

Baruch J. Cohon, ed., *Faithfully Yours: Selected Rabbinical Correspondence of Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon During the Years 1917–1957* (Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2008), 407 pp.

This edited volume of Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon's letters is a fascinating look at his understanding of not only Reform Judaism, but Conservative and Orthodox as well. Here Rabbi Cohon's son, Rabbi Baruch Cohon, presents inquiries and replies, sometimes even dialogues, about topics such as interfaith relations, religious observance, and the synagogue. He also intersperses commentaries on how his father's statements relate to the Reform Judaism of today. Some of these inquiries were addressed directly to Rabbi Cohon, some were forwarded from colleagues, and some were sent by readers of magazines for which Cohon wrote. These questions, posed by lay people and religious leaders (both Jewish and Christian) between 1917 and 1957, are in most cases similar to questions asked today. Cohon addresses issues of intermarriage, death, Zionism, religious observance, the rabbinate, the Reform movement, and antisemitism with grace and knowledge, and he presents his information in such a way that it reaches the needs of the inquirer, whether that person be a congregation president; Jewish religious leaders such as Rabbi David Max Eichhorn (a leader of the chaplaincy for the U.S. military) or Rabbi Solomon Freehof (a president of the CCAR and chair of its Liturgy Committee for a number of years); or members of the Christian clergy. Readers will find Cohon's statements not only interesting in historical context but helpful because we still deal with these same issues.

The section on antisemitism is most interesting, not just because many of these same problems still exist, but because Cohon explains how the antisemitic statements can be debunked using the Jewish texts from which the statements have been taken out of context. It is also interesting to see which standards Cohon keeps over the course of the forty years of this book and which ones he is willing to adapt to common practice. For example, he responds to a number of synagogue leaders about the question of moving the Sabbath to Sunday. On this he never waivers: Sabbath is on Saturday, the last day of the week. However, on the question of reading the Torah on Friday night rather than on Saturday morning, he slowly accepts the practice that many synagogues had adopted because he came to realize that if people are going to attend services it is more likely to be on Friday evenings than Saturday mornings. The reader can follow his subtle changes in arguments on this subject over time.

The appendix is not to be overlooked. In this final section, we only see the letters from a young woman in Kentucky who is trying to find herself as she discovers the religion of Judaism that her mother never practiced upon moving to rural Kentucky with her Baptist husband. Unfortunately, Rabbi Cohon's letters to this woman are lost, but her vivid responses show the gentleness and forthrightness with which Rabbi Cohon wrote. Overall, this book is a very insightful and creative way to learn about the theology and expansive knowledge of Rabbi Samuel S. Cohon.

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