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Tradition And Change



Synopsis

Originally published in 1958, this volume has been reprinted in a paperback edition with a new preface. Contains an extended introduction by the editor followed by classic statements by the founders and leading spokesmen of the Conservative Movement. Included among the authors are: Cyrus Adler, Morris Adler, Jacob Agus, Louis Finkelstein, Zacharias Frankel, Israel Friedlander, Louis Ginzberg, Robert Gordis, Simon Greenberg, Mordecai Kaplan, Solomon Schechter, Milton Steinberg, and Henrietta Szold.

Book Information

Paperback: 488 pages

Publisher: United Synagogue Of Conservative Judaism (January 1, 1958)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0838131166

ISBN-13: 978-0838131169

Package Dimensions: 8.4 x 5.8 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #1,395,955 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #28 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Movements > Conservative

Customer Reviews

This anthology of the seminal and classic papers on Conservative Judaism was published many years ago. It has suddenly become timely again, as the conservative stream of Judaism is busy reinventing itself, in the face of persistent declines in membership. I spent my formative years, from ages eight to sixteen, as a Seminary child, meaning the son of a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the intellectual Vatican of the conservative movement.. I was one of the few. I grew up Conservadox, which in our case meant Orthodox in practice but with total freedom of intellectual inquiry, following scientific evidence and logic to wherever it led. This was a somewhat modified interpretation of the Wissenschaft des Judentums's premise of critical investigation of Jewish literature and culture, including rabbinic literature, using scientific methods to analyze the origins of Jewish traditions, while still (generally speaking) following the Shulchan Aruch, the Jewish Code of Law, as the arbiter of Jewish practice, as specified by Prof. Louis Ginzberg, himself a scion of the famed Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman Kramer (1720-1797), known as the Vilna Gaon. Ginzberg quoted the Gaon, who instructed, "Do not regard the

views of the Shulhan Aruk binding if you think that they are not in agreement with those of the Talmud. This is a position not today accepted by normative Orthodox Judaism, but of little practical consequence as the Vilna Gaon, far from being a reformer, was a formidable and conservative decisor who was beyond criticism. Still, the comment was a useful peg for those who, like Louis Ginzberg, sought room for leniency to hang their black fedora hats on. The wags used to say that the Seminary was an Orthodox institution for the training of Conservative Rabbis who served mostly Reform congregants. There is a lot of truth about that. There is a disconnect between Conservative synagogues and its institutions. The movement has the unenviable challenge of trying to navigate between the orthodox Scylla and the Reform Charybdis. The documents presented in this book, written by the movement's leading luminaries, inform the ongoing debate about how the movement might reinvent itself, remain relevant, and remain true to its roots.

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