

CHAIM YEDIDIAH POLLAK – CALLED LUCKY



Controversy about Lucky

- Reflections in Light of the Stockholm
Conference in 1911

by Kai Kjær-Hansen

In this article, we will examine how Lucky and Waldmann's declaration of May 1911 was received at the so-called Eighth International Jewish Missionary Conference in Stockholm, June 1911. This will be done in the light of the two papers at the conference that dealt with so-called Neo-Ebionism. As it is my opinion that the declaration on the whole is in Joseph Rabinowitz's spirit, I am surprised at the rather cold reception it got. I shall try to give an explanation of this. My guess is that the conference did not so much object to the declaration as to Lucky himself and what he *otherwise* stood for, matters that were not mentioned in the declaration. So what did Lucky stand for and what did he really mean?

When Lucky returns to Europe from America in the summer of 1889, Joseph Rabinowitz and the movement around him in Kishinev are known by all who were then involved in Jewish mission. Lucky visited Kishinev in the autumn of 1889, as we have seen in the article "Lucky and the Leipzig Program."¹ The two of them must have had quite a lot to talk about: Jewish mission and money, for example. The scenario is: The guest, Lucky, who fights against paid Jewish-missionaries (who paid his travel expenses?) meets Rabinowitz, a Jesus-believing Jew financially supported by Jewish mission societies.

If Lucky had attended one of Rabinowitz's Sabbath services, seen him drive to the prayer-hall, and afterwards turn on the samovar in his home and light a cigarette – all on a Sabbath – it is easy to imagine that this could cause a certain exchange of views.²

It is interesting to note that at the conference in Stockholm Rabinowitz is used positively, both by those who are *for* Lucky and by those who are *against* him. Therefore, to make it easier to follow the argument, I will provide a brief sketch of Rabinowitz's program and adherence to Jewish customs.

1 I must admit that I am annoyed that I have practically no information about this meeting or the personal relationship between Lucky and Rabinowitz afterwards.

2 Cf. Kai Kjær-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids: The Handsel Press and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 149.

Rabinowitz's Adherence to Jewish Customs

With a few exceptions, the general view before Rabinowitz was that a Jew who "converted" to Christianity ceased to be a Jew. Rabinowitz dismissed that idea. He also protested against the idea that it was legalism if a Jesus-believing Jew wanted to retain Jewish customs. He stubbornly maintained that his faith in Jesus had not turned him into an ex-Jew, that his Jewish identity had not been drowned in baptism, and that a Jesus-believing Jew has freedom to live in a Jewish manner. He insisted to Gentile Christians that it was not a sin to continue to be a Jew after one had come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

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Already at a conference in March 1884, in Kishinev, there were Gentile Christians representing Western Jewish mission societies, who voiced their misgivings about Rabinowitz smuggling the law in through the back door.

He had indicated that he and others similarly disposed wanted to observe Jewish customs inherited from the fathers, in so far as these do not clash with the spirit of Christianity. From a *religious* point of view, he and his adherents believe that the law has been fulfilled completely by the Messiah. But from a *patriotic* point of view, they want to observe the law, in so far as nationality and circumstances make it possible.

This gave rise to a debate about circumcision and the Sabbath. The Gentile Christians were worried that Rabinowitz might want to observe these commandments – not just for national but also for religious reasons. Therefore, they asked Rabinowitz if a Hebrew Christian who does not circumcise his child commits a sin. Rabinowitz answered, "He does not commit a sin, but he alienates himself from his own Jewish people." He gave a similar answer to the question of whether a Hebrew Christian who does not observe the Sabbath commits a sin.³

Franz Delitzsch, Gustav Dalman, and Hermann L. Strack all defended Rabinowitz when he came under attack.⁴ Pastor Faltin in Kishinev and others found "Judaistic elements" in his theology and accused him of "Ebionitism."⁵ Regarding Rabinowitz's observance of circumcision, the Sabbath, Jewish feasts, etc., Delitzsch cherished the hope that Rabinowitz, with his Pauline attitude, would finally draw the Pauline conclusion and abandon this view.⁶ This did not happen, but Delitzsch's disapproval is not so strong that he cannot rejoice in Rabinowitz's work. He knew that Rabinowitz's doctrine of justification was in agreement with the Bible and the Reformation Fathers, and that was the crucial point for Delitzsch.

In this connection, it must also be mentioned that at an early stage Rabi-

3 Ibid., 55–56.

4 Ibid., 126–42.

5 Ibid., 142.

6 Ibid., 112–13.



nowitz makes Romans 10:4 one of his keys: "The Messiah is the end of the law." This is evident in his sermons, and it is evidenced by the Torah scroll in Rabinowitz's house of prayer – at least in the period 1885–1890, until he acquired his new building, Somerville Memorial Hall. The Torah scroll bore this very inscription in Hebrew.⁷

With Rabinowitz we thus have a Hebrew Christian leader who is a member of the universal church without belonging to a denomination; his baptism is publicly known; he wants to retain Jewish customs in order not to alienate himself from his people; he forms a congregation; he is not especially interested in others' mission methods; and he is not particularly enterprising regarding evangelistic outreach, which is not due to a program or a mission strategy but to his personality. In his last years, however, he had plans for railway evangelization: to have a railway coach built and travel around Russia, run the coach into a siding at various stations, and hold meetings and distribute New Testaments at places where the gospel was not otherwise being preached to Jews. The project was never realized, but it shows that Rabinowitz wanted to carry out "direct" mission.⁸

"Ebionitism" at the Jewish Missionary Conference, Stockholm 1911

Professor Hermann L. Strack is responsible for the report from the conference in Stockholm in 1911.⁹ In the invitation to the conference, the conference committee had informed participants about the "considerations upon which the selection of the subjects allotted to the various readers of papers was based."¹⁰ Concerning the last two papers about "Ebionitism," it is said:

With the newly-awakened national consciousness of the Jews, animated and fed by the Zionistic movement, the old demand for a Hebrew-Christian type of Christianity once more becomes actual. The subject has been discussed repeatedly also in our International Conferences, and no understanding could be arrived at. The Hebrew-Christian movement is beset with a dual peril. On the one hand, there is the danger of emphasizing the national at the cost of the Christian element; on the other hand, a disparagement of Confessional theology is likely to lead to a new Ebionitism. It follows that the Mission to the Jews can only approach the demand for a Hebrew Christian Church with extreme caution. But we do not think that this justifies a refusal on our part to re-open the discussion.¹¹

7 Ibid., 74, 108, 146.

8 Ibid., 198–200.

9 Cf. Hermann L. Strack, ed., *Jahrbuch der evangelischen Judenmission* [Yearbook of the Evangelical Missions among the Jews], vol. 2, (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913).

10 Ibid., 5.

11 Ibid., 6–7.

With this the conference leadership have made their position clear: they have indicated the perils but not the challenges; however, they are not going to prevent a re-opening of the issue. At the conference in Leipzig in 1895, this issue had been dealt with by the Lutheran clergyman August Wiegand. His theme, "What is the right relation of Hebrew Christians to the law?" was really aimed at Rabinowitz, who had cancelled his participation.¹² Professor Gustav Dalman read out some passages from a publication by Rabinowitz, in which he maintains that any Jew who believes in Jesus Christ is completely free as regards the law, "free from the heavy slave service according to the old essence of the letter."¹³ The headlines, or theses, of Wiegand's paper in 1895 are as follows:

1. From the point of view of the New Testament, the Hebrew Christian has complete freedom whether or not to observe the Jewish law.
2. Voluntary observance of the Jewish law is recommended to the Hebrew Christian, especially if he is engaged in Jewish missions – from the point of view of love for his yet unbelieving tribesmen.
3. Voluntary observance of the Jewish law is recommended to him – in the light of the hope for a future church in Israel.¹⁴

They did not come to an agreement in Leipzig in 1895. What a pity that Rabinowitz was not present. And correspondingly, what a pity that Lucky was not present in 1911. It cannot be inessential to ask: Why does Lucky leave it to Wiegand to speak for him?¹⁵ It is a fact that Wiegand's paper subsequently led to sharp exchanges of views in German mission journals, particularly *Saat auf Hoffnung* and *Nathanael*.

Let us now turn to the conference in Stockholm in 1911, and see how things develop there. As already mentioned, two papers were presented on so-called "Ebionitism."

The choice of the two speakers to deal with this topic seems to be very well-considered: C. T. Lipshytz from the Barbican Mission to the Jews in London, himself a Hebrew Christian, speaks *against* the new Ebionitism. T. Lindagen, a Gentile Christian and leader of the Swedish Israel Mission, speaks *for* it, and advises that the value-laden word "Ebionitism" be avoided in the discussion.¹⁶

12 Rabinowitz declined on the grounds that his health was not up to it. I wonder if another reason was that Pastor Faltin from Kishinev – the relationship between those two was very tense – had also been invited and asked to speak on the subject "Should the mission work towards the establishment of Hebrew Christian congregations?" Cf. Kjær-Hansen, 177–78.

13 Namely Rabinowitz's publication in Yiddish: *Was ist a Jsra'el ben b'rith chadasha* (Kishinev: 1894). I have not personally been able to consult it. The ending is rendered in a German translation by G. Dalman, "Josef Rabinowitz und sein Werk," *Nathanael* (1895): 129–35. A few passages also appear in A. Wiegand, "Joseph Rabinowitsch," *Saat auf Hoffnun* (1904): 72–73.

14 A. Wiegand, "Die Stellung des Judenchristen zum Gesetz," *Nathanael* (1895): 110–28.

15 As far as I can see, Lucky did not participate at all in the international conferences in Leipzig (1895), Cologne (1900), London (1903), or Amsterdam (1906).

16 Cf. Strack, 79.



Lipshytz's Contribution at the Conference in Stockholm

Lipshytz's theme is "The Relation of Christianity to the National Consciousness of the Jews." He does not deny that there is "a revived Jewish consciousness," but over against this is something which is more important, namely "a Christian doctrine, or system of teaching, which is independent of any particular national consciousness." The "present age, or dispensation, is that of the Church of Christ. However much the Jews may desire to live under the law of Moses, they cannot as a people actually do it," he argues. Besides, the Jewish national consciousness is "the consciousness of a nation which still rejects Christ." And "if we preach to the Jews we must say: 'Follow Christ; confess Him; leave the traditions of the elders; and take the consequences.'"¹⁷

What does Lipshytz include in "the tradition of the elders"? Circumcision, for example? Lipshytz gives the answer in a story: In 1893 he had a son, and as a Hebrew Christian he was inclined to believe "that a following of racial practice in this matter would inspire the respect and confidence of Jewish brethren." His wife agrees, "though, of course, there was no thought of ceremonial action, simply acquiescence in the custom of the people," he emphasizes.

What happened in the end? We will let Lipshytz tell his story:

All arrangements [as regards the circumcision] were made, when, one day, a Jew asked me "if I believed in the Torah." In reply, I said "Yes." The man continued: "Have you had circumcised your son?" "I was about to have my son circumcised," I said; "but," I continued, after a moment's reflection, "here and now, to prove that my confidence is not in things of the flesh, that is, in things of the Law, I resolved to do nothing of this kind." The man was astonished, and as he listened with eagerness, I said: "What would you say, if I had my son circumcised? Would you not say that the missionary preaches the Gospel, but practises the Law? In a word, he is an hypocrite?" "Yes," replied the Jew, "I should not believe in your sincerity." Thereupon I abandoned the idea of having the boy circumcised. I refused to put a stumbling-block before my people. No man shall say that I preach Christ and follow Moses. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. vi, 15). "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," says the great Apostle. "For I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole Law." His relation is legal, not Evangelical – he follows Moses, not Christ.¹⁸

So Lipshytz, Jewish-born and circumcised, rejects circumcision for Hebrew Christians. In his opinion, it is an attack on the uniqueness of Christ with all

17 Ibid., 72–74.

18 Ibid., 76.

that this involves. It was not so for Joseph Rabinowitz. The following passage, where Lipshytz refers to Rabinowitz, is therefore interesting:

There is, I repeat, nothing new in the desire of Israel to stand apart; but this assuredly means a contempt of the teaching of the Apostle Paul, who declared that, alike in regard to sin and privilege, "there is no difference" between Jew and Gentile in the present dispensation, which is not an age of peoples but of persons, not of crowds but of individuals. For us, the missionaries, to cultivate Rabbinism is to neglect the duty of winning the Jews from the traditions of men, and of bringing them into definite association with the great Teacher as followers, disciples, brethren. Joseph Rabinowitz discovered this. The Jews suspected him while he spoke of "Christ our Brother." When, however, he was baptized, and stood apart for the love of Christ, everyone knew what he meant, and he was rightly regarded as a Christian out-and-out.¹⁹

That Lipshytz has the Leipzig program – and Lucky – at the back of his mind is not difficult to see. Rabinowitz would agree with him not to "cultivate Rabbinism." Rabinowitz also admits that things do go "slowly" in his congregation²⁰ – which means that observance of circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Jewish feasts has *not* had the result that Jews flood into his congregation in large numbers. But Rabinowitz would, in my opinion, have objected strongly to the use Lipshytz makes of his name. If he had been alive, I suppose that Rabinowitz might have said something like this:

Lipshytz, you have just spoken, as a believer in Jesus, about your *no* to circumcision; this is your opinion. As for me, I have always believed that there is freedom to do this in faith in Jesus. So, next time you speak about these things and use my name, please make this clear. Whatever other Jews may think of my identity – and I agree: many Jews consider me a Christian Protestant – I do not see myself as an ex-Jew. Under the existing political conditions I have done what I could. I was baptized and made no secret of it. If the authorities had granted their permission, I would have baptized the members of the congregation so they would belong to the universal church without becoming ex-Jews. But as for me, it is still important to identify with my Jewish people – in the name of Christian freedom – through circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Jewish feasts. In the name of Jesus, of course!

So when Lipshytz points out that Rabinowitz's views, and practice, have *not* really resulted in a new attitude among Jewish people to faith in Jesus,

19 Ibid., 76–77.

20 To representatives from the Norwegian Israel Mission who visited him in Kishinev in 1892, Rabinowitz said that they should greet the mission supporters in Norway: "Tell them that God has a great ministry with Israel, but it is going slowly, slowly." Cf. Kjær-Hansen, 150.



he is right. But Lipshytz appears weak when he uses Rabinowitz's name to support his own views without, at the same time, making it clear that Rabinowitz, unlike Lipshytz, has no problem combining faith in Jesus with circumcision, etc.

Lindhagen's Contribution at the Conference in Stockholm

Lindhagen's theme is "Is there Ebionitism in the Jewish Mission?"²¹ He begins by going back to Wiegand's paper in Leipzig in 1895, and the treatment of the subject at the subsequent conferences in Cologne (1900), London (1903), and Amsterdam (1906), where the subject, if not directly discussed, was nevertheless implied. Recent literary contributions are also mentioned, for example, the journal *The Messianic Jew*, edited by Rev. Phil. Cohen in South Africa.²²

Again and again, Lindhagen emphasizes that Hebrew Christians have *freedom* to observe the Jewish customs. And he has been busy looking up quotations that validate that the so-called "Neo-Ebionites" are not as wrong and dangerous as some would make them out to be.

He thus draws attention to some words by Dr. Alexander Waldmann, one of the authors of the declaration reprinted in the previous article, who distinguishes between a "minimum" observance (e.g. circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Jewish feasts) and a "maximum" observance ("which, *inter alia*, includes the dietary laws"). For Waldmann both forms are legitimate. "Whether the minimum or maximum be observed will partly depend upon the type of Judaism in which the respective individual was trained from childhood or to which he belonged during most of his life." In this way, Waldmann has somehow relativized the question in that he does not argue from the Scriptures but recognizes that different forms of Jewish observance may be relevant. But no matter what, observance of the old customs needs to be filled with new *content*, which Waldmann also makes clear with the following words:

But although this minimum or maximum is to be observed primarily from a national point of view, it is none the less true that the underlying idea is to fill these old forms with a new content. Thus, for instance, the feast of Passover should be combined with the Lord's Supper, the feast of Weeks with Whitsuntide, the feast of Chanukka with Christmas, the reading of the Law on the Sabbath with the reading of the Gospel.²³

Seen in isolation, it is difficult for me to imagine that Rabinowitz, and those who supported him in his lifetime, would not be able to go along

21 Cf. Strack, 78–84.

22 Ibid., 78–79. Even though it took some time, Cohen's and other people's designation "Messianic Jew" for "Hebrew Christian" has become generally accepted and is now the most widely used term for Jewish believers in Jesus.

23 Ibid., 80.



with this understanding.

As for Lucky, Lindhagen also has a quotation which places him in a favorable light. He calls attention to a pronouncement by Lucky made "at a Jewish Christian Conference in Stanislau, August, 1903."²⁴ Lucky is quoted as saying the following:

I do not demand from my fellow-believers the complete and strict observance of all Jewish customs at any price. Here is a brother who says, "We live in exile and are not our own masters, and though I would like to keep the entire ceremonial law, and all the more because I am a disciple of Jesus, I cannot do it. I am a soldier and must eat barrack fare. I must rest on Sunday and work on the Sabbath for the sake of my daily bread." Well, he is my brother nevertheless. I do not judge his conscience, nor is he to let me be a conscience to him in the matter of meats, or of the Sabbath, all of which are only a shadow of that of which we have the substance in Christ. On the other hand, another says, "Because I believe in Christ therefore I give up the Sabbath." Well, he is not less acceptable to God on that account, and I do not despise him for it nor condemn him. But I am sorry for him, and it hurts me to the depth of my heart because he too is a child of Israel and should help us to build up the walls of Jerusalem.²⁵

Again, it is my contention that, seen *in isolation*, Rabinowitz might – perhaps with a slight change of vocabulary and added clarifications – be able to agree with the *substance* of this quotation.

Lindhagen also mentions Rabinowitz's name. Having cited a number of New Testament passages, Lindhagen says:

It follows therefore that men like Israel Pick, the two Lichtensteins in Leipzig and Budapest, Joseph Rabinowitz, Mark Levy, and the Hebrew Christians mentioned above [Alexander Waldmann, Lucky, Cohen, etc.] occupy Scriptural ground, as do also many others in all parts of the world who seek to re-establish their connection with Israel by the observance of circumcision, the Sabbath and the feasts.²⁶

Lindhagen cannot be reproached for referring to the mentioned persons as a *group* and as advocates of the view he contends, but that only goes for the "observance of circumcision, the Sabbath and the feasts," etc. The weakness of Lindhagen's argument is that he dare not distinguish between

24 Max Weidauer, "Erinnerungen an Ch. Th. Lucky," *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1923): 20, lists the names of the participants in this conference: Ströter, Lucky, a Hebrew Christian from Warsaw, a Jewish-missionary from Braila, Zöckler, Wiegand, Pastor Opdenhoff, and Weidauer himself. The question of a law-observing Hebrew Christian congregation was discussed at the conference, Weidauer says, adding: "But the result was negative, equal to nil."

25 Cf. Strack, 80–81. This same statement by Lucky appears in a paraphrased form in A. Wiegand, "Joseph Rabinowitsch," 79.

26 *Ibid.*, 82–83.

these persons and, for example, discuss their divergent views of baptism – should baptism be a private matter or should it be publicly known? – or Lucky's view of mission and criticism of paid missionaries, etc. (see below). In the hall in Stockholm, there are at least four Hebrew Christians who have all been to the Swedish Israel Mission's proselyte home; in 1911, they are all paid and active missionaries and have, through pamphlets, spread the knowledge of Rabinowitz's movement.²⁷ So Lindhagen dare not link voluntary observance of the law with the question of mission, evangelism, and strategy.

More about this later, when an attempt will be made to explain why mission societies and their leaders, who earlier to a large extent had supported Rabinowitz, do not now, in 1911, wish to support ideas that are very similar to those Rabinowitz had maintained. This is the crux of the matter.

But first to the declaration that was brought to Stockholm by Wiegand.

A Declaration Is Brought to Stockholm

Wiegand comes to Stockholm from Plau in Mecklenburg, Germany, with one thing in mind, namely to convey the declaration "Die Erklärung gesetzestreuer Judenchristen," as the original German title is, to the conference in Stockholm.²⁸

Wiegand is aware of the conditions at the meeting in Stockholm. He knows that he has only five minutes at his disposal and that there will be no subsequent discussion. The day before, he placed copies of the document on the benches in the conference room. On the previous day, Lipshytz and Lindhagen addressed the conference, also without subsequent discussion, and after that it is Wiegand's turn. First, he hands over the document so that it will be included as an official document in the conference protocol. He next spends his five minutes on point 8 (printed in the previous article), and declares it would be far from the authors of the declaration to condemn those proselytes of Israel who take the path of assimilation. He also has time to turn to Lipshytz. Of course the latter has freedom to think what he likes, but Wiegand cannot help but find it peculiar that Lipshytz, on the question of circumcision, should have made himself dependent on a "christ-ungläubigen Jude" – a "Christ-unbelieving Jew."²⁹

Christologically and soteriologically, it is difficult to criticize this declaration. As to observance of Jewish customs, the arguments are based on the New Testament principle of liberty. And it is said explicitly that they do *not* condemn brethren who take a different stand. Again, Rabinowitz's name is used as an argument in the introduction to the declaration.

27 In Swedish service: Philippus Gordon, I. N. Schapira, Paulus Wolff; in Danish service: Philemon Petri. Gordon and Wolff had made Rabinowitz's work known through pamphlets; Wolff, e.g., cooperated with Rabinowitz in 1896; cf. Kjær-Hansen, 158.

28 None of the signatories of the declaration are present, not even Otto von Harling from the Institutum Delitzschianum in Leipzig, who had declared his support of the declaration's first three points. See the previous article.

29 Cf. Wiegand in *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1911): 114.

The Conference's Response to the Question of So-called "Ebionitism"

Lucky and Waldmann – and Wiegand – did not achieve recognition from "the honorable International Conference for Jewish Missions in Stockholm" concerning "the liberty of Hebrew Christians towards the Law and their right to its observance." So there is no genuine "re-opening" of the question as announced in the invitation, since they avoided – or prevented – a discussion about it.

The explanation given for this is rather tragicomic. In the official report from the conference, printed immediately *before* the document, it is said:

Revs. C.T. Lipshytz and Th. Lindhagen addressed the Conference on the so-called Ebionitism in the Jewish Mission and the Hebrew Christian national movement. . . . The great majority of those present were of the opinion that every member of the Conference had arrived at his own settled conviction regarding this matter, and that a discussion would in no way affect it.³⁰

And immediately *after* the document it is said:

It emerged from private expressions of opinion that almost all of those present agreed with the writer of the first paper [Lipshytz]. One is justified in thinking it very significant that only a very few Hebrew Christians approve the aims and efforts advocated in above Declaration. Almost all of them desire to enter wholly and fully into the membership of the "Gentile Christian" Evangelical Churches. At any rate, it is no part of the function of the Jewish Mission to support separatist endeavours. If it is the will of God that Hebrew Christians should form a close community, He will give them the power to do it without Gentile Christian help when the time for it comes.³¹

But a little door is nevertheless left ajar: circumstances may change sometime in the future. But right now "the Jewish Mission" is not going to "support separatist endeavours."

I could stop at this point, but I will not – for things do not make sense to me! I can understand that they said that an international conference like this has no business issuing a "recognition" as requested – and especially not when several major member organizations were not represented at the conference.³² I can understand that the majority, for their own part, wish to maintain "membership of the 'Gentile Christian' Evangelical Churches." That was the way it was! But I *cannot* understand why those present, and

30 Cf. Strack, 15.

31 *Ibid.*, 18.

32 In the report, it is said that "we missed representatives of the Scottish Churches, of the British Society, and of the Leipzig, Cologne, and other societies." *Ibid.*, 7.



the conference as such, could not show more consideration for those Hebrew Christians who chose *voluntarily* to observe Jewish customs.³³

As I have argued above, this declaration is, seen *in isolation*, in Rabinowitz's spirit. The scenario is the following: In the hall in Stockholm are, as hinted above, a number of individuals who since the mid-1880s and till Rabinowitz's death in 1899 have personally or through their organizations supported him and his cause theologically and financially, and who through countless articles in their respective organs have expressed their delight at what he stood for. Why can they no longer support a Rabinowitz-like cause?

It may be presumed that, for example, the Danish delegation, among whom were two Hebrew Christians and the chairman, Professor Frederik Torm, would have supported a Rabinowitz-like cause. If Torm had brought his own little book with him, published two years earlier, he might have read aloud from it. In it he writes the following about Rabinowitz's observance of "national customs":

Christian friends of the mission had no objections as long as it was emphasized that circumcision or observance of the Sabbath could not be a *Christian obligation* for a Jew who was converted to Christianity. Rabinowitz fully concurred with this. . . .³⁴

Then what about the other delegates? I will mention a few examples.

Louis Meyer, from the Chicago Hebrew Mission, would probably have voted against it. He might have expressed his support of Rabinowitz, but it would be a Rabinowitz molded in Meyer's own image. For Meyer seems to believe that there is a difference between the early Rabinowitz, who "for a time . . . clung to circumcision and the observance of the Jewish Sabbath," and the slightly later Rabinowitz, who through baptism "became a member of the Church of Christ" and "taught the deity of Christ, justification by faith alone, baptism for the remission of sins, and the resurrection."³⁵ There is no doubt that Rabinowitz underwent a theological development after his journey to Palestine in 1882, when he came to faith, till the time when he began his public services in 1885.³⁶ But Meyer's assertion that Rabinowitz only "for a time" "clung to circumcision," etc. – and that he *then* taught "justification by faith alone," etc., *without* continued insistence on circumcision, etc. – does not hold.

What about Samuel Hinds Wilkinson from the Mildmay Mission? What would he have said if there had been a discussion in Stockholm, and how

33 The conference issues a "Resolution," but the question of Ebionitism is not mentioned at all. The theme of this "Resolution" is the previous year's World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910); in this "Resolution" there is criticism of the fact that evangelism to Jews was not sufficiently considered in Edinburgh. *Ibid.*, 19–21.

34 Frederik Torm, *Fortællinger af Israelsmissionens Historie* (Copenhagen: De forenede Bogtrykkerier i Aarhus, 1909), 72.

35 Louis Meyer, *Eminent Hebrew Christians of the Nineteenth Century: Brief Biographical Sketches*, ed. David A. Rausch (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 93.

36 Cf. Kjær-Hansen, 41–116.

would he have voted? His father, John Wilkinson, the founder of the Mildmay Mission, had been a strong supporter of Rabinowitz. I have no certain knowledge of whether father and son saw eye to eye on this matter. But in Stockholm, Samuel Hinds Wilkinson might have had the proofread manuscript of the Mildmay Mission's magazine *Trusting and Toiling* with him; this was due for publication a few days later (under the date June 15, 1911), and he might have referred to the front-page article entitled "Circumcision or Christ: The Messianic Movement," written by D. M. Panton.

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As the title indicates, there is *no* "both . . . and" in this article. It is "either . . . or." If one yields even to a *voluntary* observance of the law, the uniqueness of Christ is not only at stake but lost. Panton writes:

Hebrew Christians, says Mr. Mark Levy, are free to admit their male children into the covenant of Abraham, by circumcision, "provided it is clearly understood that neither Jew nor Gentile can be saved by works of the Law." This is an excellent proviso: but Paul pronounces the coupling of circumcision and grace as by the very nature of the Law totally invalid and fratricidal. For Christ either did everything, or He did nothing: if He obeyed the whole Law for me, it is an insult to supplement that obedience; and if He obeyed it only partially I must obey the whole."³⁷

So even if we cannot rule out the possibility that some individuals and organizations, in 1911, have changed their opinion of Rabinowitz's program, and the principle of freedom, this cannot explain the conference's lukewarm attitude to the declaration Wiegand had conveyed on behalf of Lucky and Waldmann. There seems to be something between the lines, something that is not stated explicitly.

But what?

In looking for an answer, I ask myself: If they had treated the question *historically*, asking themselves if they were still willing to express their support of a Rabinowitz-like program – his *theology of freedom* regarding Jewish customs and his insistence that Jesus-believing Jews are not ex-Jews and that they have a right to organize themselves in Hebrew Christian congregations as a part of the universal Church of Christ/Messiah – then I do not doubt that the *majority* at the conference would have voted "yes."

Such a vote would *have* to result in a "yes." A "no" would mean that all that the majority's organizations had stood for in the period from about 1885 to 1899 – and still were standing for – was wrong and really a mistake.

37 D. M. Panton, "Circumcision or Christ: The Messianic Movement," *Trusting and Toiling on Israel's Behalf* (1911): 82.



So again, how can the somewhat lukewarm attitude at the Stockholm conference be explained? Professor Strack may be able to help us understand.

Decisions on Declarations Are Not Made in a Historical Vacuum

Professor Strack had supported Rabinowitz in the mid-1880s together with Delitzsch (see above). They had hoped that Rabinowitz's *voluntary* observance of Jewish customs would eventually come to an end. Strack may have changed his mind when he realized that this would not happen. But this does not seem to be the case. In 1912, he publishes Lipshytz's paper in German and provides it with a preface. In this preface, he endorses the establishment of Hebrew Christian congregations by Hebrew Christians in places where they are numerous; he also approves of the use of Hebrew in their services and the practice of other peculiarities [*besonderheiten*]. Strack has no difficulty understanding things like that. But when it becomes a *demand* [*forderung*] on Hebrew Christians that they must observe the Sabbath, the Jewish feasts, the Jewish dietary laws, and "even have their newborn sons circumcised," he objects vigorously. Christ is the end of the law. If you *demand* [*verlangen*] such observance from Hebrew Christians, the death of Christ will become null and void, and one person will exalt himself over the other – according to Strack.³⁸

Perhaps these words provide us with a key to understanding why the Stockholm conference was not particularly interested in taking a stand on the declaration submitted by Wiegand. They had seen what this was all about. Formally, Lucky and Waldmann were behind the declaration, a declaration which as far as *content* was concerned argued from the principle of freedom regarding the observance of Jewish customs. But they knew better. They knew that at least Lucky *wanted* and *demand*ed more than that which Wiegand submitted in Waldmann's and Lucky's names.

I will conclude by trying to show it probable that Strack and others who had earlier endorsed Rabinowitz's *voluntary* observance of certain Jewish customs have not in any essential way changed their minds. But Lucky – what he stands for, what he has said earlier, and what he has practiced – has blocked an affirmation of the declaration which was presented in his name.

Let me spell it out: At the conference, people are well aware that the declaration is *not* an expression of what Lucky really believes and practices; they also know that something is hidden behind the document's words about *voluntary* observance.

Decisions on declarations and requests for approval are never made in a historical vacuum. This is also the case with the Stockholm conference's attitude to Lucky and Waldmann's declaration. They know more about Lucky

38 Christlieb T. Lipshytz, *Der Ebionitismus in der Judenmission* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1912); Strack's preface, pp. 3–4.

than what is expressed in the declaration.

Are there historical sources that can validate this claim?

Lucky and His Mission – And the Money of the Mission

Lucky wanted, as was already said, to have nothing to do with organized Jewish mission. He does not want to be paid by the mission either. But what you decide for yourself is one thing; if what you decide for yourself becomes a model for what others in a mission program should do, it is another. If “those others” do not follow this model, they may then become suspicious. It would be no wonder if paid Jewish missionaries felt that Lucky, as regards the question of money, had double standards.

It is not easy to be consistent, not even for a Lucky. In the light of history, he is not quite “kosher,” as emerges from the following story.

Back from America in 1889, Lucky plans to publish the periodical *Eduth I'Israel* in Europe. He approaches the Jewish-born G. M. Löwen, employed as a missionary in the Berlin Society, and asks Löwen to be in charge of the publication. Lucky assures him that he will be doing most of the work. But, says Löwen, without money such a project is not feasible. “Does that mean that your Society will not help?” Lucky retorts. And Löwen continues: “What? Should a mission society support a work which is hostile to organized mission work?”³⁹ Eventually, the new *Eduth I'Israel* did get published, not least owing to a recommendation from the then leader of the Berlin Society, Heinrich Schwabedissen.⁴⁰ It is decided that Löwen should be the formal editor responsible to the Berlin Society, that Lucky should write most of the material, and that the rights should belong to the Berlin Society. And not least, through talks with Lucky and Schwabedissen in 1889 and 1890 in Berlin, it is made clear that “of course” the new *Eduth I'Israel* would not contain attacks on Jewish mission nor be used as a mouthpiece for Lucky’s idiosyncratic ideas about Hebrew Christianity. The object is “only” to proclaim the gospel for Jews in a way that is relevant and objective.⁴¹

The first issue appeared in May 1890. In the preface, Lucky writes in enthusiastic terms about the “rebirth” of *Eduth I'Israel*, which strictly speaking is no longer *his* journal but now belongs to and is paid for by the Berlin Society.⁴²

This alliance – one is tempted to say “of course” – did not last long. The Berlin Society held that they had kept their part of the deal and that Lucky had not kept his.⁴³ *Eduth I'Israel* was closed down about two years later.⁴⁴ Löwen, who had been sent to Lemberg to edit the journal, returned to

39 G. M. Löwen, “Christian Theophilus Lucky,” *Nathanael* (1917): 18.

40 In 1911, one of the signatories of Lucky and Waldman’s declaration.

41 Cf. R. Bieling, *Die Juden vornehmlich* (Berlin: The Berlin Society, 1913), 82.

42 *Ibid.*, 85–86, which has an extract of the preface in German translation and information about the kind of articles that will appear in the subsequent issues.

43 Cf. Bieling, 86–87.

44 *Ibid.*, 86.



Berlin and finished the double issue, no. 8–9, without Lucky's help.⁴⁵

According to Löwen, there were both personal and religious reasons for his formal resignation as editor. Lucky had required of him that he should live in the same way as himself, namely as a law-observing Jew who lives by rabbinical law, something Löwen was neither able nor willing to do.⁴⁶

How Lucky fended for himself without getting money for his work is quite a riddle. The clergyman Max Weidauer, who supported Lucky's cause, says that Lucky lived in poverty and never begged. But where did he get money, for example, for his many journeys? Without money he could not get on the train in Stanislaw to go to Chicago, Weidauer notes. He often stayed at friends' houses and had his meals there. Weidauer's comment on Lucky seems to be spot-on: He believed that he was the most undemanding person, but in demanding something special for himself he was indeed demanding. He also believed that he was the most independent person, but really he was very dependent on other people, Weidauer claims.⁴⁷

All sources agree that Lucky lived in poverty, which there is no reason to question. He did not line his own pockets. But many sources reveal that he traveled a lot. Again, where did the money come from?⁴⁸

In his last years, Lucky lived free of charge at the theological seminary Paulinum in Stanislaw, where, in return, he taught the theological candidates. Paulinum was, as we have seen, in part supported financially by the Danish Israel Mission.⁴⁹

This was all very well, but paid Jewish missionaries in the service of the mission could ask, with some right, what the difference really was between them and him regarding money and material support. They received "direct" payment for their direct mission work; Lucky lived, at times, on "indirect" support for his work.

What Did Lucky Really Want?

When Wiegand, as spokesman for Lucky, presents the question of Jesus-believers' attitude to the law, verbally and in writing, he stresses the *freedom* to keep the law, the *freedom* that the gospel gives. But the question is if this freedom did not, for Lucky, imply an obligation. When he worked closely together with Jewish-born Jesus-believers, he seems to have demanded that they live like him.

But what did Lucky really want? Wiegand helps us to answer that question. In 1917, shortly after Lucky's death, Wiegand says as follows:

45 Cf. Löwen, 21, who also mentioned that the work had given him a nervous breakdown. Lucky tried again, in 1907, to publish a journal, *Ha-Eduth*. According to Löwen, 22–23, seven or eight issues appeared. I have no information on who backed this publication financially.

46 Löwen, 18.

47 Max Weidauer, 12.

48 Or, to ask a radical question: Did he somewhere have financial resources on which he could draw?

49 Cf. my introductory remarks to the article about Mrs. Petra Volf's reminiscences in this issue of *Mishkan*.

It should not be concealed, however, that what was presented in Lucky's name in Leipzig [1895] and Stockholm [1911] did not really express his *innermost thoughts*. What he wished and wanted was, at bottom, not a group of Jewish Christians who were faithful to the Law inside the gentile church but a *congregation of Jews who were faithful to Jesus inside the synagogue*. That is what he worked for in the end and he almost regretted that he spent so much time and energy on the German candidates instead of dedicating himself completely to the internal Jewish work. His Jewish followers should therefore remain in the synagogue and also commit themselves to the rabbinical interpretation of the Law to the extent that it was recognized in the synagogue. Consequently they should only differ from the other Jews in regard to faith in Jesus."⁵⁰

I can see no reason why this information should not be an adequate expression of Lucky's "innermost thoughts." The words belong to Wiegand, the man who for more than twenty-five years had been Lucky's mouthpiece. In this way, he is really saying that in his struggle for Lucky's cause he has only *partially* given expression to Lucky's views. The passage can be read as a kind of "confession": I, Wiegand, fought for Lucky's cause, which I still do! But I *played down* what he really meant. "What he wished and wanted was, at bottom. . . ."

Even though Wiegand does not say this in plain words until 1917, I assume that at least some of the participants at the conference in Stockholm in 1911 were well aware of what Lucky *really* wanted, namely "a congregation of Jews who were faithful to Jesus inside the synagogue."

In other words, saying yes to a declaration drawn up in Lucky's name could be construed as a yes to Lucky's "innermost thoughts." In Stockholm they were, quite understandably, not willing to give their support to something like this. Basically, such an idea was, and is, in my opinion, an illusion. One thing is what you yourself as a Hebrew Christian would like, another is what the other side, the synagogue, wants. Of course the synagogue will not let itself be defined by a Jesus-believing Jew; it defines itself, and defines itself in relation to Jesus. And of course the synagogue has a right to do this!

I have no clear picture of how Lucky and his few disciples worshipped in the synagogue. Jakób Jocz tells that on a visit to Lemberg, he had occasion to personally meet a few of Lucky's former disciples. About these he says: "Some of Theophi Lucky's *Chassidim*, who used to attend faithfully the Synagogue Services, made it a practice, at the end of each prayer, to utter under their breath: 'Beshem Yeshua Hamashiach Adonenu,'" i.e. in

**Lucky really wanted . . . a
"congregation of Jews who
were faithful to Jesus inside
the synagogue."**

50 A. Wiegand, "Chajim Jedidjah Lucky, ein gesetzestreuer Judenchrist," *Nathanael* (1917): 60.



the name of Yeshua the Messiah our Lord.⁵¹ As I see it, there can be no two opinions on such a situation being untenable for a Jesus-believing Jew in the long run.⁵²

Löwen, who despite some tensions between himself and Lucky kept up a friendly, lifelong correspondence with him, supports Wiegand's description of Lucky's "innermost thoughts" and practice. Löwen writes in 1917:

Lucky's exaggerated love of his Jewish people destroyed, unfortunately, what he had laboriously achieved. He led the souls to Christ and then drove them back into the synagogue, the same synagogue where they daily recite Moses Maimonides' confession which consciously defames Christ as an idol."⁵³

And yet these are not Löwen's last words about Lucky. There is another side to the matter, a tricky one.

Was Lucky Moving Away from His Ideals in His Last Years?

Löwen provides important information about Lucky's standpoints in 1911 and 1913. He says that Lucky, who is seriously ill, visits him in Vienna, where he has come to consult a doctor. Let us not go into the question of who has given Lucky money for this journey and consultation. More important is what Löwen has to say. He writes about their meeting in 1911:

Lucky's head had turned white, his speech soft and mild: only seldom did a sharp word leave his mouth about missionaries or mission societies. When that happened, he hastened to apologize: "None of us are righteous, we are all fallible humans and there is something good in all."⁵⁴

Is it the illness that has weakened Lucky's fighting spirit, or are his words an expression of self-reflection and genuine self-criticism? Or is it Löwen who speaks in an obituary-like style? These questions are not unimportant for a present-day assessment of Lucky's cause.

According to Löwen, Lucky is in Vienna again in August 1913, in connection with a Zionist conference. He stays with Löwen. Both attend the conference.

Lucky had seen Löwen in conversation with some Zionists. Löwen says this about the ensuing conversation between them:

51 Jakób Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ: A Study in the Controversy between Church and Synagogue* (1949; repr., London: SPCK, 1954), 406 note 339; 335 note 233.

52 Jocz furthermore claims: "After his [Lucky's] death a few of his disciples joined the Protestant Church; others lapsed to Judaism." *Ibid.*, 256.

53 Löwen, 16.

54 *Ibid.*, 24.

"I [Lucky] have had quarrels with people, also with you, for the sake of the Jews, and today they are your friends. How foolish I have been! Any mission society would have taken me in their service if I had wanted it; I might have lived a normal life like you. Why did I despise that? I was a fool!"

I [Löwen] wanted to change his mind to less gloomy thoughts and brought him into my nearby accommodation. As we were drinking a friendly cup of tea, he had some very kind words for my literary work. That touched me so much that I put my left arm around him and pressed him against me: "We might have been standing like this twenty years ago, my dear Lechem" (that is what he had called me since we first met), and his and my eyes were moist.

When we said goodbye to each other – this was the last time, for we did not see each other again – Lucky was again so cordial that I was encouraged by it for many days.⁵⁵

One cannot but rejoice that two Jesus-believing Jews, men who have been unable to cooperate and who have had totally different views on goals and means in Jewish missions, in this way become reconciled. But, as hinted above, perhaps there is too much "obituary" about Löwen's description.⁵⁶

But for the overall objective we pursue, these last accounts, from Wiegand and Löwen, pose a challenge. Continued research will have to uncover if the accounts and our interpretation of them hold. But *if* there is some truth in them, *if* they adequately express Lucky's views at the end of his life, it is not possible today to refer to Lucky's program without considering that he at last seems to have regretted what he had stood for, and that he dissociated himself from a part of his own program.

If it was known at the Stockholm conference that Lucky had begun to moderate his views as to mission strategy (cf. his words "None of us are righteous, we are all fallible humans and there is something good in all"), then there is no doubt that it would have been nice for those Jewish missionaries who were employed in the mission's service, those he had earlier attacked so fiercely. I doubt, however, that this in itself would have changed the decision at the conference not to give the seal of approval to the document submitted in his name.

Lucky's "name" and "innermost thoughts," what he until then had stood for, blocked approval of the submitted declaration, which seen *in isolation* was in Rabinowitz's spirit and therefore might have been accepted by the majority of the delegates at the conference in Stockholm in 1911.

In other words, it was not so much the *content* of Lucky and Waldmann's declaration they dissociated themselves from as Lucky the *person* and what he stood for and was known for.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

⁵⁶ The Danish clergyman in Przymysl, Emil Clausen, did not see it like that in 1914; on the contrary, see the end of my introduction to the article on Mrs. Petra Volf's reminiscences about Lucky in this issue of *Mishkan*.



For just as theology is not practiced in a historical vacuum, so decisions about a declaration are also not made in a historical vacuum.

Concluding Remarks

Of course the Stockholm conference in 1911, could not – nor did it want to – prevent Hebrew Christian congregations being established, particularly in Eastern Europe and more or less modeled on Rabinowitz's principles, or Hebrew Christians forming loose associations, often in connection with existing missions and churches. This story will not be told here, nor will we deal with the story that led to what seems to be a most natural thing today: that Jesus-believing Jews practice circumcision and keep the Sabbath and the Jewish feasts, in the name of Jesus. I venture the assertion that practically all Jewish mission societies *today* would be able to give their seal of approval to the main concern of Lucky and Waldmann's declaration of 1911.

This does not mean, however, that there are not tensions between Jewish missions and some Messianic Jews even today. A few groups in the Messianic movement today want to distance themselves from the Christian church and Gentile Christian missionaries; they seem to believe that Jesus-believing Jews are *obliged* to observe the law and are critical of "direct" mission, and in some cases are willing to open the door a crack for the view that Jews who have not accepted the gospel of Jesus are nevertheless included in his salvation.⁵⁷

The continued discussion of these important issues could, in my opinion, take this quotation by Professor Frederik Torm as their point of departure:

The New Testament neither orders nor forbids the Hebrew Christian to live according to the law of Moses. He who wants to either order or forbid that must do so on his own responsibility; he has not been authorized to it by the Lord.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See *Mishkan* 53 (2007), with excerpts from papers from the Borough Park Symposium, New York, October 8–10, 2007. Similar themes and discussions are treated in the journal *Kesher* 22 (2008), published by the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations.

⁵⁸ Torm, 75.