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A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_rande_01.php

THE STUNDISTS.

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The German Orient-Mission has taken a profound interest in the Russian Stundists, and it is chiefly from its publications that I gather the following facts, though I have gleaned from other sources as well.

I have before me two of its pamphlets on the subject. The first is entitled "A Leaf from the History of Stundism in Russia."* It is by a writer who calls himself "Christophilos," a name evidently assumed, perhaps to guard against danger. This pamphlet has chiefly to do with Ivan Riaboschapka, the originator of the movement. The materials composing it were gathered by Christophilos from the lips of this Russian apostle as he lay in his last sickness, so that the narrative possesses the highest authority.

Ivan Riaboschapka was a peasant. He was born at the village of Liubomirka, in Southern Russia, where also he spent his childhood and early manhood. He was a miller by occupation, and was sober and industrious. He married and had three children, all of whom died early. Before his marriage he learned from a discharged soldier to read and write, a rare accomplishment for one of his class. He was fond of the Russian fairy stories, and read them with pleasure by day, while his mill was doing its work for him, and in the evening at home.

His business required him to go to the villages of the surrounding country on market days to sell his flour. At one of these places he purchased a New Testament in Russian, such as the British Bible Society has sold in Russia by hundreds of

*Blatt aus der Geschichte des Stundismus in Russland. Von Christophilos. Mit drei Illustrationen. Verlag: Deutsche Orient-Mission. Berlin. 1904.

thousands. He read this book with interest, but understood little of it. He consulted his priest concerning it, and was told that it was not for such as he, that it was even dangerous for laymen, and that he ought to content himself with the regular observance of the rites of the Russian Church.

The village of Liubomirka is not far from Rohrbach, where there are many Germans and a German church. The German pastor had been under pietistic influences, such as still make themselves felt in the German religious life. He was accustomed to hold a familiar service in Russian every Sunday afternoon, which was called the "Stunde," or hour. In fact, the service lasted two hours. It consisted largely of exposition, of singing, and of voluntary prayer. It did not differ greatly from our prayer meeting, except that the exposition of the Scriptures occupied the chief place. Riaboschapka became a regular attendant at this service. Here he learned that he must be born again. After almost a year of these influences, he one day bowed on his knees in his mill, and for the first time prayed from his own mind and heart. "I do not know," he afterward stated, "what I said, or what I asked; but I know that when I rose from my knees all was bright within me, and I felt as light as if one had taken a bag of grain from my shoulders. I leaped high in the mill, and praised God aloud for very joy." This great change is not dated, but, judging from some rather vague and inconsistent statements of the narrative, it may have taken place in 1848.

The new life of Riaboschapka at once made itself manifest. His wife soon rejoiced with him in it, and then a group of his neighbors. These people began to assemble on Sunday for a familiar service like that of the German "Stunde" at Rohrbach. At first they were not molested, though some sport was made of them. The observers called them "Stunde," or "Hours," after the name of the service. It was the wife of Riaboschapka, however, who invented the name of "Stundist," or "Hourist," to designate her husband, and "Stundisti," or "Hourists," for his little company. From her lips the name has spread all over the world.

Such was the origin of the name Stundists; but was this the

origin of the people and of their movement? Some writers date their origin much earlier; others* place it as late as 1877. I have no doubt that there were earlier conversions among the Russian peasants who attended the German "Stunde" at Rohrbach, and that there were some earlier village meetings. But there was no special movement. It was the conversion of a man of power like Riaboschapka that created the movement. Let us grant that the Norsemen discovered America; yet we shall still say that Columbus discovered America in the proper sense of the words, since it was he who gave America to the world and started the tide of European emigration to its shores. Even so, Riaboschapka was the founder of the Stundists, because he was the originator of the movement, though there was some preparation for his work in events which preceded his conversion.

The fire kindled in the heart of Riaboschapka burned ever more brightly. It moved him to carry to the neighboring villages the news that men must be born again and may be born again. It became his custom to drive to these villages on the market days and, standing in his cart, to address the people, who came to hear him in crowds, attracted by the novelty of his message and by his personal power as a speaker. This method of preaching was favored by a method of advertising strayed or stolen animals which prevailed at the village markets. The loser would stand in his cart, call all the people to him, and make his announcement. It had become the habit of the people to flock about any cart from which any man called to them. Riaboschapka availed himself of their readiness to assemble, and secured a multitude of curious hearers wherever he appeared. A great demand for the New Testament sprang up, and many assemblies were formed on the model of the "hour" appointed in Rohrbach by the German pastor.

The Stundists immediately began to learn to read. To this day, Stepniak* says, "the Stundists at once teach a convert to read and then give him the New Testament." To this prac-

* Stepniak, "The Russian Peasant," p. 340.

* "The Russian Peasant."

tice he attributes their intellectual superiority to the other Russian dissenting bodies whose chief field is the peasantry. Yet of course thousands who are not converts are drawn to their assemblies, are not able to read, and are dependent for their knowledge of the New Testament on the public reading.

So great was the extension of the movement, so extraordinary was the sale of the New Testament, and so ignorant were the peasants who assembled to hear it read, that Riaboschapka found it necessary to give the people instruction. His journeys for this purpose became longer and more frequent as the work prospered, until at length he abandoned his secular occupations completely and devoted himself wholly to these sheep without a shepherd. He became an indefatigable missionary. His wife undertook the care of his secular business, so that he might be free, and also might derive from it a support which would enable him to spend his entire time in his holy calling. He usually traveled on foot, a knapsack on his back, and, since this was not sufficiently capacious, the legs of his high Russian boots stuffed full of simple necessaries for the journey and copies of the New Testament. In this manner he traversed all Southern Russia, and penetrated beyond the Caspian Sea. In some villages he was received with stoning and scourging, and went forward to the next, in simple dependence upon the direction which Christ gave to His first missionaries for such emergencies: "But when they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another," Matt. 10:23. It was his custom to ascertain in each friendly village the names of the leading peasants in the next, that he might seek their hospitality, remembering another wise command of the Lord: "Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till ye go hence," Matt. 10:11. He thus secured the favor of the most influential persons, and also a house large enough to hold the assembly of people eager to hear the new doctrines.

The substance of his preaching was found in the fundamental truths of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the love and power of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of the new birth. He carefully avoided political topics. He exhort-

ed his hearers to revere the clergy and to be faithful to the established church. At the same time, he denounced the worship of pictures and relics, the superstition of crossing oneself for good luck, and the doctrine of a special priesthood.

At first the Stundists continued to attend the services of the national church. They had not yet discovered that it was a hindrance to the divine life, rather than a help. Many of its priests were ignorant drunkards and gamblers, and "like priest, like people." But the Stundists were slow to discover that they were of a different spirit, and they were distinguished for a time only by their voluntary assemblies and their exemplary conduct. They did not drink. They did not gamble. They were noted for their kindness to all men, and especially to one another. Their readiness to share their small possessions with the needy gave rise to the charge of communism, and their persecutors made the most of this slander. But their peculiarities did not at first lead them to forsake the church of their fathers, and they were content to be a leaven within the lump rather than a separate loaf.

This attitude toward the national church, however, could not be maintained permanently. They did not derive spiritual help from its long and dreary services, and gradually fell away from them, finding what they needed in their own informal meetings. They did not intend to do this; they had no plan; the process was one of nature, rather than of forethought, like that which brings every child into the world to run its own race and work out its own destiny. The priests began to complain to their bishops of a hurtful German sect called "die Stunde," "the Hours." The people, they said, were drawn away from the churches by this new sect, and in many places the services had no attendants. The government began to bestir itself, and many Stundists were arrested, Riaboschapka among them. The first trials resulted in their release, and a report went abroad among the peasants that the rulers had become Stundists, which attracted many to the movement. It would have been easy for the national church to retain all these people and to derive new life from them. Here we have in its latest form the old story of the Jewish nation and the early

Christians, of the Catholic church and the Protestant Reformers, of the Anglican church and the Methodists: "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." Gal. 4:29.

The more peaceful part of the history was that of the period between 1860 and 1877, after which the Stundists were called upon to suffer the greatest severities, which, however, did not prevent them from achieving remarkable growth.

Two streams from without began early to flow into the current of Stundism, to disturb it, to enlarge it, and to enrich it. One arose in Northern Russia under Lord Radstock, an Englishman affiliated with the Plymouth Brethren more nearly than with any other denomination. He was ably assisted by Lieutenant Paschkow, who had spent some years in London as military attache of the Russian legation. These two men conducted meetings in St. Petersburg, beginning in 1870, and drew under evangelical influences many of the aristocracy. Their work was supported by powerful families, and at first could not well be attacked by the rulers, though they disliked it. The laborers in St. Petersburg attracted the attention of many of the common people to religious questions, and thus promoted Stundism, though Lord Radstock and Paschkow were far from being Stundists. They gathered a separate people about them and formed an organization, while perhaps they did not intend to do so. The favor of the aristocracy presently fled away from them, and their followers suffered persecution; but later this denomination was tolerated, perhaps because it showed the peculiar weakness of the Plymouth Brethren in its tendency to divide into numerous small groups, each antagonistic to all the others, and hence was not feared. Russian writers designate these people as "the Paschkow Sect," from the military attache who was associated with Lord Radstock. They are increasing but little in Russia, as the Plymouth Brethren increase but little in other countries. But the attention which they have attracted and the challenge to the national church which they have not ceased to send forth, have affected the Stundist movement favorably.

The second of the two streams of which I have spoken issued

from the German Baptists. The Baltic provinces of Russia are sometimes known as "the German provinces," so large is their German population. These have constituted an avenue of approach for the Baptists of Germany. The labors of the German Baptists among the Stundists have been more fruitful. Multitudes of the Stundists have been baptized, though the reception of the ordinance has necessarily exposed them to observation and persecution. The Stundists have been sorely shaken by the agitation of the baptismal question. The Baptists among them have also been somewhat shaken by the question of the relation of baptism to the Lord's Supper. There are perhaps three strong parties among the Stundists: the first is composed of those who deem their baptism in infancy valid, and who resemble the Congregationalists; the second, of strict Baptists, and the third of what we should call Free Baptists, and who call themselves the Free Brethren. The lines are not yet fully drawn, but they are becoming more clearly visible as the years pass. The wide diffusion of Baptist convictions among the Stundists is evident from the fact that Riaboschapka had himself baptized in order to secure the harmony of his people, and not, if we may believe Christophilos, from any desire to obey a divine command. "I am ready to be baptized twenty times," he declared, "if by doing so I can cause peace to reign among the brethren, instead of strife, in which the devil finds his greatest joy." Soon after his baptism he was appointed a missionary among the Russians by the German Baptists.

In 1884 Paschkow, with the aid of Lord Radstock, called a conference of the leaders of all the more evangelical denominations in Russia, including the Baptists. It came together at St. Petersburg. The purpose was to unite all these denominations in one denomination, or, at least, in one plan of harmonious labor, and thus to prosecute the common work with greater energy and efficiency. The conference effected nothing, "owing," Christophilos says, "to the narrowness of the Baptists, who would not participate with the others in the Lord's Supper." This is somewhat refreshing, coming, as it does, from a representative of the German church, which is as

exclusive at the Lord's Supper as the most exclusive Baptist. He tells us nothing about the narrowness of the others, who would make a general participation in the Lord's Supper the condition of an alliance in Christian labor. Is there any necessary relation between a union at the Lord's table and a union in doing good? If certain denominations refuse to unite with the Baptists in doing good because they cannot unite with the Baptists in celebrating the Lord's Supper, the epithet "narrow" should not be applied to the Baptists alone.

The conference was held in the palatial halls of an aristocratic family. It was the custom to have a sermon every evening, and throngs of the wealthy and cultivated came to hear, drawn by various motives, as the social distinction of the two men who managed the affair, curiosity to learn more of the much-maligned dissenters, a speculative interest in freedom of conscience, and genuine religious hunger. On one of the evenings Riaboschapka preached. There was great hilarity among the aristocratic classes when it was announced that this peasant had been put forward to instruct them. Throngs of them came together gaily to hear him. He appeared in his ordinary clothing, his trousers tucked into the legs of his tall boots, all of which increased the amusement. He spoke in his peasant dialect concerning the two foundations which Christ describes at the close of the Sermon on the Mount. Many who came to scoff were melted to tears and remained to pray.

This anecdote leads me to speak of Riaboschapka as a preacher. Christophilos places him in the very foremost rank. He refers to a bitter persecutor of the Stundists, who was employed by the Russian church to oppose them. This man was entrusted with the highest powers, and scrupled at no measures, of whatever kind. He opened their letters in order to discover their hiding-places. He wrote decoy letters to them, professing to be one of them. He traveled through all Southern Russia in order to spy them out and fling them into prison, where this could be done, and to debate with them where they were too strong to be destroyed by violence. Christophilos became acquainted with him and learned much from him. On one occasion he said: "There was a wonderful man among

the Stundists. To-day they have no such man. He knew his Bible through and through, and often in public debates brought me into embarrassment. I have often heard his rude sermons, and I must acknowledge that when I have listened to his convincing words I have been almost ready to become a Stundist myself." The perseverance of Riaboschapka in learning to read and write proved that he possessed intellect and will. His fondness for fairy stories proved that he had a simple but vivid imagination. His persistent study of the Scriptures constituted a divinity school of the highest excellence for the purpose of preparing him for his evangelistic career. We should expect such a man to preach with much thought, with much clearness, with much tenderness and picturesqueness, and with much experience of sin and grace.

It is said that Pobiedonoszeff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, was present in disguise at some of the meetings of the conference at St. Petersburg in 1884. At least, when the conference adjourned and the members were departing to their homes with joyful hearts, he had many of them arrested and cast into prison, whence later they were sent into banishment. He selected his victims with some political shrewdness. Men who lived in St. Petersburg and labored among the aristocracy he did not molest. Nor did he touch the Germans, even when they were Russian subjects, for he did not wish to arouse hostile feeling in Germany. The native Russians bore the brunt of the storm. Riaboschapka escaped, I know not how, and continued his labors six years longer, though repeatedly cast into prison during the period.

We are thus introduced to Pobiedonoszeff, now fortunately dead. He was one of the most remarkable men of our age, and one of the most relentless persecutors of all ages, destined to be remembered with Torquemada and Arbues.

The Russian church was once governed by a Patriarch. Peter the Great, jealous of the power and splendor of this subject, abolished his office. Thus the Czar himself became the head of the church.

Early in the history of this new constitution the state confiscated the enormous property of the church, promising in

exchange for it an adequate maintenance from the national treasury. Thus the clergy, both white and black, that is, both secular and monastic, were reduced to abject dependence upon the civil administration, a condition which remains to this day.

Moreover, the change in the ecclesiastical constitution required, to make it effective, the appointment of a new cabinet minister, somewhat like the Minister of Public Worship in Germany, but wielding far greater power. The highest ruling body in the church itself became the Synod, called the Holy Synod, and composed of a select number of Archbishops, Bishops, and other eminent men, appointed nominally by the Czar, but really by the minister. This minister was named the Procurator of the Holy Synod. It was his duty to advise the Czar concerning all ecclesiastical matters, even the appointment of members of the Holy Synod, to recommend appropriations for church maintenance and extension, to inspect appointments to clerical offices, to promote to higher stations, and in general to represent the autocracy of the Czar in its relations to the church. The Procurator has usually been a layman, and for this, as well as for his unbounded power, he has been hated by the ecclesiastics, who have objected that no layman except the Czar should govern the church. Yet they have obeyed him, partly because they have been dependent on him, and partly because he has wielded the sword of the state to save them from the annoyance of sectarian opposition and has also suppressed all internal disturbances with frightful severity.

To keep the Russian race true to the Russian church has been one of the greatest purposes of the Russian government. The Poles might be Roman Catholics. The Germans might be Lutherans or Reformed or Baptists. But no efforts to make proselytes among the Russians proper could be permitted.

For the last twenty years of the nineteenth century the Procurator of the Holy Synod was Pobiedonoszeff, and it was his business to carry out this policy. He performed the task with all the earnestness of profound conviction combined with ardent enthusiasm. He came into power under Alexander III. in 1881. He began at once to reduce the church to more ab-

solute subjection, and this was not difficult, as he held the purse, and dictated degradations and promotions. The two Czars whom he served were pleased with him, as his administration favored their autocracy; and the ecclesiastics, though always displeased that he deprived them of power which they deemed theirs by divine right, submitted abjectly, though sullenly.

He believed that the Orthodox Greek Church is identical with the kingdom of God on earth. He believed that it would forfeit the favor of Heaven if it should permit dissent within its own limits. He believed in the principle of autocracy, and he knew well that freedom of religion among the Russians would soon lead to a demand for political freedom, which he always detested.

Now the Stundists in general belonged to the Russian race. With the German Baptists in the German provinces he did not concern himself; but their evangelists, when they went among the native Russians, were met with arrest, imprisonment and banishment. He opposed all forms of Stundism with arrest, imprisonment, and banishment. He employed milder measures also. He stimulated his church to send forth emissaries among the peasants, who should discharge the double function of spies and popular preachers, so as at once to intimidate the populace and satisfy their longing for religious light. His favorite measures were imprisonment and banishment. He sought to organize the entire priesthood into a secret police for the detection of heresy. The Stundists, because of their coherency and their zeal as propagandists, were the especial objects of his enmity. Their secret meetings were discovered and the members carried away. Their property was dissipated by fines. Their wives and children, bereft of their natural providers and protectors, were turned penniless into the cold world. At a later stage of these persecutions, the children were torn from the mothers to be brought up in alien families or in convents, that they might be taught the national faith. By his cruelty Count Tolstoi was aroused to write a letter which appeared in one of the papers of St. Petersburg, and was copied by other papers all over the world, so that the government

abandoned the inhuman practice in shame. But it did not abandon the practice of fining, imprisoning and banishing.

It is impossible to say how many of the Stundists suffered in these persecutions, for the records of their trials are not accessible to the historian.

Pobiedonoszeff lived long, bent with age, to witness the ruin of the system which he sought to uphold at so great a cost of torture and tears. It is a part of the poetic justice of God that this monster was caused to pass his declining years in a country which detested him and a world which execrated him, amid the wrecks of the houses which he filled with the sighs and groans of his victims.

After the return of Riaboschapka from the conference at St. Petersburg, he was seven times arrested and imprisoned. Those who know what a Russian prison is, need scarcely be told that, under these hardships, his health gave way, and that he became a mere shadow of himself. Yet, when any term of imprisonment came to an end, he betook himself at once to his evangelistic labors, visiting and confirming the existing churches, founding others, and leading sinners to repentance. On his eighth arrest, in 1889, he was banished to the Caucasus for three years, and the period was twice extended by the government, because he was not yet dead, though the district was malarious and he suffered from continual fever. The total period was twelve years. His faithful wife accompanied him.

Finally, as he did not die, even the brazen quality of Russian tyranny was perplexed. His sentence could not well be extended a third time. Yet he was not allowed to return to Russia, for he was a man of power, and would not desist from the chosen work of his life. A cruel expedient was invented. He and his wife were placed on a steamer and carried to Constantinople, where they were compelled to land, and where they did not know any one. They were in rags. They had not the smallest coin of money or a crust of bread. The Turkish police speedily found them and imprisoned them as Russian spies. They were made to understand, however, that they might be released for a certain sum of backsheesh. At length a benevolent Bulgarian gentleman paid the necessary bribe and

they were set free. When their deliverer learned that they were Russian Protestants, he advised them to go to Sophia, where there were churches of their faith. He also presented them with the necessary tickets.

At Sophia Riaboschapka spent the closing days of his extraordinary life. His simple wants were supplied. But he was pained, Christophilos says, by the controversies between the Baptists and the Congregationalists of the city. The Baptists were not as cordial to him as they might have been, because he partook of the Lord's Supper with the Congregationalists. He himself told of this difference with tears in his eyes.

Riaboschapka died in February, 1901. He had labored as an evangelist for forty years, and had then passed twelve years in banishment. His place is now with the apostles and martyrs. His wife must be held as high in the reverence of all good people, for she administered to him lovingly in all his tribulations, and shared his punishments where she could.

Thus far I have followed Christophilos, though I have drawn some things from other sources.

I now turn to the second of the two pamphlets to which I referred in the beginning. It is entitled "Labor Among the Stundists."* The first pamphlet has to do chiefly with the origin and growth of the Stundists; the second, with their present condition. The second is written by Captain Stefanowitsch, formerly an officer in the Bulgarian army. He is a Russian, was educated for the priesthood, a calling in which his paternal ancestors for ten generations had served. At the end of his preparatory studies he found himself an atheist, and refused to be ordained, in spite of the assurance of his father that his unbelief need make no difference. He drifted into the Russian army, and, after a time, into Bulgaria, where there was great need of officers, and where his superior education and his military experience led to his promotion to be Captain of a company. His station was Sophia, and here he came under the influence of the Congregationalists and found the way of life. The change in his conduct, and his identification of him-

* Aus der Arbeit unter den Stundisten. Dritte, neu bearbeitete Auflage mit 4 Abbildungen. 1904. Verlag: Deutsche Orient-Missiou, Berlin.

self with the Protestants, made his position as an officer intolerable, and he was dismissed from it and became an evangelist of the German Orient-Mission. His command of the Russian language and his knowledge of the Russian character adapted him to the field of the Stundists, and he began to travel among them and instruct them in 1900. His account of them was published in 1904 by the society which he served. I shall follow it in the main, but shall avail myself also of some other sources.

It has been his chief purpose to instruct the Stundists, and thus fit them to do their great work better, rather than to make converts from the world, though he has also conducted revival meetings among them. He has been exposed to constant danger and has been compelled to observe as great secrecy as possible, but he has been watched over by a vigilant Providence and has escaped every peril.

He has found many sectarian divisions among the Stundists, using the name in its broadest sense. One of these is distinguished by the belief that the local church can forgive sins; and when anyone makes confession in the assembly, the brethren rise, lift up their hands, and pronounce the absolution. There is another which forbids its people to laugh, because Sarah was blamed for laughing, and thinks it necessary to fall on the face and weep when one prays. Another thinks it necessary to live in caves, in order to be separate from the world. Some of its men, conscious of ignorance, once started to travel in search of light. They presently saw a cow, and were terrified, never having heard of such a creature, and perceiving clearly from its horns that it was one of the beasts of the Apocalypse.

In general the most darkened sects among the Stundists are eager for instruction, and receive it gladly, so that their state is by no means discouraging.

I may here depart from my immediate subject far enough to say that Stefanowitsch found the Jews in Russia hospitable to the truth.

The Stundists are debating many questions which once troubled us, and have been settled by us in one way or another.

Can a child of God hold a civil office? Can a child of God be a soldier; or rather, can a soldier be a child of God? Is the Christian Sabbath Saturday or Sunday? Shall infant christening be recognized as baptism? Shall those who have not been baptized since their conversion be received at the Lord's Supper? This last question has occasioned a controversy which, Stefanowitsch says, may be called a chronic disease. It will not cease. It is especially virulent in Southern Russia, where, it will be remembered, Riaboschapka performed his principal work.

There is a strong tendency to believe that one receives regeneration in baptism after repentance, and the Disciples would find adherents among these people. On the other hand, unlike the Disciples, the Stundists set an extravagant estimate upon tears; and, unless one confesses his sins in the congregation with tears, the genuineness of his conversion is doubted by many. The question, "Have you wept yet?" is equivalent to the question, "Are you converted?" While the public weeping is identified with conversion, baptism is sometimes identified with regeneration. In the assemblies of the Stundists there is often much loud weeping, with detailed confession of sins of even the most offensive character.

The Stundists have leaders, but they have no good means of testing these men, who take the office to themselves whenever they can get a following. In general the Stundists, while they teach their converts to read the New Testament, distrust learning, whether it is seen in the leader or in the follower. They often said to Stefanowitsch: "You speak tolerably well, but learnedly." He once recommended some books to a leader among them, but received the answer. "Ah, no. All books are of the devil." Naturally many of the leaders, being thus ignorant, are fanatical and go to extremes and commit unlawful excesses and bring their people into difficulty with the magistrates. There is strong tendency to believe that their leaders speak under the immediate and infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This encourages the leaders to a tyrannical interference with the private life, so that, like the early Wesleyan ministers, some of them even prescribe the kind of dress which

the women shall wear. If a church has an ordained minister, who is doing the regular work of a pastor, it is regarded by many with some suspicion and disapproval.

Stefanowitsch came into contact with many Baptists among the Stundists. The strict Baptists, believing in Baptism as the proper approach to the Lord's Supper, gave him much to criticise, though he himself belonged to a church quite as exclusive. There are a great number of them, as "they have about one hundred churches." "All of them, however," he assures us, "consist of people who are not steadfast in the truth." They fall away easily to the eccentric sects about them. In many places there are Free Baptists side by side with the Regular. This was formerly the case in St. Petersburg, but there the two bodies are now united. In general "the Baptists are deteriorating, rather than improving."

I turn from Stefanowitsch a moment to the representative of the Stundists at the late Baptist congress in London. According to this man there are 23,000 persons organized in the Baptist churches among the Stundists, and about 20,000 others who would join them did circumstances permit; or 43,000 in all.

It is evident from both these witnesses that there is a widespread tendency among the Stundists to crystalize into Baptist churches.

The Stundists, when Stefanowitsch wrote, were not so generally persecuted as they had been once. In some places they were quite free. Yet in others they suffered all that mistaken religious zeal could bring upon them. In St. Petersburg they were unharmed, and had "many churches scattered throughout the entire city." The same immunity was enjoyed in Kiev, where their persistency and boldness had compelled their tormenters to desist. In Moskow, on the other hand, their sufferings are still bitter, for that city was under the terrible rule of Sergius, the uncle of the Czar.

On the whole, persecution was ceasing. They were "exposed," he says, "to dangers from within greater than those from without." He does not mean, however, that the period of their distresses had come to a close. He gives many pathetic

instances of recent suffering. The national government, in the more recent years, seems to have had no settled policy, and the provincial or local magistrates persecuted or not, as they were individually disposed. Much depended also on the priests. If the priest was fanatical, he could have the Stundists arrested, or, where this was not convenient, he could lead his people to refuse all business to them, and thus ruin them, unless they happened to be strong enough in the place to support one another. If he was friendly or indifferent, the Stundists might prosper.

The Baptist Stundists were exposed to special danger because it is difficult to administer immersion in secret. The Russian Baron UixKiull, who represented them at the late Baptist congress in London, told a story which illustrates the precautions they were often compelled to exercise. A woman became convinced that she must forsake the national church and be baptized. The Baron conversed with her, and found that she gave evidence of the new birth and determined to take the risk of baptizing her. His brethren were alarmed at this, and proposed a plan which would permit him to discharge this duty and yet escape identification. The woman was to walk on the beach of the ocean in the dimness of the evening. She would meet a man who would bear the name of Philip, who would introduce himself to her by this name, and would baptize her. She would not know him in the dark, and the officers could not employ her testimony against him. So it was done, and the silent stars were the only visible witnesses of the scene.

Such is the latest word. Toleration is now granted, but is it enforced? Or are the enemies of the Stundists seizing upon the disorders as a veil under which to hide their cruelty to these innocent people? We tremble, but we also hope.

The Stundists, Stefanowitsch says, need evangelists most of all. They are increasing in numbers, but not in intelligence and steadfastness. It is evident that they are in a plastic state, and may be moulded this way or that. Their tendency to become Baptists lays upon the Baptist denomination in England and America a special obligation. The German Orient-Mission has opened a seminary near Berlin for the training of young

Russians who wish to enter this field; and, as the German church is the first to take this forward step, it will probably reap more largely than others.

The Baptists have just established a small theological school, but it has scarcely got to work as yet.

This study of the Stundists may aid us to judge of some statements concerning them which are found in various works reputed to be accurate. Stepniak* says that as early as 1887 the Stundists in Southern Russia were several millions in number. Yet he dates their origin in 1877, and thus allows them but ten years in which to achieve this incredible growth. They arose, in fact, some decades earlier; yet, even so, there is no evidence that they are as numerous as this. Once more. They are often called a denomination, a sect, a church. But it is evident that they are a people, rather than a denomination, and are already divided by several denominational lines. Again. The *Encyclopedia Americana* tells us that the Stundists are known as Russian Baptists. Similarly the French *Grand Dictionnaire Universel* says: "The doctrines of these sectaries have much analogy with those of the anabaptists, from whom they have adopted the second baptism and various ceremonies." This identification of the Stundists with the Baptists is uncritical, as we have seen, for it exaggerates the Baptist tendencies of these people. On the other hand, the *International Cyclopædia* tells us that they "repudiate the sacraments and demand equal distribution of property." As a body, they do neither of these things. The *New International Encyclopædia* endorses the second of these errors, and declares that they "hold communistic views concerning property." The researches of the German Orient-Mission enable us to do better justice to these simple and noble people, to love them for what they are, and to wish them the highest success in their efforts to spread the light of the gospel throughout their land, which sits in shadows of midnight darkness.

* "The Russian Peasant," p. 340.