

RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON
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מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן
 ליובאוויטש

770 איסטערן פארקווי
 ברוקלין נ.י.

By the Grace of G-d
 23rd of Adar I, 5717
 Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. Joel Saibel
 92 Bellingham Street
 Chelsea 50, Mass.

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter of February 12th, in which you give a brief account of your background and education, and that you are now contemplating becoming a Conservative Rabbi, for which purpose you are considering entering the appropriate institution where Conservative Rabbis are trained. You ask my opinion on this matter.

My opinion can only be based on the opinion of the Holy Torah, and as it has been formulated by Maimonides, to the effect that he who admits that the Torah is G-d-given, except for one verse which he holds was given by Moshe Rabbeinu himself, such a person is regarded as denying the whole Torah. Even without the said ruling of Maimonides, this would be self-evident and logical. For one has to be consistent: Either one accepts that the Torah is Divine, in which case a human being with his limited intellect, inasmuch as all creation is limited, cannot possibly fathom the Divine Wisdom that is in the Torah, and cannot therefore, select passages from it which appeal to his intellect, and discard others which do not. On the other hand, if a human being is so presumptuous as to use his own discretion with regard to the Torah, and accept or reject accordingly, this means that he regards the Torah as something which does not go deeper or beyond the human understanding. Consequently also, the Torah in his opinion has no greater binding force than that dictated by human reason, which in effect means, no binding force at all, since no human being can impose his views on any other human being.

From the above, it is clear that Conservative and Reform Rabbis who follow the approach of reform and compromise on religion, completely misrepresent the true Jewish religion and, moreover, mislead those who are under their influence in believing that their own form of convenient 'religion' is the kind for which our ancestors have given their lives for thousands of years. They will have their followers believe that their type of man-made religion is the religion revealed to us by G-d on Mount Sinai, and this is the greatest possible fraud. When a career is made of this type of religion, and human conscience and profoundest feelings are made a "trade-in-stock" in this unholy business, then a greater depravity cannot be imagined.

In view of what you write about your own background, I think it is superfluous to emphasize that there is a great difference between a person failing on occasion to withstand a temptation and therefore committing a transgression, and one who tries to justify such sins of omission and commission by saying that they are not transgressions at all, or that the Torah itself permits one to use one's own judgement,

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for in the latter case it is nothing but falsification of the truth, which is what Conservative and Reform preach. The fact that a Conservative Rabbi may himself sometimes be a thoroughly religious person, and observe all the 613 Mitzvoth, does not alter the situation if he represents the Conservative movement and disseminates its doctrines.

✓ in his private life

From the above, it is also evident that the use of the title "Rabbi" in its traditional sense is completely contradictory when it is applied to a conservative, and is in itself misleading and fraudulent to the unsuspecting congregations. Hence, to select such a career in the first place, in my opinion, is completely out of order.

It is well-known that there are many members in Conservative congregations, and sometimes even so-called spiritual leaders in the movement, who themselves negate completely the Conservative philosophy, accepting and following fully the whole Torah, and, in the latter case, have accepted positions as rabbis in Conservative temples for various reasons. This is also the case with regard to the person to whom you refer in your letter, who obviously does not belong in the Conservative movement, nor in the so-called "New" brand of Conservatism, which goes under the name of "Modern Orthodoxy". On the other hand, it is clearly obvious that such a situation is pregnant with constant inner conflicts, which are often even outwardly apparent. Therefore, it is certainly inadvisable and illogical to select a career which is bound to bring with it constant conflict and friction, both within himself and in relation to the environment, etc.

You write that hitherto you have succeeded in safe-guarding your immunity from outside inimical influences. But surely this does not justify yourself in a situation which contains more than the average elements of temptations and trials, a road which is fraught with dangers and pitfalls. Rather the contrary, inasmuch as Divine Providence has been kind to you and has safe-guarded you from such influences in the past, you should once and for all, make up your mind to break away from that dangerous path.

If you are bent on a rabbinical career, surely it would be more advisable for you to enroll into a proper Yeshiva which prepares and trains for the Orthodox rabbinate. If this seems a more difficult climb, nothing stands in the way of determination and will.

With blessing

M. Schneerson

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