

# Lucky and Waldmann's "Declaration of Law-observing Hebrew Christians"



## Introduction to the Declaration

by Kai Kjær-Hansen

Ch. Th. Lucky and Alexander Waldmann's declaration from 1911, reproduced below, has seldom – if ever – been included in contemporary discussions about Messianic Jews' relationship to their people and the law – a fact that in itself is sufficient reason to republish it here.<sup>1</sup> The declaration is dated the end of May 1911, and is occasioned by the fact that the subject of "the so-called Ebionitism in the Jewish Mission and the Hebrew Christian national movement" was to be treated at the upcoming Eighth International Jewish Missionary Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, June 7–9 of that same year.<sup>2</sup> The four-page declaration, which is entitled "Friede über Israel," was brought to Stockholm and distributed among the participants by the Lutheran pastor August Wiegand.<sup>3</sup> In the autumn of 1889, Wiegand had been convinced of the truth of Lucky's ideas, and at conferences and in numerous articles, he served as Lucky's mouthpiece.<sup>4</sup>

### *Introduction to the Declaration*

In the introduction, it is mentioned that with the topic "Ebionitism in the

- 1 Reactions to the declaration at the Eighth International Jewish Missionary Conference in Stockholm, in 1911, will be dealt with in my article "Controversy about Lucky" in this issue of *Mishkan*.
- 2 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), 15.
- 3 A copy has been preserved in the Danish Israel Mission's archives. Shortly afterward, the declaration was published by Wiegand with the heading "Die Erklärung gesetzestreuer Judenchristen," cf. August Wiegand, "Die 8. Internationale Konferenz für Judenmission in Stockholm 1911," *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1911): 106–23. After Wiegand's report of the conference (pp. 106–16) comes the declaration: first an introduction (pp. 116–17), then the declaration itself (117–22), and lastly a list of individuals who support the declaration (pp. 122–23).
- 4 What part Wiegand may have played in connection with the drawing up of the declaration is an unclarified question. The possibility that he is the author of a draft or that he, at the very least, put his fingerprints on the final wording cannot be excluded. However that may be, in 1917, Wiegand admitted that when he presented the declaration in Stockholm in 1911, he did not express Lucky's "innermost thoughts"; see my "Controversy about Lucky" in this issue of *Mishkan*.

Jewish Mission,” the planners behind the Stockholm conference apparently allude to “das Messianische Judentum,” i.e. Messianic Judaism – a term that Philipp Cohen had “recently” used.<sup>5</sup> There are also references to similar efforts by Israel Pick and Joseph Rabinowitz and to Professor Franz Delitzsch’s support for the latter.

The authors of the declaration feared that in Stockholm an attempt would be made to stamp out these ideas “under the old heresy name Ebionitism.” Although the content of the papers to be delivered at the conference in Stockholm was not known at the time the declaration was drawn up, they wanted to lodge a sharp protest against the potential use of the term “Ebionitism” for Messianic Judaism.

#### *The Declaration in English Translation*

The conference book, edited by Hermann L. Strack in 1913,<sup>6</sup> contains an English translation. The English version of the declaration, however, leaves out four elaborating sections printed in brevier in the German original after sections 3, 5, 6, and 7. After 5, 6, and 7, the content of the original elaborating sections is reproduced with a short note in English in brackets. In the present republication of the declaration, these parentheses are kept – even though it is the subsequent sections in brevier that belong to the German original.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Conclusion and Signatories*

By way of conclusion, it is mentioned that the declaration was drawn up, at the end of May 1911, on behalf of the “judenchristliche Vereinigung,” i.e. “the Hebrew Christian movement in Galicia” by Ch. Th. Lucky, “Hebrew writer,” Stanislaw, and Alexander Waldmann, LL.D., of the inland revenue department, Lemberg.

This is followed by a statement of support from “gesetzesfreien Völkerchristen,” i.e. law-free Gentile Christians, for those brethren in Israel’s camp who are faithful to their people and law. Their cause should be supported, it is said, because it is 1) biblically justified – also according to the New Testament; 2) a precondition for and the most direct way to the restoration of a Christ-believing Israel, which the promises speak about; and 3) it has very good prospects despite all apparent difficulties. The law-free Gentile Christians are Dr. Fr. Heman (university professor and secretary in the Basel Mission), E. F. Stroeter (professor and editor of “Das Prophetische Wort”<sup>8</sup>

5 In a note in the declaration, there is a reference to Philipp Cohen’s book, *The Hebrew Christian and His National Continuity* (London: Marshall Brothers), and the German translation of it: *Das hebräische Volkstum der Judenchristen* (Kommission des Traktathauses in Bremen). The declaration, however, does not use the term “Messianic Jew/Judaism,” but rather the German term “Judenchristen,” which in English is rendered “Hebrew Christian.” In the quotation by Zahn under item 5, “Jewish Christianity” is retained.

6 Strack, 15–18.

7 I am indebted to Professor David Dowdey, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, for his translation in 2009 of the four elaborating notes from German into English.

8 The relationship between Stroeter (Ströter) and Lucky needs closer study. Ströter’s book *Die Judenfrage und ihre göttliche Lösung nach Römer Kapitel 11* (Kassel: Ernst Röttger,

in Wernigerode), and A. Wiegand (Lutheran clergyman in Plau, Mecklenburg).

Then comes a list of nineteen signatories.<sup>9</sup> Among them are two who endorse only the first three sections in the declaration, namely Otto von Harling, clergyman, Secretary of the Lutheran Central Agency for Jewish Mission, Leipzig; and Clodius, clergyman in Camin, treasurer of the Agency for Jewish Mission in Mecklenburg. This list may provide a clue for those who might wish to deal in more detail with Lucky's relationships.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, it is mentioned that those who wish to endorse this declaration can do so on application to Dr. Waldmann, Professor Stroeter, or Pastor Wiegand.

And now to the declaration itself – without notes.

### The Declaration of Law-observing Hebrew Christians

(1) We declare that we believe in the Divine Revelation as borne witness to in the Old and New Testaments, and that we hold that faith in its fullness and integrity. We believe in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Son of David; especially do we also believe that we can only be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts xv,11), and not by works of the Law.

(2) We declare that we see no means of grace or salvation in the ordinance of circumcision, but merely the ancient and outward sign of the Covenant which God once made with Abraham and his seed after him, and in whose spiritual blessing all nations are accepted in Christ. We know that it confers no religious advantage upon us, for in Christ there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. But as children of Abraham after the flesh we retain the bodily mark of the old Covenant, as it is written in Genesis xvii,13, "And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant."

(3) We declare that we believe it right, even now that we with our people are scattered among the nations, to adhere, as far as possible, both ourselves and our families, to the observance of the Sabbath, the Jewish feasts, and the Jewish dietary laws. We desire to adhere to the ancient customs of our people, which have been hallowed anew by Jesus as long as He dwelt on this earth.

1903) was criticized by, among others, P. L. Anacker, "Zu Prof. Ströters 'Judenfrage,'" *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1904): 33–39. According to Anacker, Ströter misinterprets Romans 11 because he does not stress mission to Israel but rather the people of Israel's future mission to the nations. The main concern for Paul is, according to Anacker, Israel's salvation through faith in Jesus. Cf. similar criticism by A. Wiegand, "Ist Professor Ströters Auslegung von Röm. 11,26 schriftgemäß," *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1904): 39–50. I wonder what Lucky thought of such considerations?

9 Thus in the original. In Wiegand's publication of the declaration in *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1911): 123, Theodor Zöckler, Lucky's close confidant, appears as the twentieth – presumably because he had been "forgotten" in the original list.

10 Names from this list which are mentioned in articles in this issue of *Mishkan* are L. Anacker, O. von Harling, H. Pauls, H. Schwabedissen, F. von Velsen, S. Volf, M. Weidauer, and T. Zöckler.



When the observance of the Law was not possible for some of us who in earlier years formally joined other national churches and thereby lost the firm support of their kinsmen also in these points, then they consider this law-free position as something temporary and seek to make possible a closer connection to the people's law-observing tradition. When others, on the other hand, attach themselves more closely to the Talmudic tradition, this happens without the exaggerations of one-sided fanatics, without contradiction to the gospel and only in the spirit of the great rabbinic-Talmudic thinkers (Rishonim) in order not to lose the spiritual contact with the broad Talmudic masses of our still Christ-unbelieving people, especially in Galicia: in short, in the spirit of Jesus' words in Matth. xxiii, 2–3. Yet, these internal questions are of relatively little consequence and do not invalidate the fundamental unity of our movement.

(4) We declare that we do this out of loyalty to our nation, in the conviction that in so doing we establish our continuity with the law-observing primitive Hebrew Christian community at Jerusalem, and in the hope of laying the foundations of a new Christian community in Israel. For however many of our Jewish brethren have already accepted the Lord Jesus Christ in true faith, they and their descendants have disappeared among the other Christian peoples, and in so doing have benefited the other nations, but have not benefited their own, being lost to it. But if any nation may justifiably persist within the Christian Church, then it is surely Israel concerning which God Himself has said in connection with the promise of the *new* covenant, "If those ordinances depart from before me . . . then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever (Jer. xxxi, 36).

5) We justify this our loyalty to our nation and to the Law in opposition to the prevailing practice by an appeal to the Holy Scriptures, especially to the Apostle Paul (Acts xxi, 21–25; Ephes. ii, 18–22; Gal. iii, 24).

Paul who, according to Acts xxi, 21–25, was far from alienating the Jews who were living among the Greeks from their people and from the law of Moses, as far as he himself was concerned kept the Law. Paul protested in the strongest possible way when someone wanted to force a Greek like Titus to be circumcised. However, in the single incident when he, the childless one, was offered the opportunity to have a descendent of the Jewish people circumcised, namely Timothy, he did it. Paul's ecclesiastical ideal was not that everything should be uniform; he particularly warns the thriving Roman congregation against exalting itself above poor Israel and neglecting it. Rather he wanted the coexistence of a law-observing Hebrew Christianity and a law-free gentile Christianity, which on the basis of the one shared faith uphold, encourage and inspire each other, just as husband and wife in Christ are equal before God and yet not identical in their natural state, but within the Christian congregation are called to mutual encouragement, support, and inspiration. Ephes. ii, 18–22. Gal. iii, 24.

(6) We would oppose . . . the short-sighted policy of some workers among the Jews [and we declare our agreement with] the far-seeing statesmanship of many ecclesiastics and of the foreign missionaries who advocate the inception of indigenous national Churches among all peoples (e.g. Bishop Gore, of Oxford, Dr. J. Campbell Gibson, of Swatow, China).

At the World Missions Conference in Edinburgh last year, Bishop Gore of Birmingham emphasized, with general approval, that the mission schools among the Gentiles foster a national way of thinking and nourish such distinctive understanding of the Christian truth that is appropriate for each country and its people. And the China missionary Gibson von Swatau assured the attending Asians of the sympathy of the conference with their efforts for their nation and a national church. And concerning the Jews, the Anglican Bishop Popham Blyth of Jerusalem declared: "A Jew cannot be incorporated into any general form of Christianity. In the communion of the holy catholic church there will always be Jews and non-Jews alongside each other, just as there are Latin, Greek, American and every sort of other branches of the true vine in distinctive diversity. And once the Jew recognizes his future in Christ, he will pour it into the moulds of his national liturgies, rites, and ceremonies; not into ours, rather into his own, which we can no more prevent him doing than he would be permitted to force them upon us." And the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of America declared: "The church does not require that Hebrew Christians forsake their people; they have moreover the right by virtue of the freedom with which Christ has freed them to receive their sons in the covenant of Abraham and to observe other ancestral customs and ceremonies of the fathers which are not cancelled by Christ and the early church, provided that it is maintained that neither Jew nor non-Jew can be justified by works of the law, but only through the merit of Christ." Against, the Jewish Mission Secretary Rev. Gidney declared: "The formation of a special Hebrew Christian church is in every respect out of place and undesirable, and for three reasons: it is neither scriptural, nor necessary, nor promising; the New Testament knows of only one church in which there is neither Jew nor gentile. (We ask: Why is there then a national Church of England?)

(7) We would refer those whose biased judgment would revive the ancient heresy label of Ebionitism to the more mature verdict of the more recent scientific research in early Church history and theology (e.g. Theodor Zahn, Commentary on St. Mark, 2nd German edition, p. 218).

Dr. Theodor Zahn in Erlangen writes in his famous commentary on Matthew (2nd edition, p. 218): "Jewish Christianity held onto circumcision, Sabbath, and similar matters as is demonstrated in history, just as they recognized without jealousy or resentment the law-free gentile church founded by Paul. Most of the very short-sighted and un-



justified verdicts of the gentile church teachers should not prevent us from recognizing that these Jewish Christian congregations had the word and example of Jesus on their side when they held onto the Law. Only in this way were they able to preserve their national identity; it was a natural consequence of their faith in a future conversion and restoration of their nation that they saw this as their duty. In this they were in agreement not only with Jesus (Matth. xxiii, 39; cf. xix, 28), but also with Paul (Rom. xi, 13–32). The question cannot be further pursued here whether without this hope the faith in a complete fulfillment of the promises contained in Matth. v, 18 can be maintained. This question is appropriate since the Old Testament law was given to a people." So Dr. h. Prof. Zahn is of the opinion that only through a law-observing Israel can the future of Matth. v, 18 be fulfilled.

(8) It is far from us to condemn those of our Hebrew Christians brethren who take a different path from ours and have been made sure of that path in the sight of their Lord and Redeemer. Some, however, have perhaps chosen that path because they knew of no other or thought no other was practicable. However that may be, we remember the Pauline word, "Who art thou that thou judgest another man's servant? Unto his own master he standeth or falleth" (Romans xiv, 4). But we demand for ourselves the same recognition of our Scriptural rights in Christ Jesus.

(9) We would therefore urgently request that as according to Acts xv, the law-observing Hebrew Christian community of Jerusalem recognised the exemption of gentile Christians from the Law – a resolution upon which the whole subsequent development of gentile Christianity turns, and which therefore determined the course of Church history – so the honorable International Conference for Jewish Missions in Stockholm, in which the various evangelical national Churches are represented, might now, in its turn, explicitly recognise the liberty of Hebrew Christians towards the Law and their right to its observance. In so doing it would reach out a friendly hand to our still feeble movement, and strengthen and refresh many an individual Hebrew Christian who is struggling against the current of prejudices.

(10) We are convinced that such a recognition would make a deep impression upon our still unbelieving nation also, which just at the present movement, in the Zionistic movement, is struggling for a healthy revival of its national consciousness. Surely Joseph Rabinowitz was right when he called unto our people, telling them that the key to the Holy Land is in the hand of our Brother Jesus! Let us then make it easier for our people to recognise this Jesus as their promised Messiah. Of course, none of us either could or would remove that offence, which not only the Jew but every natural man finds in the Cross of Christ. Only in the Cross can man, whether he be Jew or gentile, come to the new birth in the Holy Ghost and to the new life in God. What we want removed is the offence which our people cannot but take when they see that a Jew must apparently cease to be a Jew in order to declare himself a disciple of Him whom the inscription

on the Cross designated truly as the King of the Jews. We plead for the removal of the offence that a Jew is apparently asked to break the Law in order to follow Him who said, "I am come, not to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matth. v, 17-19).

