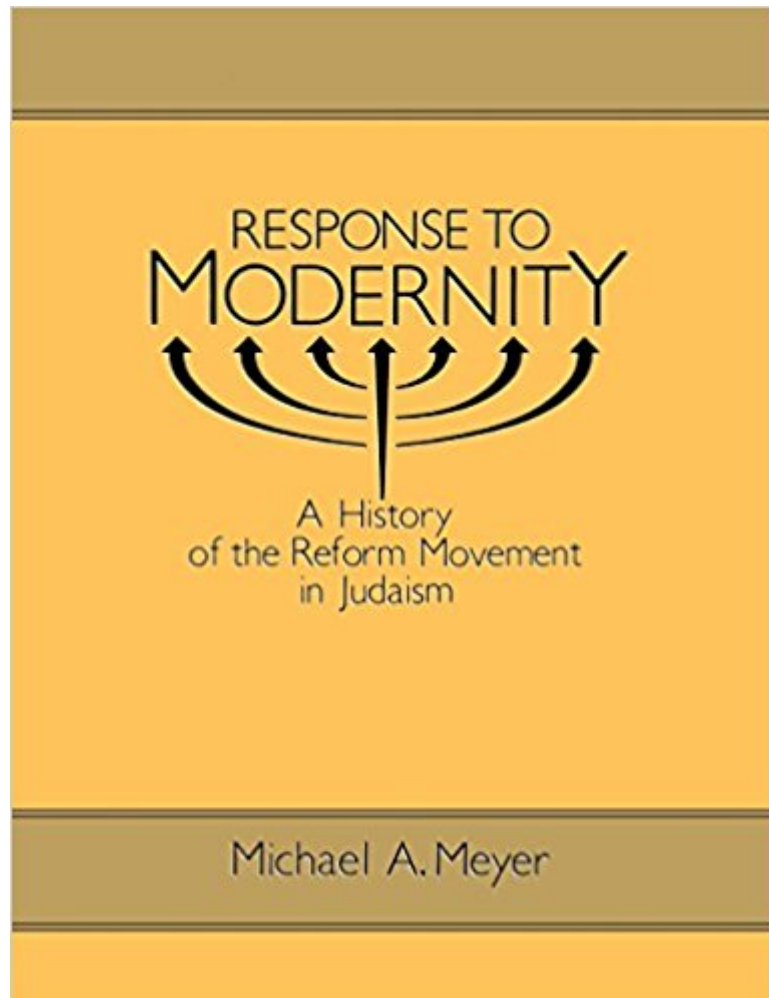




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# **Response To Modernity: A History Of The Reform Movement In Judaism**



## Synopsis

The movement for religious reform in modern Judaism represents one of the most significant phenomena in Jewish history during the last two hundred years. It introduced new theological conceptions and innovations in liturgy and religious practice that affected millions of Jews, first in central and Western Europe and later in the United States. Today Reform Judaism is one of the three major branches of Jewish faith. Bringing to life the ideas, issues, and personalities that have helped to shape modern Jewry, *Response to Modernity* offers a comprehensive and balanced history of the Reform Movement, tracing its changing configuration and self-understanding from the beginnings of modernization in late 18th century Jewish thought and practice through Reform's American renewal in the 1970s.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In attempting to make Jewish observance more comprehensible and meaningful to modern adherents, the Reform branch of Judaism needed to devise a system of ritual and thought flexible enough to survive a fragmented, secularized world. Meyer, professor of Jewish history at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, traces the origins of the Reform movement to changes in temple services in Hamburg and Berlin in the early 1800s. In Europe, Reform had to contend not only with conservative Christians, who sided with Jewish traditionalists, but also with governmental intrusion into Jewish religious affairs. But, in the United States, the Reform movement found fertile soil, spreading rapidly after a dozen men in 1825 launched the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston, S.C. This dry, scholarly history follows the rabbinical rivalries, ideological polemics and

innovations that have marked Reform Judaism. First serial to Reform Judaism. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Meyer, author of works on the religious and intellectual history of contemporary Jews, here presents a lucid and thorough history of the Reform movement in Judaism. After analyzing the precedents for reform, he shows how the movement developed slowly in late 18th- and early 19th-century Germany, then moves on to Europe, the United States, and such relatively unexplored areas as Eastern Europe and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The author lucidly describes the philosophies and motivations of the reformers, the relationship between Reform and Orthodoxy, and Judaism's context within the Christian world. For all collections with an interest in religion. Maurice Tuchman, Hebrew Coll. Lib., Brookline, Mass. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is a great overview of the history of progressive Judaism. A great book that I definitely recommend to anyone who wants to familiarize themselves with this topic

Excellent history of evolution of Reform Judaism from Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) to mid\_20th century, but is dense and not an easy read. Because the topic is important to me, I read in 20-30 page doses. Can't say how you'll feel, but I didn't want to read on without some time to reflect.

In Dr. Meyer's usual manner, he encapsulates the history of the Reform Jewish movement from its beginnings in Europe through its triumphs and struggles in modern America. For anyone who wants a thorough and accurate history of Reform, including fun and useful anecdotes on its leaders, this book is essential.

There is a lot of research that went into this book. I feel that this book provides a nice overview. However, at times, I was frustrated. I wanted more detail and historical background. Overall, this is a nice contribution. I would definitely recommend it as an introductory book to this topic.

This book is the single best resource for the history of the Reform Movement. Dr. Meyer writes as he speaks; engaging and thorough.

As a committed Progressive Jew who fluctuates between Reform and Reconstructionist affiliation, I was glad to stumble upon Michael Meyer's excellent history of the Reform Movement. Meyer traces the development of Reform from the early years in Hamburg and Berlin to recent decisions made by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. In so doing, he explodes a number of horrific myths that Orthodox "Judaism" lobes at Reform: that significant numbers of Reform congregations shifted their main day of worship to Sunday; that the movement is simply "watered down" Judaism; that Reform Jews are simply "lapsed" Jews who would be Orthodox if they didn't find it difficult or knew more about Judaism. Meyer also shows that, just as there are and have been important movements and currents within "Orthodoxy", there were and are many different movements and currents within Reform. The discussions of the movement's growth and foment on German soil, and the transfer of that foment to the United States, are particularly enlightening.

It's the best history of Reform Judaism ever written. In addition Michael Meyer writes clearly and with precision. His knowledge of the topic is unparalleled.

Michael Meyer's clear-eyed history of the Reform (a.k.a. 'Progressive') movement should be read by anyone who wants to understand the current fragmented condition of modern Jewry. Meyer makes eminently clear that it is the Reformers who departed from the traditional faith of Judaism and thereby founded a new religion at odds with (what they came to call) Orthodoxy. (Meyer himself is clearly favourable toward this approach, but he is at least unblinkingly honest about it.) Anyone affiliated with Reform or Progressive 'Judaism' who has not read Meyer's careful and thorough historical exposition probably does not understand the real foundations of his or her own movement.

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