

## Foreword

**R**AYMOND LILLEVIK'S STUDY IS an interesting and timely contribution to the study of profiled Jewish-Christian leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They played important roles in the pre-history of what later was called Messianic Judaism, although they did so in quite different ways.

Lillevik's study is pioneering in more than one respect. First, none of these three Jewish-Christian leaders have ever before been portrayed and studied in such depth and detail as in this book. It therefore brings new data and new knowledge.

It is also pioneering in another respect. Lillevik analyses the nowadays important concept of identity with regard to the three Jewish-Christian leaders. It goes without saying that this was an acute problem for persons who, according to the common perceptions of their time, were trying to straddle two incompatible identities: Jewish and Christian. More specifically, Lillevik asks how the three leaders themselves understood and practiced their problematic double identity.

I find Lillevik's choice of the three persons treated in this book to be well considered. His biographies of them are accurate and nuanced, and his analysis of their challenges with regard to identity is well grounded in a theoretical framework based on cutting-edge scholarship in the field.

Lillevik has shown great acumen in his handling of the sources, and his nuanced portrayal of the double identity of the three leaders is enlightening. It demonstrates a wide spectrum of possibilities and choices as far as identity formation for Jewish Christians is concerned, in a period marked by upheavals and changes with regard to culture, religion and politics in a turbulent Eastern Europe.

In our days, when attention to questions of identity formation has reached new heights in scholarship, Lillevik's book is a timely contribution, demonstrating that the issue is not an entirely new one, and that lessons learned from people living more than hundred years before us,

are still of general relevance, and of special relevance to modern day, so-called Messianic Jews.

The book will be of great interest to church historians, missiologists, scholars in interreligious studies, sociologists of religion; but also for a wider group of interested readers, comprising present day Jewish Christians, be they inside or outside the movement of organized Messianic Judaism, and also Christians in general who have an interest in things Jewish.

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