

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Conservative Judaism originated from the movement, which adhered to Jewish customs and traditions in the U.S.A. This movement refuses to support both the Reform and Orthodoxy traditions. Conservatives try to mix a progressive attitude to present values and beliefs, recognition of critical materialistic knowledge concerning Judaic sacred texts and guarantee obedience to Jewish tradition. They consider that intellectual studies of sacred texts allow Jews to keep their relations with God. Conservative Judaism preserves that the facts established in the Jewish texts originated from G-d, and were spread by people; these texts enclose an anthropological component and meaning of the human existence. Moreover, they believe that central Halakhic message is able to end the controversies of the world. Conservative Judaism confirms that the Halakhic practice reveals the Divine power. It confirms the soundness of scientific Bible criticism. The movement believes in God, that He is real and that His willpower becomes known to people in revelations. The clearest and most well-known revelation was the one received at Sinai. A lot of people misinterpret the Conservative movement as the one similar to Reform Judaism. The only difference is in its service. Conservative Jews need to live a faithful Jewish lifestyle. There are seven essential principles of Conservative Judaism as the value of modern Israel, the unique language of Jewish communication, adherence to the model of Klal Yisrael, the role of Torah, the study of Torah, the power of Halakhic teaching, and trust in God. Schorsh explains that Conservative Judaism establishes a great number of separate and non-prioritized principles. Therefore, there are three nationwide and three general sacred principles.¹ The movement of Conservative Jews is called Masorti. It is based on three core doctrines: Torah, Mitzvah, and Zionism. Nowadays, there are near 1,5 million members of the Conservative Judaism movement. Conservatives still observe numerous traditional Jewish religious practices.

¹ See Schorsh (1995), especially chapter about the core principles.

Conservative Judaism is a movement based on theological pillars of Orthodox and Reform Judaism. Therefore, it is difficult to determine a religious position of Conservatives. Conservatives visit synagogues. It is a sacred place to worship the God. They come together and pray God here. Obviously, Jews are able to pray the Creator anywhere; however, the synagogue is said to be a holy temple. Moreover, the synagogue is the house of study and library. Conservatives believe that learning does not end after school graduation. It has to last for entire human lifetime. The study of sacred texts is not an easy task. Therefore, the synagogue has a great library of sacred Jewish texts for followers of the movement. Furthermore, it is the place where offspring can receive an elementary religious education. Furthermost, synagogues have a community room for non-religious and religious purposes. The worship house often is used as a kind of the town hall where the most significant problems of the community are discussed. In addition, the synagogue is a place of communal support. Here money and other things for the needy and poor in the community are collected and dispensed. Three main branches of Judaism are rather different. Orthodox Judaism firmly consecrates on the endless and permanent Law of Moses. They firmly believe that a person can be near to God by keeping to the rules. Reform Judaism, on the other hand, is a liberal movement. People decide on which laws they want to follow and which not. In general, they have individual autonomy. Conservative Judaism is in between of Orthodox and Reform Judaism. The followers adhere to the laws and try to embrace modern culture. During the service in a Conservative synagogue, people discuss different questions from both sides: worldly and religious. For example, while visiting the synagogue, they discussed lesbianism and homosexuality. They asserted that Torah is against it, while, on the other hand, contemporaneousness tolerated such behavior. They were rethinking the problem from different sides. There were various interpretations. Such discussions are very revealing and informative to people who try to adapt to the modern culture without breaking the religious laws. Moreover, some people left to continue their dispute after the service. They were discussing other political

problems, as well. People tried to understand and find the best solution to the problem as they wished to live in harmony and peace. This movement makes people think over various things from different perspectives, which is very informative and reasonable. Moreover, their ideas during the Conservative services stay in the walls of the synagogue.

Evangelical Protestants are fundamentalists — socially, economically and religiously. Occasionally, the word "evangelical" is inaccurately used to distinguish the conservatism from liberalism of the Protestant movements. Nonetheless, Evangelical Christianity has particular features that differ it from the whole Christian community. Evangelism is preaching the Good news: salvation through Jesus Christ for all people. An evangel is an individual devoted to spreading the gospel of Jesus. This movement of Christianity is increasing, and its members have more assurance in their belief and participate in the acts of worship more often. Evangelical movement is different from "fundamentalism" — this means that originally these Christians believed in five main pillars of Christianity, however, which finally became related to ultraconservatives who were in contradiction with theological studies, against modern versions and whatever modern, and usually in contradiction with anybody who was not a fundamentalist. Evangelists and other Christians have a lot of mutual things. However, they are split by some differences in doctrines. Nevertheless, they all believe in the authority of the Bible, but understand it in their own ways. Some christen newborns, some preach destiny; others speak in tongues, others develop and support a particular system of authority and hierarchy, and stress the importance of social work. Possibly, this diversity is better than compulsory conformism; nonetheless, it is able to make Christianity look as being gripped with insignificance. In addition, from time to time, Christians do become confused by these problems. All societies have to understand that it is probable for Christians to be mistaken about the core issues; people need to appreciate the necessity to be open-minded to others who serve Christ in their own ways. There are no mandatory be-

liefs, but Evangelicals keep their rules rather simple. They consider the death of Jesus Christ to be of the main significance. They provide a lot of services to remember and honor His sacrifice. This is how every Christian wants to be remembered, and that is undeniably the most characteristic feature of the Christian religion. Jesus died for his people and their sins. Several theories exist that Christians will be saved by God at the end of the times. There are five main beliefs, which represent the movement of Evangelicals and their conservative faith: a tough acceptance of the Bible, one way to be saved through Jesus Christ, individual relations with Jesus, and readiness to preach the salvation in Jesus Christ. Evangelicals differ from Catholics and other Christian communities a lot. The main thing that Protestants can learn from the historic churches is the way they worship. Liturgy gives people a piecing with the holy that is just not presented during the service, in Evangelical houses of worship. On the other hand, Evangelical Protestants teach Scripture better than any other community. It is more tolerable and accessible. The Catholic Church did not preach the destiny, unlike the leading Protestant movements. Moreover, there is no unity among the Protestant Churches. Worship services in the Evangelical church are enormously sermonical and pastor-centered. The Evangelical service arrangement includes singing of the worship songs throughout the service. Worshipers believe it is with a kind of praying to God. Music is a vital part of Evangelical service. Therefore, the music is of high quality. It is mostly modern and optimistic. Evangelicals use various electric instruments. The singing lasts for nearly half of an hour. After the singing part, Protestants have a short Scripture interpretation followed by the sermon. A great importance is given to the sermon; the Evangelical priests devote a lot of time to preparing them. The most important is the Sunday sermon. Moreover, Protestants have longer ceremonies than Catholics or other communities. Evangelical service not only reveals the sense of the biblical scripture but also teaches the rules of living in this world according to the Bible. Pastors practice expository evangelization. Furthermore, each sermon is focused on one passage from the Bible. Each week, the sermon focuses on a different fragment

of the Bible. This gives an opportunity to understand the main message better. Therefore, a lot of Catholics come to Evangelical Protestant churches. In Evangelical doctrine, rituals are only symbols. Evangelists do not truly discuss grace. As an alternative, Protestants consider that it is more significant for followers to live according to the Scripture than to have any sacrament. Therefore, Protestant churches devote much more time to sermons and usual services than to different celebration procedures. As a rule, every Evangelical worship is full of practical teachings of the Bible texts. People listen to it during every service but do not reenact the Eucharist. First of all, Evangelists worship during the liturgy just like other communities do. However, they have created their own model of modern service. Even though, they try to be rather spontaneous. Therefore, it is impossible with the formal liturgy. Evangelicals practice liturgical holy rites. All their songs are prayers, but they are written and put to music by common people. Consequently, the common feature is liturgical singing and worship but in their innovative forms.

For an outsider, there are a lot of differences between Christian and Muslim traditions. For Muslims, the most important day of the week is Friday. Friday is the big day when Muslims go to the mosque and participate in the prayer rituals. Healthy Muslim men, women, and non-Muslims are encouraged to visit Friday sermons. Moreover, Muslims have to pray five times a day. It is the norm for them. The Friday midday prayer is called Jum'ah. It lasts for nearly forty minutes. Muslims believe that it allows all of them unite with Allah. Moreover, it symbolizes the unity of Islam. The importance of the Friday sermon is revealed in the Muslim beliefs that the first human on Earth was created on Friday; he entered the paradise and was expelled from it on Friday, and lastly, the archangel would inform of the Judgment Day on Friday. First of all, while entering the mosque, people take off their shoes. It is a symbol that everybody has to be prepared physically, as well as spiritually, to the service. All men are shaved, clean, and nobody has dirty socks. People do not speak a lot. Mostly, they keep silence till the service

begins. Jum'ah is an important part of the service led by the worship leader – the imam. The sermon gives Muslims daily motivation, delight, peace of mind, and nonphysical assistance. All Muslim males need to attend the mosque on Friday. It is, however, not compulsive for women. They can pray God in private at homes. For different religions, there are various main days in the week. For Jews, it is Saturday, for Christians – Sunday and, for Muslims, the big day is Friday. In Islam, the prayer is constantly followed by a lengthy prayer when all worshipers raise hands to the heaven while the imam sends their prayers to Allah, begging the Creator to bring peace and harmony to the world, end the pain of those who are less lucky and bless these people. It is the time when Muslims have an intimate and peaceful communication with God. They can talk to him, thank him, and ask for some things they need or lack. People behave in their best ways on Friday. They dedicate themselves to God. In the U.S.A., there is a great traditional and ethnic difference. Therefore, people do not always wear traditional clothes. The traditional clothes are a differently painted clothing - like khakis brought from Arabia, Asia, or Africa. During the service, Muslims have two sets of the charitable prayer. It is called *tahyatul masjid salah*. Next, they listen to *iqaamah*. After the prayer, men stand up to provide the *iqaamah* with a short form of the request. Muslims line up shoulder to shoulder in the direction to Mecca. Their shoulders, arms, and legs can touch other people's parts of the body. All Muslims consider the Jum'ah an integral part of their lives. Small children are brought to the mosque to be prepared for visiting the sermons for the rest of their lives. They are taught that they need to attend Jum'ah every Friday, despite various problems. Whenever a person is in another part of the world, he/she needs to find a mosque to fulfill this vital and sacred necessity. The sermon gives people the feeling of unity and protection. The relationship between faith, sacramental fulfillment, and collective behavior is depicted during the service. When passing these three interrelated stages of Islam, people study a right model of existing in the world.

Reference

Schorsch, I. (1995). The core values of conservative Judaism. In *The sacred cluster*. Retrieved from http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/conservative_values.html.