

Michael A. Meyer and W. Gunther Plaut, *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents* (New York: UAHC Press, 2001), 228 pp.

This compilation of documents related to the development of Reform Judaism in North America will make a concise and useful companion for any student of Jewish denominational history. The editors have divided their texts into twelve topical chapters, tracing historical patterns of practice and belief under each heading. For example, in examining Reform perspectives on "Zionism and Israel" (Chapter 8), the selected texts bring the reader from the official anti-Zionism of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1897 to the same organization's "Zionist Platform" a century later.

The intended audience for this book, as noted in its preface, is "individuals and... study groups in universities and synagogues." (vi) One can imagine different academic and social settings for which this text would be appropriate. Its most apparent use would be for congregational adult education programs seeking English-language text study. (Though some of the earliest documents cited in the book were in German, they have been translated by the editors.) A twelve-week course might be built around the different chapter headings. A synagogue ritual committee might find it interesting and beneficial to study the chapters that discuss the changes in liturgy and practice. This book might also be appropriate as a confirmation class text, providing high school students with access to original documents.

The structure of the book is nicely organized and easily followed. The editors selected texts that represent both mainstream and peripheral ideas, and their introductions to each chapter put the selections into their appropriate contexts. Some of the selections are available in other works (such as Plaut's *Growth of Reform Judaism: American and European Sources Until 1948* or Meyer's *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*). The uniqueness here is that in this new volume one can easily find texts that are of immediate relevance to the contemporary Reform Jewish community. *The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents* would be a valuable addition to any home or synagogue library.

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