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Truth and Faith: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism

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Abstract: Conservative Judaism is a religious movement that developed primarily in the United States, inheriting the spirit and tradition of the German positivist-historical school pioneered by Frankel, emphasizing a moderate, eclectic, and cautious reform. For a long time, The Conservatives did not issue a formal creed like the Reform, because the Conservatives believed that it itself represented the classical tradition of Judaism and did not need to be further elaborated with a creed. Moreover, Conservative Judaism feared that issuing a unified platform or statement might cause divisions and tensions between different conservative ideas. However, the avoidance of self-definition has led to a lack of self-confidence among some Conservative Jews in competition with Reform and Orthodox, who increasingly want to know “what Conservative Judaism is”. In 1985, the Conservatives established a Committee on Conservative Philosophical Thought, composed of rabbis, scholars, and laymen, with the aim of working together on the basic elements and fundamental ideas of Conservative Judaism. In 1988, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, The Rabbinical Assembly, United Synagogue of America, Women’s League for Conservative Judaism, Federation of Jewish Men’s Clubs, and other Conservative institutions jointly issued *Truth and Faith: A Statement of Principles for Conservative Judaism*, which systematically explains Conservative Judaism’s views on God, revelation, Halakhah (Jewish law), the Jewish people, the State of Israel, interfaith relations, social justice, women, the Jewish home, Tefillah (prayer), Talmud Torah (Jewish studies), and a range of other issues, and sets forth standards for the ideal Conservative Jew. Although the statement does not work toward a unified, set-in-stone view of Conservative Judaism, it nonetheless serves to some extent to guide and advance the development of the Conservative movement and to unite Conservative Jews.

Key Words: Conservative Judaism, Truth, Faith, Creed