accordance with the principle of freedom of thought coercion will not be exercised and the practical aspects of the program will be the responsibility of the local congregations.[45]

The general debate that preceeded the adoption of the resolution and the program gave a clear idea of the variety of expectations that had brought people to participate in this gathering. Among the rabbis there was a unity of purpose, if not necessarily of program. Some complained that the program was too general, but as a beginning they favored it. Some of the laymen, on the other hand, voiced opposition to both the resolution and the program. Some found the resolution unnecessary, a compromise with orthodoxy which they did not think necessary. Others viewed the program as too general, not giving clear enough instructions as to what the individual was to do. Both rabbis and laymen were in agreement as to their opposition to the secular Zionist movement, though the laymen were more vehemently opposed to it. Yet the biggest disagreement was the one that existed between laymen and rabbis with their regard to their attitudes towards orthodoxy. The rabbis were tolerant and expected tolerance in return; even though their speeches did not clearly reflect it, they did want to "live and let live." The laymen did not share this concern for the unity of the community, they were, by and large, non-practicing Jews and they wished the new organization

to legitimize their non-practice.[46]

At this first gathering the influence of the rabbis made itself felt. Both the resolution and the program were passed with overwhelming majorities. The Union was formally created and its program adopted. For our purposes it will be necessary to keep in mind the differences between rabbis and laymen, for they will constitute the main stumbling block for action at many stages of the history of the next years.

The single most important result of the Berlin gathering was the establishment of the monthly magazine Liberales Judentum edited from Frankfort by Rabbi Caesar Seligmann. This magazine became the center around which liberal rabbis and thinking laymen moved. It offered a forum for the presentation of a wide variety of views as to the proper function of the movement, it reported periodically as to the status of the movement with regard to membership, regional conventions and all other subjects of interest to the liberal Jewish constituency.

Very early in the history of this publication there was a sharp argument between its editor, Rabbi Seligmann, and Breslauer, chairman of the Union and a member of the editorial board. Breslauer attempted to pressure Seligmann to publish articles of a more radical vein, and even suggested that Seligmann, Freudenthal and other frequent contributors should take a more radical line of thought. According to Seligmann's account,[47] there was even a move afloat to

remove him as editor which was only abandoned after strong protest on the part of many of the rabbis. We can see here, at the highest level of leadership in the movement, the same deep division between rabbis and laymen that was noted elsewhere.

Through a careful study of Liberales Judentum we can learn a great deal about the movement, the thinking of its leaders and the progress it made during its first period. There is throughout confusion about what the role of the Union was to be. Rabbis and laymen contribute opinions about what should be done with a variety of practices, i.e. cremation, Shabbat, divorce, prayerbook, etc.. Some of these articles are scholarly, others simply opinions of members. The theme most developed through this period was the discussion on the question of Shabbat. It started with an article by Rabbi Norden.[48] By itself the article was not very important, but the variety of responses it called forth in further issues of the magazine showed how deep the concern and how deep the division was regarding the subject. Norden bemoaned the state of Shabbat observance and presented two alternatives, either to move the Shabbat to Sunday or to keep it as is but making a concentrated effort to revitalize it. His basic position was that with the idea of Shabbat Judaism stands or falls!

Most of the respondents agreed that Shabbat should be kept in its place, yet a majority indicated a preference for a new Sunday service, not in place of, but in addition

to the Shabbat services. Some went so far as to declare that the only alternative was to replace Shabbat with Sunday services, but that even in that case not much was to be expected as a result, youth rested on Sunday--and that rest was also from worship! This last response was included in an article by H. Raemy,[49] who exemplified the attitude of many laymen who identified with liberal Judaism because it was for them an easier way of life. He was liberal enough to concede the Shabbat on its day for those who wanted it, but for the youth nothing would work if it was more than a short Sunday service consisting of a Torah service, a very short sermon, a very few prayers or psalms and community songs.

Few saw such simple solutions as Raemy. Most members were confused and there must have been a great deal of pressure exerted by the laymen for the movement to produce strict guidelines as to what a liberal Jew was supposed to do and which practices he could abandon. Of this mood we learn from an editorial in the seventh issue of the magazine, signed by the full board of the movement:

> In response to many inquiries we feel obliged to give the following information:
> Contrary to what is being said, it is not the Union's intention to present certain conditions which are to be binding on its affiliates, members or regional groups.[50]

At this early stage the movement was also quite conscious about how others saw it. It was for this reason that often the magazine would reproduce orthodox attacks and defend

itself against them, or publish favorable reports about its activities, even from non-Jewish sources.[51] What was most difficult for them to understand was the attitude of orthodoxy towards them. The founding of the Freie Jüdische Vereinigung, under the guise of uniting the different Jewish parties, was particularly repugnant to the leaders of the movement. It was, undoubtedly, an organization founded in response to the new liberal Union, but it was deceptive, a cover for orthodox Judaism and a new angle from which the liberal movement could be attacked.[52]

How could the leaders of the movement understand this intolerance when they tried so hard to keep the peace, to show that they were not interested in gaining adherence from those who identified with orthodoxy? The early anti-orthodox tone of many of the laymen was kept out of the pages of Liberales Judentum and replaced by articles like the one written by Blau,[53] in which he poses the question as to whether the religious liberal movement in Germany serves towards the survival of Judaism. The question was examined from several angles, not the least consequential of which was the expression of his conviction that if liberal Judaism in Germany harmed orthodoxy in any way, his question required a negative answer, "to hurt one part of Judaism is to hurt the whole and therefore not to contribute to the survival of that whole."

Reflecting the views of the editor, the most important articles during the period of 1908-1910 dealt with

the theoretical aspects of the movement, an attempt to redefine liberal Judaism, and general sketches indicating the direction the movement should take. These are not theological articles, rarely do we find in the magazine an indication as to where the rabbis stood with regard to concepts of God, revelation, redemption, etc.. They were rather apologetic arguments justifying the existence of liberalism in Judaism and its function in Germany at that period.

The most important of these were those written by Rabbi Samuel[54] and Rabbi Dienemann.[55] They both touch on the subject of what makes a Jew liberal and try to define the thin line that liberalism in religion has to walk if it is not to be simply another orthodoxy or a justification for religious anarchy. Samuel rejected the assumption that liberalism was to follow "instinctive individualism without regard to authority." Piety is not a sufficient requirement for a religion to exist. Judaism is a community religion that can survive only if it avoids individual extremism. But what constitutes the "community" is not the small ruling orthodox elite, which considers itself to be the "rescuer of the synagogue." Unfortunately, he continues, with the flight of the intelligentsia from the synagogue there was a developing official church doctrine which judged--or pretended to judge--everybody in all instances from birth to death, an elite which commanded authority within the institutions but satisfied only those non-individualist

elements who felt lucky for not having to make decisions. Due to this state of affairs many were drawn to liberal Judaism, a movement which should recognize the need to enforce and follow only that which we think our descendants will be able to do in honesty.

We must, Samuel explains, be true to our convictions and show constantly our deep devotion for Judaism. Only in this way will we be able to refute the charges of those who because of the power of habit or comfort will accuse us of unclean motives. "The self-chosen task is indeed the most difficult task one can take up," and we must watch every move. Everything we abolish must be replaced by something positive in its place, and everything must be carefully explained. We cannot become a religion of snobs, the simple man must be carefully cultivated so that he will be able to recognize the importance of "truth" in any religious system. In the areas of changes[56] Samuel draws careful examples which are clear and valuable.

Dienemann's article emphasizes the concept of Judaism as a social organism, with Jewish religion as the adequate expression of our religious views. As Jews we can only understand ourselves with reference to our past and to our belonging to a community. Yet the prior condition, claims Dienemann, is the existence of a "will to Judaism,"[57] and a will to participate in the Jewish religion.

As shown in the last few pages, an effort was being made during the first years of the Union to define the

movement and its functions. Confusion and disagreements had brought them together in 1908. It was obvious by the growth in membership that the movement served a need within the community. Yet they were still far from being able to claim that the movement had indeed developed a positive program for liberal Judaism. This theme dominated the proceedings of the second assembly of the Union, which took place in Nuremberg during the month of June, 1910. The debates during this assembly[58] demonstrated the need for establishing guidelines for the movement, and led to the formation of a committee of laymen and rabbis charged with the task of developing this program. We must note the mistrust which existed on the part of the laymen with regard to their rabbis during the course of these discussions. A fear, maybe, that the rabbis would in the end ask for more than the laymen were willing to give. There is mention, during the debate, of a set of proposals drawn in Elberfeld[59] which are, together with a further set of recommendations, referred to the committee of fifteen members elected to draw up guidelines which are to be debated and voted on at the next assembly, which was to take place in Posen in 1912.

The two years in between assemblies were full of activities on the part of laymen and rabbis. Laymen succeeded in winning significant community elections in Berlin and other cities, while rabbis busied themselves drawing up guidelines. Liberales Judentum continued its work and

expanded its subscribers list. Many of the important articles published during this period give us clues as to the position of many rabbis vis a vis the Richtlinien, and we shall deal with them in a later chapter.

CHAPTER III

The Writing of the *Richtlinien*

The Rabbinical Conferences and Synods of the nineteenth century serve as background to the writing of the Richtlinien. Evaluating these events Martin Philippson says in his Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes:[60] "The Synods followed in the way of the Rabbinical Conferences (failure) because it became clear that the Jews of that time wanted to be individualistic and independent in all religious and cultural matters. They would not be willing to subject themselves to any kind of authority, not even that of a body elected by themselves." The rabbis of the twentieth century disagreed with this analysis. They could agree with Philippson that the previous efforts had failed, yet they attributed those failures to weaknesses stemming from organization which they had overcome. They therefore saw the drawing up of guidelines as the end of a process that had started a century earlier. They considered this to be something like the culminating point in the evolution of liberal Judaism in Germany. The Central Conference of American Rabbis had showed them that proper organization would allow a rabbinical body to discuss and decide issues. The first priority, for the movement, according to Rabbi Freudenthal, was to get on with the task of drawing up these guidelines.[61] Rabbi Seligmann and many others viewed the task that was before them with the same sense of historic fulfillment and approached it with a high degree of awe.

Unfortunately, much of the work that preceeded the actual writing of the Richtlinien is not available for our

investigation. We know of its existence from references in Rabbi Seligmann's history of this crucial period.[62] What we lack, most of all, are the papers prepared for the committee of fifteen dealing with the theological subjects.[63]

From September, 1910, until the end of 1911, during seven meetings of the committee and a great deal of correspondence in between among its members, the basic work was drawn up based on a sketch of guidelines written by Rabbis Seligmann and H. Vogelstein, a paper on Jewish Doctrine by Rabbi Hermann Vogelstein, two papers on the relation between liberal Judaism and religious law by Rabbis Freudenthal and Blumenthal, two papers on marriage law and one on the subject of synagogal music.

Following this first stage all agreed that before they could go any farther, and certainly before the results were made public, it was important that the liberal rabbis as a whole discuss the subject and prepare it for presentation since it was they, as leaders of the community, that would be in charge of disseminating and carrying out much of what was being decided. This second stage, the rabbinical consideration, proceeded from the time of the liberal rabbis' assembly in Berlin in November, 1911, until it was finally debated at the Posen convention in October, 1912. Meetings of a special committee, chaired by Rabbi Seligmann, consultation with the rabbinic membership per correspondence (over fifty rabbis contributed opinions towards its writing), and finally the meeting of the Rabbinical Union

in Frankfort, in September, led to the approval of the guidelines that were to be presented at Posen.

In Seligmann's narration one can sense the importance that he and others attributed to that fatefull assembly in Frankfort:

> And a fateful day it was. Not satisfied with the near completion of the frustrating work of one hundred years, but seriously and in full understanding that a thorny responsibility was being fulfilled; knowing full well that we worked leschem schomayim yet not for the gratitude of our contemporaries; knowing that we would confront hostility and fights from the right as well as the left; conceived only out of our passionate love for Judaism and our sense of responsibility before history the rabbis gathered from all parts of Germany, from Silesia and Posen, from Baden, Bayern, Wurttemberg, Saxony, as well as from the Rheinland, for serious deliberation.[64]

The debate that took place during that assembly was marked by a spirit of compromise and a desire to get things done. In the end, a committee was appointed to write the final results of their deliberations, Rabbis Seligmann, Lazarus, Salzberger, Baeck and Freudenthal were to work on this final aspect,[65] yet we know from Seligmann's memoires that the work was done by himself and Baeck.[66]

The laymen in the committee of fifteen desired to see guidelines that would go beyond the general belief structure, they wanted instructions for liberal Jewish practice. Not all the rabbis agreed with this, Seligmann and others wanted to keep it very general, but by the time the rabbis began discussing the problem among themselves they agreed that it would have to include both, general

principles and specific practices for individuals and congregations.

Here then are the Richtlinien zu einem Programm für das liberale Judentum as they were presented to the movement at Posen in October, 1912:[67]

> I. Liberal Judaism discovers the nature of the Jewish religion in its eternal truths and ethical principles, which are historically destined to become the religion of the world.
>
> II. The eternal truths and ethical principles of the Jewish religion on which all ages and factions of Judaism agree are:
>
> > The doctrine of the one and only, purely spiritual, holy God, and the God of justice and love.
> >
> > The doctrine of man created in the image of God, of the immortality of his soul, of his potential for moral freedom,and of his destiny to advance to an ever higher moral and spiritual freedom.
> >
> > The doctrine of all men as children of God, and of the destiny of mankind to approach ever more closely the Messianic ideal of peace through truth, justice and love.
>
> III. Providence has given Israel the task to safeguard and proclaim religion in its pure state, to witness to it through the living power of example and sacrificial devotion and to labor for the Kingdom of God on earth.
>
> IV. The historic foundations of the Jewish religion are the Holy Scriptures as well as the further stages in the growth of Judaism--post biblical literature, Talmud, rabbinic literature and the philosophy of religion until today. The historical and critical analysis of these religious documents is one of the tasks for the science of Judaism.
>
> V. Being a historical religion Judaism has further given expression to its eternal truths and ethical principles through concepts and forms which were historically conditioned. Every generation adopted the faith of the fathers through its own particular religious concepts and

expressed it in its own particular forms. Liberal Judaism therefore recognizes the validity of evolution, which gives Judaism in every age the right and the duty to abandon certain historically conditioned beliefs and forms, or to develop them, or to create new ones, while safeguarding its own essential content.

VI. This duty speaks with special urgency to our time. Through the entrance of Jews into the intellectual, cultural and social community of this age, which has broadened its horizon through new discoveries and which has experienced a revolution in all areas of life, many traditional concepts, institutions and customs have evaporated and disappeared and thereby have lost both content and significance. This development which is now in progress faces us with the great and responsible task to evaluate all historically conditioned beliefs and forms.

VII. All beliefs which mar the purity of the Jewish teaching of God are to be eliminated from the teaching content of the Jewish religion.

VIII. In view of the great significance of external forms for the maintenance of Judaism, all those institutions and customs should be maintained and revitalized which, cherishing pious sentiment for the past, still have the ability to bring the individual into a living relationship with God; to remind him again and again of the moral purpose of his life; and to bring into his every day existence those moments of quiet and meditation which sanctify the life of the family and give the Jewish home its particular sanctity and atmosphere, which express our pious sentiments toward both the living and the dead and which confirm our loyalty to our faith and awaken noble Jewish self-awareness within us. Ordinances which do not fulfill these conditions do not have binding force.

IX. According to these principles the following demands are imperative for the religious life of the individual:

> Sabbath and Holy Days, these bearers of our most important religious thoughts and memories, are to be solemnly observed through celebrations at home and through attendance at public worship. Everything that disturbs such solemnity must be avoided, and, conversely, whatever does not disturb it cannot be considered as prohibited. Therefore the added strictures which have grown from an extension of the command to rest do not have

any claim to validity. However, all workday labor must be avoided. As long as the complete fulfillment of this command is made impossible because of economic conditions, rest at home, attendance at services and the celebration of Friday nights and the eves of holy days are to be given increased attention: Festive customs like the kindling of lights, the blessing by parents, the prayers over wine and bread, the celebration of Seder and Hanuckah should continue to live in our homes, in their old significance and should be surrounded with new sanctity.

Daily prayer at home should be nurtured as one of the most valuable means of promoting religious living.

It is a sacred duty to invest the important moments of family life with religious sanctity: a) Membership in Judaism is acquired through birth. Circumcision remains a sacred institution. To him who wants to turn to Judaism from another religious community and who does this with a pure heart in genuine acceptance of Judaism, our faith shall open its gates as the religion of mankind. b) After proper preparatory instruction, boys and girls shall be introduced through a Confirmation service to become members of the community. c) Marriage receives its sanctity only through a religious ceremony. Those priestly laws which were connected with the existence of the Temple and those laws concerning family and inheritance which applied to the Jewish commonwealth of antiquity no longer represent an obstacle to a religious wedding. Ritual divorce shall rest on the principle of equality of man and woman and, after a civil divorce or annulment has taken place, shall be safeguarded against malicious obstruction by one or the other marital partner. The form of ritual divorce is to be simplified. d) The service of love performed for the dying and the dead is a sacred duty and shall be carried out in every case without respect to character, manner of death or nature of interment. During the year of mourning and on the days of yahrzeit of the closest relatives, pious sentiments should be expressed through the old memorial customs, through participation in the worship service with its kaddish prayer, and through pious donations.

X. He who fulfills these indispensible requirements is to be considered a religious Jew. Liberal Judaism leaves the observance of all other ordinances which tradition commands to the religious sentiment of the individual. It rejects the evaluation of piety by measuring its outward observances. It recognizes as worth while only that which for the individual has the power to elicit pious sentiment, to advance moral action and to recall religious truths and experiences vividly.

XI. The following standards are essential requirements for the religious life of the Jewish community in synagogue, school and communal matters:

1. The most devoted care is to be given to the dignified arrangement of public worship services. In the same way as Shabbat morning, so shall Friday night be distinguised by a solemn service and sermon, and especially so in all larger communities. The beginning of the evening observance shall be fixed by each community in accordance with its needs, without reference to calendaric calculations. The highest holy days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, are to be maintained in their traditional character; the same holds true for Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot which preferably on the biblically ordered days, shall be distinguished through festive services and sermons. Hanuckah, Purim and Tisha b'Av are to be observed in an appropriate manner as historical days of rememberance.

2. The services of Shabbat and holy days (with the exception of Yom Kippur) should be shortened considerably. If possible the repetition of prayers should be avoided.

3. The Hebrew language should be maintained for the central prayers of the service, but our German native tongue should be given wide range in prayer and song.

4. Those prayers which are not truth in our hearts should be eliminated. The Hebrew prayers which are to be retained must both in content and form reflect the religious thinking and feeling of our time.

5. In order to win the congregation in greater measure for active participation in the service, unison Hebrew and German congregational singing with the accompaniment of organ or harmonium shall be introduced if possible.

6. The Torah is to be read in Hebrew and thereafter in German translation in a one-year or three-year cycle. The Haftarah is to consist of free selections read in German.

7. The Daily Service is to be solemnly arranged according to the same principles as Shabbat and festival services.

8. The holding of services is not dependent on the number of worshippers.

9. In order to buttress religious education at home a special youth service with sermon should be held on the Shabbat, in the eve or the afternoon. Every attempt should be made to have young people excused from school during the main holy days.

10. Religious classes shall educate young people in moral living and religious attitudes, in loyal convictions and active participation in the religious life of the community.

In order to reach this goal, religious education has the task to teach the pupil to know and love the old sacred writings of Israel in their original tongue and to point out their eteranal significance; to create understanding for the development of Judaism; to awaken enthusiasm for the history of the Jewish people; to introduce a consideration of problems of philosophy and religious questions of the present and do so with the unrestricted help of science; to treat of existing differences in traditional beliefs and forms and do so tactfully and with an understanding of their historical significance; and to foster love of Fatherland together with loyalty to the faith of our fathers and an appreciation for the work of humanity.

11. Young people who have finished their formal education should be encouraged to join youth groups and thereby participate in the religious work of Judaism.

12. The science of Judaism must be especially encouraged and spread, so that through it a greater inwardness and a deepening of Judaism be brought about and respect for it be increased.

13. The special education of rabbis, teachers and cantors shall take place in a manner responsive to the needs of the present age.

14. If at all possible, all members of

the community shall be involved in participating in the tasks of the community, especially in the area of charity and social welfare.

15. The participation of women in religious and communal life is indispensible. They should receive their equal share in religious duties as well as rights.

XII. We urge the individual liberal Jew and especially also Liberal congregations to carry out these demands. We leave it to the individual congregations and their officers to judge their special local circumstances. All institutions of the community must be maintained even though only a minority needs them for the satisfaction of their religious needs. The Conference of Liberal Rabbis in Germany declares itself decisively for the religious unity of Judaism. The Conference therefore rejects as untrue the claim that denominational differentiations exist within Judaism, and further rejects as un-Jewish and disastrous all attempts to create a schism in the community.

XIII. The Conference of Liberal Rabbis in Germany will dedicate its sincere efforts to a scientific discussion of all of these principles and tasks as well as to their practical realization in our religious life. It further considers it to be its special task to take these Guide Lines and further elaborate them by considering additional questions which will arise from their discussion. The Conference is filled with the holy conviction that only in this way will it be possible to reconcile our traditional religion with the thinking, feeling, and opportunities of our time, and to labor for the exalted principles and ethical ideals of our religion in all areas of life. Only in this way will we appreciate the fact that Judaism continues to have a vital role in the present and its indispensible importance for the future. The Conference aims to overcome religious indifference and estrangement from Judaism, so that we may bequeathe our millenia-old trust to coming generations.

Rabbis Appel (Karlsruhe), Appel (Bingen), Baeck, Baron, Behrens, Bergmann, Bloch, Blumenthal, Caro, Cohne, Coblenz, David, Dienemann, Einstein, Elsatz, Freudenthal, Freund, Fuchs, Galliner, Ginsburger, Goldmann, Goldschmidt, Grünfeld, Heilbron, Hochfeld, Jaulus, Italiener, Kalter,

Kahlberg, Kantorowsky, Koch, Landau, Lazarus,
Levi, Levy, Lewit, Lewkowitz, Lorge, Maybaum,
Neumark, Norden, Oppenheim, Posner, Rulf,
Salfeld, Salomon, Salomonski, Salzberger, Samuel,
Sander, Schreiber, Seligmann, Seligkowitz,
Silberstein, Sonderling, Strassburger, Tänzer,
Tawrogi, Vogelstein, Weyl, Wiener, Wilde,
Worms.

CHAPTER IV

The Rabbis Behind the *Richtlinien*

The Richtlinien were the result of the efforts by the rabbis to establish standards. The project had begun as a combined effort of rabbis and laymen, but the final result--the document presented for approval at the Posen Convention--was a rabbinic document. In order to fully understand this document we must look at the rabbis that stood behind it, those who were instrumental in writing it. Who were they? Was their intention to present a new code of law for liberal Jews? Did they simply desire an endorsement of the laity for their suggested guide lines? A reading of the Richtlinien alone does not answer these questions satisfactorily. The rabbis who participated in this effort were active in all aspects of community life, they did not write the Richtlinien as their only legacy. It is in their life styles and in their writings where we must look for their individual positions in order to understand the document they signed.

This investigation is partially problematic since we do not have written documents by, or full biographies of, the signers of the Richtlinien which would give us a clue as to their individual positions. Even in the case of rabbis who were members of the committee charged with the task of writing these guide lines we miss their personal testimonies.[68] In some cases we find that rabbis who played an important part in the writing of the Richtlinien did not leave us their opinions regarding the document, and we are forced to deduce their positions from their general writings.[69]

The rabbis of this period had moved beyond the reformers of the nineteenth century. Then reform per se was the goal, and the concept of progressive development of Judaism was the most powerful ally in achieving reform. Now that concept was firmly established, among the liberal rabbis nobody doubted that Judaism survived throughout the ages due to its dynamic character. Reform per se was no longer the goal. What was to be achieved was a synthesis between Lehre and Leben, between religion as it was transmitted to their generation and the cultural and intellectual environment within which religion had to exist. There was, among the rabbis of the period under study, a much greater respect for tradition than in the previous generation of reformers. The give and take between religion and life was to be even-handed, without either obstructing the other.

From a study of the documents of the time we find that there were three personalities that appear predominantly in the process of writing the Richtlinien. Rabbis Caesar Seligmann, Hermann Vogelstein and Max Freudenthal prepared the bulk of the material for presentation at rabbinic conventions and at the Posen Convention, Seligmann acting as the coordinator for the entire project. In addition there is a fourth name that adds a great deal of significance to the Richtlinien, that of Rabbi Leo Baeck. According to accounts mentioned in a previous chapter, Rabbi Leo Baeck is identified as one of the co-editors

of the Richtlinien and one of its prominent signers. The first three left us, in addition to their general writings, specific opinions regarding the questions raised by the Richtlinien, Leo Baeck did not. He had been a contributor to Liberales Judentum in its early years but concerned himself mostly with polemical articles in defense of Judaism, in an effort to stem the current of conversions which afflicted German Jewry during this period.[70] In his case we will have to look at some of his early writings and his biographies in order to establish what his position was regarding the document.

Before his death in 1911 Rabbi Heinemann Vogelstein had been a driving force behind the liberal movement in Germany. He was born in 1841 and pursued his rabbinical studies at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary. Even though during his Breslau years Abraham Geiger had already moved to Berlin, in many ways Vogelstein was a disciple of Geiger. At the time he created the Association of Liberal Rabbis he was the only survivor of those who had participated in the last synod. Though he had studied at the more traditional rabbinical school he belonged to an old line of reformers. His Prayer Book, his position in rabbinical assemblies and several of his writings reflect a highly universalistic trend. At every step he attempted to erase the particular from Judaism. His Prayer Book, patterned after Geiger's earlier effort, went farther than his mentor's, all references to Zion and Jerusalem were left out. At the Rabbinical

Assembly of 1897 he had been one of the many Protestrabbiner who went on record against the growing Zionist movement. In 1880 he accepted a call to become Rabbi in Stettin. The small size of that community made it possiblefor him to work towards organizing the liberal community in Germany. In addition to having gathered the liberal rabbis under their own Union, he was one of the main forces behind the creation of the lay Liberal Union. From the inception of that organization he labored, together with Seligmann, to establish guide lines for the movement. He was one of the members of the original committee of fifteen but did not live to see the Richtlinien in their final form.

His son, Hermann Vogelstein, (1870-1942), was one of the most liberal rabbis of the period. He began his rabbinic studies at Breslau, but completed them and received ordination from the Hochschule in Berlin. He preceded Leo Baeck as Rabbi in Oppeln, but quickly moved on to occupy a position in Königsberg, and finally--before emigrating to the United States in 1938--he was rabbi in Breslau. Following in the footsteps of his father, he was an active member of the liberal rabbinic and lay associations. His main interest lay in the field of history, to which he contributed several volumes, the most important having been the history of the Jews in Rome, which he co-authored with Paul Rieger. Only during those occasions when he spoke or wrote on behalf of the movement did he become a theologian.

In his writings and speeches he drew a clear line

between thought and practice, between belief and custom. The term "religious law" for him did in no way refer to exterior forms and practices, these belonged to the realm of custom, which was in constant evolution. It is possible to understand, he claimed, why they had been interpreted as binding laws in the past, yet in his time they could no longer have that force. Man in the past felt a need to verbalize and act out his innermost thoughts and feelings, and the avenues by which he could do this were established by conventions to which he felt bound. Modern man, on the other hand, was no longer willing to do this, he demanded individual freedom and one had to be willing to grant it.[71] If the term law was to apply at all in religion it could only do so with regard to the "eternal teachings of God, the religious moral law, and the concept of the providential mission of Israel."[72]

Once Vogelstein had set this strict definition he was not willing to be limited by it. He realized that forms were important in as much as they helped clarify and made practicable those eternal teachings. This drove him to admit that even though he recognized the importance of individual freedom, the function of Liberal Judaism was not to do away with forms but "to inspire through the eternal teachings the practice of those forms which we consider important." Just as he was opposed to the creation of a Shulchan Aruch for liberal Jews, he expressed himself against the possibility of opening the doors to religious

anarchy.

At the Posen Convention, Hermann Vogelstein was charged with presenting and explaining the first eight points of the Richtlinien,[73] the theological foundations upon which the remainder rests. It was probably not by accident that he was given this task, since it was in this area where he felt that liberalism could set guide lines. From our knowledge of his position he probably would not have felt as comfortable in presenting the practical implication of the Richtlinien for the layman.

He began by drawing a very fine line between what it takes to create a new religion and what it requires to distill from the old that which is applicable in one's time:

> A time which creates a new religion expresses its innermost convictions without consideration of philosophic and theologic formulations of the past, even without retreating when faced with logical difficulties. But we do not create a new religion, we do not even express a new religious concept. We only try to find a form of expression for that which constitutes the religious conviction of our time.[74]

What he has drawn is an arbitrary distinction which will allow him a certain leniency when presenting what for him is the dogmatic content of the Jewish religion. Liberal Judaism approves those ideas listed in the second and third paragraphs of the Richtlinien because they are the "eternal truths and ethical principles of the Jewish religion." But they are only eternal, if one is to follow Vogelstein's thought, because we accept them. Since any generation

has the right to reject them if they do not express the religious conviction of its time their eternality is highly dubious. We can certainly see this concept in operation when he explains his rejection of the concept of resurrection. He does not convincingly show that this concept was not considered "an eternal truth" in the past. His most valid argument when denying the eternal nature of resurrection is that he has rejected it.[75]

The broad concept presented above can be based on Vogelstein's understanding of revelation:

> We deny the concept of verbal revelation. . . We consider the Bible as the reflection of God's revelation through man. . . Revelation was a continuous process. . ., and we are not at the end of this chain, nevertheless we have the right and the responsibility to determine and express that which for us is the content of revelation.[76]

From this position with regard to law and revelation it is simple to understand how he views the role of the Richtlinien in those articles referring to individual practices. The power of religious liberalism lies in the fact that it allows for individuality. Whatever the individual does, he must do so out of deep conviction. He applauds that paragraph of the Posen resolution which allows for the exercise of individual judgement when approaching the ceremonial aspects of the Richtlinien, not because he favors arbitrariness, but because it is the only way in which the individual can develop an honest relationship between his religious perception and conviction with the community life as a whole.[77]

Even though Vogelstein considered that the continued celebration of Shabbat and holidays as well as the life cycle ceremonies and the modernization of worship modes were important,[78] he consistently opposed any form of codification at every gathering of the Liberal Union.[79] His understanding of revelation and law drew him to a conception of Judaism as a religion in constant flux, which did not allow for ceremonial codification even for his own time.

Within the group of rabbis which we are to examine in the present chapter, Vogelstein stands at the farthest point on the left. In his presentation at Posen he is conscious of this and constantly feels the need to go back to the tradition to prove that his views are in line, and that his interpretation does not constitute a new religion.[80]

Rabbi Leo Baeck (1873-1956) followed, at the beginning of his training and rabbinic career, the same path as Hermann Vogelstein. He began his rabbinic studies in Breslau but concluded them and was ordained at the Hochschule in Berlin. During the course of his seminary years he also pursued studies in philosophy at the Universities of Breslau and Berlin. He had a distinguished rabbinic career which began in Oppeln, took him to Düsseldorf, and culminated in Berlin, where he arrived in 1912. From then on he became a lecturer on Midrash at the Hochschule, an active member of the Rabbinerverband, and later its president, a grand-president of the B'nai Brith order of Germany, and the

most distinguished leader of German Jewry in the twentieth century. Shortly after the Nazi takeover of Germany, when many of his colleagues accepted calls from congregations outside of Germany, Leo Baeck declared his readiness to remain in Berlin as long as there was a minyan which needed a rabbi. From 1943 until the end of the war he was an inmate at Theresienstadt, after his liberation, and only after he received assurances that his fellow inmates would be properly taken care of, he traveled to London to reunite with those members of his family who had survived the holocaust. The next ten years of his fruitful life were spent traveling between London, Israel and Cincinnati, where he taught at the Hebrew Union College.

Leo Baeck was not only a great Rabbi, but a great teacher of rabbis. Beside his rabbinic duties, his teaching at different institutions and his activities on behalf of German Jewry he distinguished himself as a scholar of the first magnitude. His first important contribution was The Essence of Judaism published in 1905 as a response to Harnack's The Essence of Christianity. Through the years Baeck continued publishing, among others Aus Drei Jahrtausenden, numerous articles in journals, and towards the end of a distinguished career This People Israel.

Leo Baeck did not show the same insecurities which we witnessed in Vogelstein. The whole realm of dogma for him did not pose a problem. The student of Baeck may quarrel with his conception of Judaism in this particular

point, but for Baeck,

> If we view the word "dogma" in its restricted sense, it might indeed be said that Judaism has no dogmas. . . Of course, in any positive religion, classical phrases will pass from generation to generation, each of which will view these phrases as the ancient and holy vessels of religious truth. Wherever there exists a treasury of faith, a depositum fidei, it is expressed in sacred words which ring with tones of revelation and tradition. But that does not yet constitute a dogma in the precise sense of the word.[81]

The classical phrases of which he spoke exist in abundance in Judaism, yet they do not become "dogma," there is no authority to promulgate them and enforce them. From generation to generation the emphasis may shift from one phrase to another without thereby doing violence to the religious system.

Revelation, if one is to characterize Baeck's concept in a few sentences, must be viewed as threefold. The continuous existence of Israel as a chosen people with a mission is by itself a revelation to the world. This is one way in which God manifests his revelation to the world. But what God reveals to the world through Israel, He reveals to Israel directly. This second aspect of revelation resembles the traditional concept of a two-fold revelation, but, in Baeck, the initial aspect is the appearance of ethical monotheism, while the second is God's continuous revelation to man producing an unending oral law.[82]

Leo Baeck maintained in his private life many of the traditional observances, but the practice of ceremonials for him were a useful tool to attain and exemplify the

high ethical standards which the content of revelation imposed on Israel. Ceremonials were for him necessary for the preservation of Israel, but not a part of the static content of revelation. Through the practice of ceremonials the mystery could enter into the realm of experience of the practitioner and thus enrich the individual's religious experience.[83]

In his private life Baeck went far beyond the practices prescribed by the Richtlinien, yet he must have felt that the goals established in that document presented an attainable possibility for the layman who was so far removed from the highly sophisticated religious sphere in which Baeck moved. The so-called dogmatic elements of the document must have reflected in his view an adequate statement of those classical phrases of the treasury of faith which were pre-eminent in that age.

This speculative analysis of Baeck's position vis a vis the Richtlinien is based on the tenuous fact that Baeck did indeed contribute to the drafting of the document and became one of its signers. His name is not often seen in general documents, and he was not one to hide his disagreement (as seen above on p. 22). It is interesting to note that even though his talents as a polemicist were well known, he did not feel a need to respond to the flurry of attacks that came from the orthodox rabbis after the publication of the Richtlinien.

Rabbi Max Freudenthal (1868-1937) was also one of the

great exponents of German Jewish liberalism. Like the others studied in this chapter, he mixed the active rabbinate with a good deal of scholarly writing. He published works in the area of history, among others Aus der Heimat Moses Mendelssohns and Die Israelitische Kultus Gemeinde Nuremberg, 1874-1924, a history of the congregation which he led during the longest period of his rabbinate. In the area of theology he published Die Erkentnisslehre Philo von Alexandria early in his career (1891) and contributed many articles to Liberales Judentum. He began his career as a rabbi in Dessau, moved to Danzig, and finally accepted a call to Nuremberg. Once settled in that community he distinguished himself as one of the active leaders of the liberal movement and as co-editor of the Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland.

As an active participant in the Richtlinien project, Rabbi Freudenthal clearly defined his position in his writings of the period. We have already examined his concept of authority. In his opinion it was impossible for any religion to survive if it did not acknowledge an authoritative structure. This authority need not be static, it could change from generation to generation, as it indeed did in Judaism, but,

> a religion which will not subject itself under a higher authority is no longer one, and a religious community which does not seek a new and stronger authority when the old one falters can no longer exist, must of necessity fall apart.[84]

The primary task of the liberal Jewish organizations, rabbinic and lay, was to assume that position of authority and establish guidelines which would fix the minimum structure of belief and practice a Jew had to follow. There is often an indication in his articles that it was in no way the task of liberalism to attack those who went farther than the Richtlinien indicated--that was left to the individual to decide--but there is ample evidence that he did not consider him who practiced less than prescribed to be a conscientious Jew.[85]

In a presentation before the Liberal Union of Rabbis he clearly sets down the procedures by which one is to determine what in the tradition retains validity and what can be left out.[86] One can only consider himself bound to the religious law if it coincides with a) the pure moral religious views as reflected in Jewish literature, b) the results of scientific investigation, Jewish and general, and c) the law of progressive development which prohibits the eternal codification of those laws which are adopted due to particular circumstances of place and time. From these basic considerations we can determine that Judaism in our time demands internalization, simplification, service of the heart, flexibility and elaboration and not a narrowing of Judaism. We also can deduce from the three basic requirements that religion in our time does no longer need to consider as binding those commandments closely related to Palestine and oriental customs, the sacrificial

cult, the pagan environment, the obstruction of relations with non-Jews, superstitious practices, laws closely related to the earlier Jewish state, and sanitary considerations and standards.

With the above considerations in mind, Freudenthal maintains, we can go through the Schulchan Aruch to determine what is valid. The attempt of the rabbis is not to write a new code but to bring back to life that which still has force and validity in the tradition.

He proceeds to enumerate those ceremonies and practices which he considers binding. His list reproduces what will be the content of the ninth paragraph of the Richtlinien, in some parts even the wording is identical, leaving little doubt as to the influence he exerted in the writing of the document. All that which he did not consider necessary did not appear, all that which he considered essential was reproduced in the final Richtlinien.

Following the violent orthodox attacks which came after the Posen Convention, he wrote an ardent defense of the Richtlinien.[87] It was to be a document which defined that which we considered to be so historically typical and basic in the development of Judaism, that it could not be abandoned without doing harm to Judaism. He tried to justify the Posen resolution as indicating the non-authoritarian aspect of Judaism, but in the light of his known position it constitutes a weak defence. In his mind, the only justification for that resolution was that it reflected

the reality, the lack of enforcement procedures in modern day Judiasm. Some fifteen years later, narrating the events of the time and his defense against orthodox attacks he said that:

> He who identifies with the Shema is and remains a Jew. He who is a Jew has full participation in the religious privileges which Judaism has to offer. . . But our Richtlinien at the time went farther. They should have been supplements to these basic points in order to show that a liberal Jew identified with more than just the Shema, that he did not only want to claim his rights but that he recognized his responsibilities and was willing to practice them. . .[88]

Having had such noble goals, he must have been quite disappointed with the outcome of the Posen Conference.

After his death, Rabbi Heinemann Vogelstein was succeeded as leader of the Liberal Rabbinical Association by Rabbi Caesar Seligmann. Rabbi Seligmann was born in Landau in 1860. He pursued his rabbinic studies at the Seminary in Breslau, after the completion of which he took up the position of Rabbi at the historic Hamburg Temple in 1889. He did not stay there for a long period. In 1902 he was called to become Rabbi in Frankfort, a call which he accepted because it would place him at a great center of Jewish activity of his age. Soon after his arrival he published one of the most liberal prayer books of his day, which was used for the High Holidays at the West End Synagogue. Seligmann was a highly active rabbi, totally dedicated to the task of strengthening liberal Judaism. He had a clear vision of what was wrong, and what was

needed to set it straight. He understood Judaism to be totally compatible with the modern world and dedicated his life in an attempt to bridge the gap that separated the community of Israel from the religion of Israel. He was confident that while the people retained what he called "the will to Judaism" that reconciliation was possible. The medium through which it was to be achieved was Liberal Judaism. Early in his career he gave a series of lectures, later published under the title of Judentum und Moderne Weltanschauung, where he tried to demonstrate that compatibility.

Rabbi Seligmann was a liberal in a very real sense. Despite his commitment to Liberal Judaism he always sought to find a modus vivendi that would insure peace within the community. He disagreed with orthodox Judaism but refrained from attacking that movement until its spokesmen violently attacked him and the movement he so much cherished. When it would have been very easy for him to be an anti-Zionist, since there was nothing the laity of the movement would have liked more, he pursued a more moderate course, and at last, in 1937, he openly pleaded for a reconciliation between the rabbis in the movement and Zionism.

His major efforts on behalf of the movement took place from the time of the founding of the Liberal Union in 1908 until the end of the First World War. During this period he edited Liberales Judentum, traveled throughout Germany seeking new adherents to the Union, and became

the architect of the Richtlinien. His central position as an activist ceased after the war, but until he was forced to emigrate he continued to contribute to the movement those things which he considered important for the growth of the movement. In 1922 he wrote the Geschichte der jüdischen Reformbewegung von Mendelssohn bis zur Gegenwart, which contained the most detailed description of the history of the movement in Germany during the twentieth century and culminated with the publication of the Richtlinien. Later, in 1929,, he published the Einheitsgebetbuch, together with Ismar Elbogen and Hermann Vogelstein, which became the first common prayer book for liberal Jews in Germany since the beginning of the Reform movement.

If there was one project in his long career which Rabbi Seligmann considered most important, it was the writing of the Richtlinien. He understood the difficulties involved in writing a document of that nature at a time when the laity was not prone to accept authoritative statements, and even though at an early stage of the project he favored the idea of limiting the document to a theoretical statement containing the theological basis of the movement, in the end he recognized the need for a more complete statement which would orient the laity as to what was required of them.

Rabbi Seligmann, as many of his colleagues, could not admit that the Richtlinien were to be taken as a

dogmatic statement, but in his many writings we can clearly see that he did not want a simple "thank you" for the effort of writing the document, but that he expected the Liberal Union to adopt it as its statement of principle. Why the need for guidelines of this nature is explained by him in a speech before his rabbinic colleagues:

> At this uncertain time we must show our brothers and sisters the lines by which they must guide themselves today. That is the meaning of our Richtlinien. We must show German Jewry a Judaism which they can observe and in which they can believe, to which they can belong with honesty. We must--not out of assimilation to the times or to any other external motives-- in order to preserve religion indicate openly and freely that which is no longer to be observed and which no longer lives.[89]

But he does not end with the negative side, he insists on the necessity to draw positive demands and guidelines. The function of the Richtlinien will be to reconcile teaching and life, to bridge the gap between objective religion and subjective individualism, to bring together once again Judaism and Jewishness, to make fluid once again the presently stale formulations of thought and practice.[90]

Liberal rabbis have the duty to promulgate these Richtlinien, for in spite of the existence of a rabbinic association there are no common religious principles and no common religious practices. "Should every one do what is right in his own sight? Should an unbound religious anarchy be filled by wild subjectivism?"[91] Seligmann may

not intend the Richtlinien to be a new Shulchan Aruch, but he deplores the fact that for over one hundred years liberalism was ruled by hints, and considers it a necessity and a religious obligation that Richtlinien be promulgated as a magna carta for liberal Judaism.

If there is any doubt about Rabbi Seligmann's position regarding that which is indispensible in Judaism we may turn to his address to the laymen at the Posen convention:

> In our introductory passage (of the Richtlinien) we speak of eternal truths and eternal basic moral commandments. One could argue that there are no eternal things according to science. . . but we, in our Richtlinien, are not pursuing science, we speak rather of what our religion is. . . We recognize the absolute authority of the godly truths and the moral demands. They are for us an unimpeachable revelation, in whatever sense that word is taken. They are, if I may use the words, irreplaceable dogmatic demands.[92]

He then proceeds to explain why the rabbis, recognizing the Richtlinien as fitting the above definition, cannot expect the laity to see them in exactly the same light. But again what comes through is simply that there is no enforcement procedure on which the rabbis may rely, but that if liberalism is to be a positive manifestation of religion it must be translated into the beliefs and practices prescribed in the guidelines.

Seligmann expressed agreement with many of the utterances of Baeck and Freudenthal, these men stood on the same ground. Their acceptance of the Posen resolution as a

document reflecting their intentions at the time of the writing of the Richtlinien must have signified a painful retreat from cherished positions simply for reasons of political accomodation. Seligmann, also speaking in the names of Vogelstein and Freudenthal, said at that time that

> we can support Dr. Blau's resolution mainly because in its third paragraph it explicitly states that it is meant to reflect our speeches. The first two paragraphs can be accepted without question. . . The third one is, in my opinion, totally justified from the point of view of liberal thinking people. It contains no rejection of what we have described as indispensable religious demands. It grants the rabbis, . . .the right, and what from our point of view is the duty to win over liberal Jews, especially youth, to observe those things which we consider indispensable demands. . .[99]

But many years later, when speaking in front of rabbis, he would vent his true feelings as to that particular convention and the mood of liberal Jews during the years he exercised leadership over German Jewry:

> . . . But even the modest minimum of religious demands of Liberal Judaism which the Guide Lines proclaimed was waived off by the Posen Conference with a meaningless gesture, and thereby the Guide Lines received a first class funeral.
> In its famous resolution which was approved in Posen the demands made upon the religious life of the individual were left to "the conscientious conviction of each individual." The most extreme religious individualism had gained a victory over the generously conceived attempt of creating a true community. . .
> . . . . . .
> Still, the achievements of liberal Judaism are great and undeniable.
> Of liberal Judaism? We pause before this question. Was it really Liberal Judaism which has achieved all that has happened? Is there really a Liberal Judaism, has there really ever

been one? There are and there have been a few dozen of dedicated leaders. . . They still exist today. They are mostly Liberal rabbis, but there are also non-rabbis and non-theologians amongst whom there are a small number of dedicated religious liberal Jews who are really religious not only in their conviction but also in their Jewish life. However, the mass of Jews who call themselves religious liberals how many are these (sic) amongst them who really take the responsible name of religious Judaism seriously? They are "liberal," liberal above all measure--but of religion and of Judaism there is hardly a trace. In the place of Jewish substance they have substituted a thinned-out surrogat, a religion which does not obligate, which is bodiless and vague, whose content becomes formless as you touch it, a thing without substance or form, without bone or marrow, without rhythm or verve. If one wants to define this nothing, one may call it the last tiny remnant of Jewish feeling and desire for Judaism.

Do I exaggerate? Do I paint the picture too black? "Well then, let us argue together," I would say with the prophet. As for the lukewarm mass of people who are counted amongst Liberal Jews and who count themselves as part of it, where are the sacrifices they take upon themselves for their convictions? A human being can only prove himself by the sacrifices he brings for a cause; only thereby does he show how highly he values it. Religious Judaism, no less than Orthodoxy, demands the involvement of the whole human being, the sanctification of all life, it demands enthusiasm, it demands open hearts and open hearts.

. . . I will talk of the past. Where were such sentiments amongst the liberal masses? Where were the masses who crowded the halls of knowledge, the academies? Where amongst all our rich people were the patrons of Jewish literature? In how many homes were Jewish books to be found with which one could nourish one's own soul and the souls of one's children? In how many homes was there a real Jewish life? Alas, the daily life of these "liberal" Jews was not disturbed by their religion; once they no longer were Orthodox they called themselves Liberal Jews and imagined that with this word they could cover their nakedness, while in fact this appellation was nothing but a justification for their Jewish religious diffidence. . .[94]

These then, were the rabbis behind the Richtlinien, the ones that labored to produce the document and with highest expectations took it to the Posen Convention. In the following chapter we will have an opportunity to see what transpired there, in addition to which we will have an opportunity to analyze the position of some of the other signers of the document.

CHAPTER V

The Posen Convention and its Aftermath

Much thought went into the writing of the Richtlinien. The rabbis who actively worked on their preparation were conscious of the importance of the task they had undertaken. Having considered their individual views we know that even though they recognized the dangers involved, they intended the Richtlinien to be more than just a mere guideline, a collection of suggestions on how a liberal Jew ought to conduct himself. If initially it may have been true that pressure for the inclusion of individual observances came from the laity the end result indicated the desires and will of the rabbis. One may go too far if he is to claim that the guidelines were to be a liberal Shulchan Aruch, and that those who did not follow it in detail were to be read out of the movement; but one cannot help but feel that the rabbis intended the Richtlinien to reflect a minimum of practices that a liberal Jew had to follow. "He who fulfills these indispensable requirements is to be considered a religious Jew."[95] Clearly the rabbis knew what they were writing, the list in the ninth section speaks of "demands that are imperative for the religious life of the individual," it could not have entered the Richtlinien by accident. Finally the rabbis had drawn up what they considered a positive program of belief and practice for the liberal Jew.

Before the Posen Assembly a prominent lay member of the Frankfort community understood the guidelines to be just that, a code of minimum belief and practice for lib-

eral Jews. The laity, having asked for guidelines felt that what was now asked of them, to adopt the Richtlinien as theirs, was more than they had bargained for. It was correct for the rabbis to define their beliefs and to express what they considered to be minimum practices, but to demand the same of the laity was an infringement of individual freedom, a much cherished concept that could clearly be defined as sanction for religious anarchy. Blau[96] understood this attitude and was in full agreement with it. Through his influence he secured the vote against the adoption of the Richtlinien by the Frankfort and Berlin delegations that were to participate at the Posen Convention.

Rabbis Seligmann, Freudenthal and Vogelstein were in charge of introducing the Richtlinien at Posen. Rabbi Seligmann gave a general introduction to the subject of guidelines.[97] Even though he does not state it clearly he deals with the problem of authority within religion in modern times. Of the content of the Richtlinien he says:

> For us rabbis, the representatives of objective religion, they are indispensable. In the case in which an individual Jew, from his subjective viewpoint, would reject one of another of these true beliefs or indispensable demands, we could not, from our liberal stand of freedom of conscience condemn him. Neither could we exclude him, since we do not have a regimented church. We would not be so coarse as to deny him his membership in the religious community. But we, as representatives of objective religion, explain those religious truths and demands which we have compiled to be the indispensable minimum religious demands of liberal Judaism.[98]

There can be no doubt that beyond these words there is a hidden condemnation against those that would not accept

the guidelines as binding. Given the structure of the community more could not be said or claimed for them, but to attach less value to them was to misunderstand the rabbis who wrote them.

Rabbi Vogelstein directs his comments to the first part of the Richtlinien, the binding dogmatic content of the Jewish religion.[99] It reflects in part the theological ideas of nineteenth century reformers. Even though heavy emphasis on the progressive nature of religion is lacking, the elements which the previous century had labeled as common throughout the history of Judaism were all present: The God of justice and love; the concept of man, created in the image of God, with an immortal soul, destined to rise to great heights of moral and spiritual perfection by the use of his moral freedom; the universalistic aspect of religion and the Messianic ideal; the importance of the mission of Israel as the guardian of religion in its pure state, as promoter towards the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

Recognizing that even within these few all-important concepts there are a variety of possible interpretations, they are presented in a very general fashion. Vogelstein refers to the variety of opinions regarding the existence or non-existence of dogmas in Judaism, nevertheless one thing he sees clearly: "That there are some basic religious teachings which have been recognized as such in Judaism at all ages by all factions."[100]

In terms of those beliefs which liberal Judaism does not consider essential Vogelstein mentions the sacrificial cult, the return to Israel, bodily resurrection, and a belief in verbal revelation. These add nothing to what was rejected by the nineteenth century reformers. When Vogelstein speaks of these, he claims that we can rightfully reject them because of the historic development of religion, but he adds that the liberal Jew should have a compassionate understanding of these elements in their historical moments. Unfortunately the writers of the guidelines and the movement rejected the claim that was being made in some quarters that the concept of return to Israel was experiencing a reawakening and that it possessed a religious dimension. Vogelstein is conscious of this when, within a highly "theological" presentation, he includes a strong word against this concept; by his mentioning that "We don't hope for the rebuilding of Israel in a political sense" he recognizes that the existence of such a trend and rejects it in an absolute manner.

The most difficult part of the Richtlinien, the listing of those ceremonial laws which are to be binding on liberal Jews, were ably presented and explained by Rabbi Freudenthal.[101] His speech contains what by then had become the ritual introduction to any presentation of guide lines to the laity, the usual disclaimers regarding the obligatory nature of the document, the recognition of the importance of evolution in religion, etc. But it also

contains warnings as to what the movement ought to be, "liberaliter," not "liberi." Ceremonies are of great importance for the individual. We are Jews--he declares--and regardless of what our opponents say we do not want to divorce ourselves from our history, "and the ceremonial law occupies a very important place among the characteristic forms of expression in Judaism."[102] For that reason, Freudenthal claims, the rabbis included this section in the document. It represents an attempt to answer the question: "Which ceremonies are so typical for Judaism that they appear as historical foundations, so that for us--for now and for the future--they are just that, they have to be recognized as such and have to be maintained?"[103] Here we see once again that though the rabbis may have been reticent to make anything binding, they did recognize that they could not enforce their decree, but they had a clear position as to what was indispensable, and therefore to be observed by liberal Jews. The last passage quoted from Freudenthal's presentation makes this abundantly clear.

Freudenthal proceeds to discuss point by point the requirements listed under ceremonial law in the Richtlinien. The rabbis presented a very traditional view of Shabbat, holidays and their observance, "without its Sabbath and its characteristic holidays Judaism would be extinguished as an independent religion in the life of the people!" The same applies to the life cycle ceremonies, even if some appear burdensome they must be maintained if the holy

community is to survive. Judaism, as a religion, cannot compel by force, cannot excommunicate; the power to legislate is the power of the state, but:

> He who observes Shabbat and holidays, who participates in public worship, who sanctifies his home with religious solemnity, and who identifies with the community of Israel--assuming personal good moral conduct--not simply a Jew, for that he is through birth and acceptance; not just a good Jew--for that he is if he faithfully accepts his Judaism and participates with interest in its activities; but with regards to ceremony he is much more: he is a religious Jew or even a pious (frommer!) Jew.[104]

Liberal Judaism cannot read anybody out, one is a Jew by birth and that fact the movement cannot change; but according to Rabbi Freudenthal the movement can and does distinguish between a Jew and a good Jew, a Jew and a pious Jew. And the best members of the movement, those which must be multiplied are the pious Jews!

With the conclusion of the third speech the Richtlinien were presented to the assembled for a general debate. It was an important document. The liberal rabbis of Germany had undertaken a task that surpassed in scope the writing of the Pittsburgh Platform, and in some facets would not be equaled by the Columbus Platform. It had its shortcomings, as a document signed by sixty-three rabbis it had to. There were compromises in theology and practice, but it presented a view of Judaism that was not necessarily beyond reach. Its shortcomings were determined by the desire of its authors to avoid conflict with other segments of Jewry and by lack of prophetic vision--for which they can hardly

be blamed! In the Germany of 1912 one could not have expected the rabbis to include an endorsement of peoplehood and Israel, but it is significant that there is no negation of these concepts present in the Richtlinien. Present in the document is the tension between what was and what should have been. The rabbis claim that workday labor on the Shabbat must be avoided, yet on the very next line there is a recognition that this is the ideal, but as long as economic conditions make impossible the fulfillment of this command, all other efforts must be made to sanctify the holiday.

Lastly, the rabbis were aware of the dangers involved in the reform of marriage and divorce laws. They approached the subject timidly, hinted at some aspects in need of revision, and simply stated that "the form of ritual divorce is to be simplified," knowing full well that the ideal would be to come to some understanding with orthodoxy as to what and how to accomplish this. As early as in 1909 a prominent orthodox leader had warned that liberalism could be tolerated and combated with positive work by the orthodox segment, but that a complete break would have to follow any attempt by liberal Judaism to change marriage and divorce law,[105] those laws which touched on personal status.

When the rabbis submitted the Richtlinien for approval at Posen they expected the endorsement of the laity. There was no enforcement mechanism included in the document; given the structure of the movement the rabbis knew that

this would have been unrealistic, but at least a great number of them saw the document as valuable only if the movement would adopt it as its religious constitution. They could not, and did not expect that every individual would feel bound by every statement in these guidelines, but they hoped that the laity would accept its ideas as a standard to be attained by them and their children. With this in mind we can now proceed to look at the actual debate.[106]

Rabbi Coblenz opened the debate arguing against the adoption of the Richtlinien. They are a fine effort to express the position of the rabbis, but the laymen cannot be bound by them. The document is the rabbinic expression of their role as representatives of objective religion, but they cannot be accepted as a Shulchan Aruch for the laity of our movement. Rudolf Geiger followed Coblenz, agreeing with him and carrying the point further. Adoption of the Richtlinien as the movement's magna carta represents a return to clericalism. The function of the movement is a different one,

> the Liberal Union can decide on matters of organization, it can also decide how to publicize and propagate the positions adopted by liberal Judaism, it can publish magazines, establish affiliate organizations and participate in favor of the liberal cause in community elections. The Union can also, by resolutions, decisions or any other means, make known that this or that ritual or ceremonial arrangement is to be considered passe and that therefore it has to be eliminated. . .[107]

thus, in Geiger's words, the function of the Union remains a negative one, meetings, propaganda and Abschaffung. He

defends the proposition that one, like himself, can be a good Jew without following the rabbis' Richtlinien. Adoption of the guidelines as a document of the Liberal Union would necessarily mean that he, and many like him, would have to leave it because it no longer represents their ideal of freedom. He proposed that the best the assembly could do was to congratulate the rabbis on their efforts and reaffirm the freedom of the individual when it comes to dealing with particular ceremonial laws.

Such was the mood of the assembly. The fondest hopes of the rabbis were being drowned in a sea of non-commitment. Speaker after speaker spoke against adoption, some even against a simple "thank you" to the rabbis, and only in favor of a total rejection of this document, "a new Shulchan Aruch, which," one speaker said, "I am not even sure is better than the old one!"

Reflecting this mood Blau proposed a resolution, which would be passed by an overwhelming majority at the end of the session. He explained the intent of his resolution as reflecting all that the rabbis had expected, and urged its passing to settle the fear of those rabbis who felt that orthodoxy would look at the Posen meeting and say: "They just passed a liberal Shulchan Aruch and the laymen already rejected it!" Thus the remainder of the discussion did not center around the content of the Richtlinien, but around the bland resolution which Blau had proposed:

The Union of Liberal Judaism in Germany salutes

> the Richtlinien, composed by the liberal rabbis based on the preparation of the committee of fifteen, as a significant deed and an excellent step forward in the area of teaching and life of religious liberalism.
>
> The Union considers the Richtlinien as appropriate basis for its work in the further development of liberal direction. From now on it will forcefully expand its activities.
>
> True to the basis of liberalism, and in accordance with the speeches heard today, the Union leaves up to the knowledgeable conviction of its members the attitude towards religious life and the relevant demands of the Richtlinien.[108]

Shortly after Blau's resolution was submitted to the assembly Rabbi Felix Goldmann made a significant speech, expressing what must have been the feelings of a great number of rabbis. He stood with the more conservative segment of liberal rabbis, but his reasoning was sound, reflecting the only basis upon which a religious community could meaningfully survive. For Goldmann, the Richtlinien should have been written even before the creation of the Union, they should have been the basis from which the movement was built. If that would have been the case, everybody would have known what the Union stood for. As the membership grew it became imperative that principles be established. Anybody could call himself a liberal Jew--that being in fact the case, the movement stood for nothing. If the Richtlinien are not approved all that is left to work with is "the will to Judaism," a phrase empty of meaning. "There is no such thing as a religion without beliefs; and what is even more important, a religion without a personal

will to sacrifice, that does not ask a person to express oneself for a viewpoint, does not exist. That, ladies and gentlemen, let us say it very clearly, is what distinguished many a liberal from orthodoxy!"[109] Goldmann does concede that the Union will not control whether or not every individual will observe every point in the document, but requires its acceptance as a positive base, as an educational base for the next generation. The only meaningful resolution the Union can pass should read:

> We perceive in these religious Richtlinien produced by the Liberal Union of Rabbis the positive, obligatory basis, which the liberal Jew will have to recognize and observe in the future![110]

After continued debate the resolution proposed by Blau passed with an almost unanimous vote. In the end even Rabbi Seligmann, speaking for Freudenthal, Vogelstein and himself, endorsed the resolution. This must have been a politically motivated move. The resolution was assured passage, the rabbis could accept it or diminish even further their leadership role in the movement. Directing his comments to the final point of the resolution Seligmann concluded his speech saying : "This third paragraph protects the highest good of the liberal man, the freedom of conscience which also we--liberal-rabbis--certainly recognize."[111]

Rabbi Seligmann's final speech at the Posen Convention stood in sharp contrast with what must have been his true feelings. In a speech delivered before the Union of Liberal

Rabbis of Germany in 1937 he expressed what must have been his feelings at the time, maybe sharpened by the passage of time and the consistent inability to bridge the gap between rabbis and laity, between objective religion and subjective individualism:

> In its famous resolution which was approved in Posen the demands made upon the religious life of the individual were left to "the conscientious conviction of each individual." The most extreme religious individualism had gained a victory over the generously conceived attempt of creating a true community.[112]

All within a few days, German Jewish liberalism had experienced one of its highest moments and filed its bankruptcy papers. For a few months after the Posen Convention, in the heat of the controversy with Orthodoxy, membership in the liberal Union grew, but several elements contributed to the steady decline that followed within the movement after the Posen Convention.

The fundamental weakness of the liberal Jewish movement in Germany was its inability to resolve the conflict between Lehre and Leben, between what Seligmann had called objective religion and subjective individualism. The gap that separated rabbis and laymen was never bridged. At the height of its organizational success the Union had slightly over eight thousand members, individuals who had joined the Union for a wide variety of reasons. In addition to these members, the Union always declared proudly that it represented the more than 500,000 non-affiliated, non-orthodox Jews. This was a dubious claim which could only

hurt the movement, for that mass of non-affiliated Jews would constantly stand in the way for a clear definition of the movement.

The liberal rabbis were deeply commited Jews, who justified their liberalism on the basis of tradition. For them Judaism was the important term, liberalism a qualifying adjective. For the membership, on the other hand, liberalism was the attractive term. Its political connotations were inviting, and if one was to affiliate with Judaism, what better way than through its liberal organization. Even if not always clearly stated liberal Judaism for the rabbis represented something positive, while for the laity it always was the negative that attracted them. Liberalism was the laymen's way of saying "no" to orthodoxy and "no" to Zionism. The failure of the movement was reflected in its failure to develope positive commitments. The clear divorce between rabbis and laymen became clear and ever more severe after the Posen debate on the Richtlinien. Almost every issue of Liberales Judentum from the time of the printing of the guidelines up to the beginning of World War I was dedicated to a defense of the liberal position against attacks of orthodoxy against the Richtlinien. Considering that the laity had rejected these it is clear that they could have had only a marginal interest in this debate.

After the war, as the rabbis became increasingly conscious of the shortcomings of the original Richtlinien,

the gulf that separated them from the laity deepened. Slowly the rabbis began to sense the true importance and meaning of the Zionist movement, yet the laity remained staunchly opposed to it.[113] With the temporary setback of the universalist ideal, and the disappointment of some rabbis regarding Germany's conduct in the war some rabbis became much more aware of the particularist trends in Jewish tradition;[114] the laity remained as practically German as ever. Eventually, in 1923, the leadership of Liberales Judentum was to be taken away from the hands of the rabbis, to be placed in the hands of laymen who would turn the magazine into a collection of anti-Zionist polemics.[115] Much to the dismay of the laymen, the rabbis became increasingly conscious of the Community of Israel, while they remained "liberals" in a period in which political liberalism was discredited and extreme religious liberalism harmful to the survival of the German Jewish community.

CONCLUSION

Since the closing of that chapter of history which concluded with the signing of the Richtlinien sixty eventful years have passed. The center of liberalism in Judaism long ago left the European continent and took roots in the United States.

Today the Reform movement shows a great deal of similarities between it and its European counterpart. One can safely say that we too have left behind the anti-Zionist and non-peoplehood stage of our movement. The holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel taught us difficult lessons which produced a transformation of word and deed, a more people-centered religious conception, and a strong identification with the Jewish State. On the religious side we hide our quarrels with our orthodox brothers in order to project a picture of solidity in the household of Israel.

Yet the worst problem that affected German Jewish Liberalism is still very much with us, if any change has occurred it has only been for the worse. What was once a divorce between Lehre and Leben, between objective religion as represented by rabbis and teachers and the subjective individualism ever present in the people, has deepened to the point where one cannot always be sure that objective religion is truly being represented by rabbis and the teachers of the tradition. A wide gap exists today not only between rabbis and laity in our movement, but even between rabbis and rabbis, between those who relate themselves

to the totality of our tradition and those who wish to break loose from it.

Statistically it can be shown that our movement has flourished during the last twenty years, membership has grown, synagogue buildings have proliferated and the number of rabbis ordained by our seminary and employed by our institutions has considerably increased. But to attampt to use these facts as proof that the movement has filled a deeply felt religious need among our membership is to commit the same mistake incurred by the leaders of German Jewish liberalism, who thought that they represented the vast majority of Jews who did not affiliate with Orthodoxy in their age when in fact they represented only a tiny fraction of their members.

If, with regard to religious matters, rabbis are responsible to the majority of the people they serve, they can do, say and practice anything they please, for the majority of the people have relegated religion to a state that is at best one of benign neglect. If a reform rabbi in America today is to please his congregants he must be much more concerned with what he wears, what non-religious causes he identifies with and which he denounces, than with anything religious. Rarely are complaints about rabbis heard because he does or does not keep kashher, or because he believes in a theistic God, a deistic one or no god at all.

Considering this state of affairs it is surprising that once again there is a call for the drafting of a new

platform for the movement. It is surprising especially because the movement today has grown to such a degree that it no longer encompasses only those who adhere to one specific interpretation of Judaism. Among laity and rabbis there are groups that speak a multiplicity of languages. It should be an impossible task to draw up a platform to which all members of the movement, as it is presently constituted, can adhere.

Nevertheless, new guide lines are needed. If they are to be successful much can be learned from the history of the Richtlinien which has occupied us in this study. The rabbis, who with great expectation submitted the Richtlinien for approval, committed one serious error. A survey of the make-up of their constituents prior to the drafting of the guide lines would have clearly shown them that they would have been rejected. Undoubtedly Rabbi Felix Goldmann was right when he indicated that the Richtlinien should have been written before the creation of the Union for Liberal Judaism in Germany. If that would have been the case, those who affiliated with the movement would have done so with full knowledge of what membership entailed. Given the variety of religious and non-religious views which coexist at present in the Reform movement, which would be clearly reflected in any survey undertaken, any meaningful guide lines would be rejected by our movement if they are drafted for adoption by the movement as a whole.

For whom, then, is this new platform to be written?

In the first place, it should be written for the rabbis. They should be written in order that the rabbis shall no longer be only members of a professional union, but shall be able to belong to an ideological fraternity that shall be able to take stands on important matters of religion, an activity which the present structure discourages. It is quite likely that as a result of the present effort to present a platform, two different sets of guide lines will emerge which will reflect the positions of the two major groupings within the reform rabbinate. If this is the result, then, as a consequence, the new platforms will have been written for the lay membership of the movement.

The platforms will show the laity that there are two widely different philosophies of Judaism which co-exist in the movement. They will further know to which of these two philosophies any particular rabbi adheres. They will know in advance where a rabbi stands vis a vis the religious tradition and will be able to select their leaders accordingly. The existence of two platforms, to either of which rabbis will adhere, will facilitate the process of selecting rabbis for congregations.

Two platforms will reflect realistically the present state of our movement. They will indicate a set of guiding principles around which first rabbis, and then the members of the movement will be able to gather to fulfill their religious needs and any responsibility which may result from the adoption of a particular platform as theirs.

What should be the content of these platforms? I cannot pretend to fully answer that question, but from a study of the history of the Richtlinien and their final content--having considered it a positive effort towards defining Liberal Judaism--I can suggest those things which appear to me as absolutely necessary. I cannot indicate what should be the content of a platform to which that segment of the movement which affirms "radical freedom" should adhere, beyond a statement that clearly affirms that proposition. For those, on the other hand, who consider "Judaism" to be the essential term in the phrase "Reform Judaism", some suggestions can be offered here.

There is, in the first place, a need to rediscover those elements within Judaism which stand out as "eternal truths." In the process of writing a platform there should emerge a concept of a personal God, a God who acts in history, a God to whom man can pray. Revelation, meaningfully defined, should enter the theological make-up of a platform, and Law as a direct result of that revelation, or simply as man's interpretation of the divine revelation cannot be absent. The importance of these elements for the continuity of historic Judaism ought to be affirmed in the strongest terms.

Once a theology based on the above mentioned "eternal truths" has been established, the need will arise to deal specifically with the concept of Law. Under Hallacha we shall understand that to which the individual obligates

himself when he identifies with the platform. It cannot and should not be set down in terms of "customs and ceremonies" which a member may observe. Rather, there must emerge a minimum code of law intrinsically connected to our understanding of history and our concept of Klal Israel.

It may be true that a majority of Jews who affiliate with Reform Judaism do so because, considering religion to be a phenomenon of the past, they view the movement as the least demanding one, the one that allows them best to affirm their "radical freedom." It may indeed be the case that many are reform Jews because they identify with all "reforms" and not primarily with Judaism. If this is the case, the rabbis who join in affirming a "Jewish" platform may experience the same disappointment felt by their predecessors, the signers of the Richtlinien. But we cannot know this with any degree of certainty until such a platform will have been drafted which will make demands on its adherents. For too long a period of time no religious guide lines have been offered to our members. If subjectivism dominates the movement at present, it is in no small degree due to the lack of religious leadership within it. Maybe this is the time to find out where we stand, if so, new Richtlinien are needed.

FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

FOOTNOTES

1 Under the 1850 Constitution issued by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV; the process being almost completed by Otto von Bismarck in his reform in 1866. Exception: Judges, crown ministers or full university professors.

2 Kurt Wilhelm, "The Jewish Community in the Post Emancipation Period," Leo Baeck Year Book vol. 2, p. 48.

3 See David Philipson, The Reform Movement in Judaism (Ktav, 1967), 253 ff. for details of the dynamics and problems of this congregation.

4 Kurt Wilhelm, Leo Baeck vol. 2, p. 64.

5 Quoted from Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Jüdische Theologie in Philipson p. 140-141.

6 Philipson, p. 224.

7 Philipson, p. 223.

8 C. Seligmann, Geschichte der Jüdischen Reformbewegung, (Frankfort a.M., 1922) pp. 145-146.

9 Philipson, p. 288.

10 Philipson, p. 288.

11 Philipson, pp. 288-289.

12 Seligmann, p. 146.

13 Philipson, pp. 293-296.

14 Philipson, p. 293.

15 Philipson, p. 300.

16 Philipson, p. 301 ff.

17 Verhandlungen der Zweiten Israelitischen Synode (Berlin, 1873), p. 11.

18 Verhandlungen, p. 41.

19 For a more complete discussion see Verhandlungen, pp. 40-158, or Philipson, p. 309 ff.

20 Verhandlungen, p. 159-170.

21 Seligmann, p. 147-148.

22 For a full discussion of this interesting period see M. Meyer, "Great Debate on Anti Semitism, 1879-1881" Leo Baeck Year Book vol. XI p. 137-170.

23 Seligmann, p. 133.

24 For a full discussion see Wilhelm, pp. 63-66.

25 Seligmann, pp. 133-134.

26 Philipson, pp. 220-221.

27 See Seligmann, pp. 129-130.

28 1) What will be the meaning of revelation in the new Seminary? . . .Do the leaders of the Seminary adhere to this orthodox belief?
2) What will be the meaning of the Bible in the new Seminary? . . .What do the leaders of the Seminary have to say about the authenticity of the Bible?
3) What will be the meaning of tradition in the new Seminary? . . .How do the leaders of the Seminary relate to this orthodox principle?
4) What will be the meaning of derabbanan and minhag in the new Seminary? . . .How do the leaders of the Seminary relate to this orthodox principle?

For the full text see Seligmann, pp. 130-131. These questions will become increasingly important for the later relationship between orthodoxy and liberalism.

29 Seligmann, p. 132.

30 Article on Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums, Jewish Encyclopedia Vol. VII p. 668.

31 Seligmann, p. 133, also J.E. Vol. X pp. 297-298.

32 For a more complete listing see J.J. Petuchowski, Prayerbook Reform in Europe (N.Y., 1968), Chapter I, and the discussions of each of these efforts contained in that book.

33 Seligmann, Geschichte, p. 153.

34 Hermann Goldschmidt, "Der junge Leo Baeck" in Tradition und Erneuerung n. 14 pp. 202-203 (December, 1962)

35 See Philipson pp. 393-396 where he shows no sympathy and great lack of understanding for German liberalism during this period.

36 Philipson, p. 394.

37 Seligmann, Geschichte, p. 150. For a more complete discussion of the Sunday Service controversy see Philipson, pp. 388-389.

38 See Seligmann, Mein Leben, Erinnerungen Eines Grossvaters, pp. 99-101 for a passionate description of an event at a gathering of the Rabbinical Assembly from which he walked out. (The manuscript of Mein Leben, property of the Leo Baeck Institute was obtained from Dr. M. Meyer to whom I owe my thanks.)

39 Seligmann, Geschichte, p. 152.

40 Seligmann, "Zum neuen Jahrgang," in Liberales Judentum (from here on L.J.), vol 2,(1910)pp. 1-2.

41 "Protokoll der konstituierenden Versammlung der Vereinigung für das liberale Judentum in Deutschland," L.J. vol I,(1908-09), p. 3.

42 Vogelstein, H., L.J. vol I, p. 4.

43 Seligmann, "Unser Programm," in L.J. vol. I, p.8.

44 Seligmann, "Unser Programm," in L.J. vol. I, p. 9.

45 "Resolution," in L.J. vol. I, p. 17.

46 See L.J. vol. I, pp. 11-15 for details of this debate.

47 Seligmann, Mein Leben, pp. 102-103.

48 Norden, "Ein Wort zur Sabbatfrage," in L.J. vol. I, pp. 57-61.

49 H. Raemy, "Womit steht und fällt das Judentum," in L.J. vol. I, pp. 84-85. See especially 84!

50 B. Breslauer and others "Erklärung," L.J. vol I, p. 145.

51 See "Eine zionistische und eine christliche Stimme über unsere Bewegung," in L.J. vol I, pp. 136-140.

52 "Die freie jüdische Vereinigung," and Silberstein, "Die partei der Versöhnung," in L.J. vol. I, pp. 341-348.

53 Blau, "Dient die religiös-liberale Bewegung unter den deutschen Juden zur Erhaltung des Judentums?" in L.J. vol. II, pp. 130-143 and following issue. See page 140.

54 S. Samuel, "Unsere Bewegung, eine sittliche Forderung und eine sittliche Macht," in L.J. vol I, pp. 27-36.

55 M. Dienemann, "Liberales Judentum in seinem Zusammenhang mit dem Zeitbewustsein," in L.J. vol. I, pp. 73-81.

56 Samuel, p. 33.

57 This "will to Judaism" originates in Seligmann's thought and writings. It will also be used later by Ahad Ha-Am.

58 "Die Nurenberger Versammlung," in L.J. vol. II, pp. 173-186.

59 This must have been a proposal presented by Rabbi Norden or his congregation in Elberfeld. Unfortunately a copy of the text of this proposal is not available. Further material referred to the committee of 15 as a guide for its deliberations were the proceedings of the third Rabbinical Conference regarding Shabbat, those of the second regarding Worship, and the decisions of the two Synods.

60 Philippson as quoted by Freudenthal in "Unsere Stellung zu den Rabbinerversammlungen und Synoden des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts," in L.J. vol. IV, p. 8.

61 Freudenthal, p. 7.

62 Seligmann, "Zur Geschichte der Entstehung der Richtlinien" in Richtlinien zu einem Programm für das liberale Judentum nebst den Referaten und Ansprachen. . . (from here on simply Richtlinien.) Posen, 1912 pp. 45-55. Mein Leben, pp. 106-109.

63 Listed in page 46 of Richtlinien: "As questions to be presented, the following were enumerated: Concept of revelation, views on the Bible, biblical criticism, story of creation, miracles, immanence and transcendence, immortality, kingdom of the Messiah, Mission of Israel, obligatory nature of biblical and talmudic-rabbinic laws, interpretation of the oral law. . ."

64 Richtlinien. p. 53.

65 Richtlinien. p. 55.

66 Seligmann, Mein Leben, p. 107.

67 The translation here quoted belongs to G. Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism, W.U.P.J. (1965) pp. 68-73. Where I chose to deviate from his translation I have underlined my text. The signatures are not found in Plaut.

68 The seven Rabbis in the original combined committee of fifteen laymen and rabbis were: Appel, Blumenthal, Freudenthal, Norden, Seligmann, Heinemann Vogelstein and Hermann Vogelstein. In the Rabbinical Committee later appointed we find: Rabbis Seligmann, Bloch, Blumenthal, Grunfeld, Porges, Hermann Vogelstein, Walter, Wilde, and Winter.

69 This applies particularly to Rabbi Leo Baeck.

70 These articles appeared in vol. I numbers 13 and 14, pp. 311, 332.

71 Vogelstein, H., "Liberalismus und Religionsgesetz," in L.J. 4. 121-126 see P. 125.

72 Vogelstein in L.J. 4. 124.

73 Vogelstein in Richtlinien, pp. 91-110.

74 Vogelstein in Richtlinien, p. 93, author's italics.

75 Vogelstein in Richtlinien, pp. 99-100.

76 Vogelstein in Richtlinien, see mention in pp. 105, 106, 108.

77 Vogelstein, H., "Die schöpferische Kraft des religiösen Liberalismus," in Richtlinien, p. 154.

78 L.J. 2. 183.

79 See his comments at the Berlin gathering of 1908 in L.J. 1. 14, and at the Nuremberg Convention of 1910 in L.J. 2. 183.

80 See Richtlinien, pp. 105, 106, 108.

81 Leo Baeck, The Essence of Judaism, pp. 12-13.

82 Baeck himself does not speak of revelation in a threefold manner, but in a short summary of his views as reflected in Essence, and in quotes given by Friedlander's Leo Baeck, Teacher of Theresienstadt, this seems to me to be a sufficient definition.

83 Based on Friedlander, Leo Baeck, pp. 190, 198.

84 Freudenthal, "Unsere Stellung zu den Rabbinerversammlungen," in L.J. 4. 4-9.

85 Freudenthal, "Unsere Stellung zum Religionsgesetz" in Richtlinien, pp. 43-44.

86 Richtlinien, pp. 32-44.

87 Freudenthal, "Die Richtlinien und ihre Wirkung" in L.J. 5. 100-113.

88 Freudenthal, "Ein liberales Gutachten als historisches Dokument" in Festgabe für Claude G. Montefiore, p. 43.

89 Seligmann, Richtlinien, p. 16.

90 Seligmann, Geschichte, pp. 155-156.

91 Seligmann, Richtlinien, p. 12.

92 Seligmann, Richtlinien, pp. 80-81.

93 As quoted in the stenographer's report of the Posen Convention, L.J. 4. 291.

94 Seligmann as quoted in Plaut, "The Growth of Reform Judaism, pp. 106-108.

95 See the tenth section of the Richtlinien.

96 Seligmann in Mein Leben p. 108, refers to the "Frankfort gentleman." From his description it appears that Blau fits the bill.

97 Richtlinien, pp. 70-91.

98 Richtlinien, p. 81.

99 Richtlinien, pp. 91-110.

100 Richtlinien, p. 94.

101 Richtlinien, pp. 110-125.

102 Richtlinien, p. 111.

103 Richtlinien, p. 113.

104 Richtlinien, p. 120.

105 S. Stein, "Unsere stellung zur liberalen Vereinigung," Würzburg, 1909 p. 14.

106 The full transcript of the debate is given in L.J. v. 4 pp. 277-292.

107 L.J., 4. 279.

108 L.J., 292.

109 L.J., 286.

110 L.J., 287.

111 L.J., 291.

112 G. Plaut, The Growth of Reform Judaism, pp. 106-107.

113 C. Seligmann, Mein Leben, pp. 114-116.

114 See Seligmann's "Der Krieg und die gottliche Weltregierung," in L.J., v. 8, pp. 25-37.

115 C. Seligmann, Mein Leben, p. 115.

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