

The Ukrainian Stundists and Russian Jews:
a collaboration of evangelical peasants with Jewish intellectuals in late
imperial Russia¹

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The spread of the radical evangelical movement in southern Russia and Ukraine by the 1880s coincided with the activities of revolutionary intellectuals, who tried to exploit the anti-state feelings of persecuted evangelicals. Some of these revolutionaries were Jews. Because of anti-Semitic pogroms after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 in the southern Russian provinces many Jews tried to emigrate, while others tried to survive by converting to Christianity. The last development, which was called the movement of ‘New Testament Jews’ by Russians, converged with the evangelical movement in the Ukrainian provinces of Kiev, Kherson and Tavrida and influenced peasant religious dissenters as well. The Russian police discovered these connections first, but the Orthodox clergy and Russian conservative press used this information about the collaboration of Jews and Christian dissenters, who were called Stundists, for their ideological campaign against the evangelical peasants. The Jewish theme contributed to the construction of the anti-Russian image of the first Russian Stundists, who were Ukrainian peasants by origin and whose theology and religious practices were reminiscent of the West European Reformation. A return to the Hebraic origins of the Christian faith and an emphasis on the Jewish roots of Christian theology was a prominent feature of the entire European Reformation.² From medieval times Russian religious radicals shared the same interest in the Judaic religious background of the first Christian communities described in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. So-called ‘Judaizers’ (‘Zhidovstvuiushchie’) of medieval Russia emphasised the Judaic traditions of their Christian beliefs, including the celebration of the Sabbath rather than Christian Sunday.³ Later on, during the eighteenth century in central provinces of European

¹ The American Council of Learned Societies, IREX, Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies and Mellon Foundation supported financially this research, which is a part of a wider research project I worked on. See the detailed analysis of relations between the Stundists and Jews in chapter 7 of my book: Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917*, Baltimore 2004: 321-395.

² See: Lois Israel Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements* New York 1925; Salo W. Baron, ‘John Calvin and the Jews,’ *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: from Late Antiquity to the Reformation*, ed. by Jeremy Cohen New York University 1991: 380-400; Armas K.E. Holmio, *The Lutheran Reformation and the Jews: the Birth of Protestant Jewish Missions* Hancock, Mich. 1949. Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* Cambridge 1979. Richard H. Popkin, ‘Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism,’ *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, ed. Perez Zagorin, Berkeley 1980: 70-71; David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* Oxford 1982; Sergei Zhuk, ‘La tradition hebraique’: les Puritans, les Calvinistes hollandaise et le debut de l’ambivalence des Juifs dans l’Amerique britannique coloniale,’ *Les Chretiens et les Juifs dans les societes de rites grec et latin. Approche comparative. Textes reunis M. Dmitriev, D. Tollet et E. Teiro* Paris 2003: 123-164.

³ N. A. Kazakova, Ia. S. Lur’e, *Antifeodal’nye ereticheskie dvizhenia na Rusi XIV-nachala XVI v.*, Leningrad 1955; Ia. S. Lur’e, *Ideologicheskaja bor’ba v russkoi publitsistike kontsa XV-nachala XVI v.*, Moscow-Leningrad 1955. See also new research: Mikhail V. Dmitriev, ‘Joseph de Volokolamsk etat-il anti-Semite?’ *Les Chretiens et les Juifs dans les societes de rites grec et latin. Approche*

Russia, their ideas and religious practices laid a foundation to the religious movement of 'Subbotniki' ('Sabbatarians'), who changed their holiday from Sunday to Saturday, introduced circumcision and denied the universal authority of the Orthodox Church hierarchy. Saint Dmitrii of Rostov (Dmitrii Rostovskii) wrote that Subbotniki 'celebrated Jewish Sabbath and did not worship Christian icons because they were influenced by Lutheran, Calvinist and Judaizers' ideas.' At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the Subbotniki movement spread to the south, to the new regions of Russian colonisation in southern Ukraine and northern Caucasus, where their ideas of 'Moses law' and 'Hebrew rituals' affected local Molokans and other religious dissenters. By 1812 Subbotniki became especially popular among the Cossack settlers in the Don Army and Terek regions. Some Molokans in Ukraine accepted Sabbatarian religious practices, which transformed the entire Molokan movement. During the 1820s-1830s, according to official calculations, there were more than 20,000 Subbotniki in the European part of the Russian Empire.⁴ The first Russian Subbotniki introduced Sabbatarian ('Hebraic') theology and practices to the evangelicals among Russian and Ukrainian peasants and elaborated rituals based on the Old Testament, which became an important component of the popular Sabbatarian movement up to the twentieth century.⁵

The most numerous sect among the first evangelicals in the Russian Empire was that of the Ukrainian Stundists, who later on became predecessors of different evangelical Christian churches in southern Russia, including Baptists (Stundo-Baptists), Adventists and Pentecostals. From the outset this sect was related to the religious awakening in the German and Mennonite colonies. In it the evangelical movement among the German colonists converged with the religious revival among Orthodox peasants and produced a movement that contemporaries referred to as Stundism. Contemporary authors and historians noted this as a remarkable moment in the popular evangelical movement's development in the Russian Empire.⁶ The German-speaking settlers brought Stundism to Russia as a part of the Pietist movement. The word derived from the German 'Stunde' (hours). At the beginning of the eighteenth century members of the German Pietist movement, followers of Philip Jacob Spener, organised the meetings in their houses for reading and discussion of the Bible during the special hours (Stunde) after church ceremonies. These Pietists from

comparative_Textes reunis M. Dmitriev, D. Tollet et E. Teiro Paris 2003: 77-98 and Tat'jana A. Oparina, 'La polemique anti-juive en Russie au XVIIIe siecle,' *Les Chretiens et les Juifs dans les societes de rites grec et latin*, 165-182.

⁴ Orthodox missionaries considered Sundukov, a peasant from a village of Dubovka in Saratov province, a founding father of 'Subbotniki' sect in imperial Russia. See: N. N. Golitsyn, *Istoria zakonodatel'stva o evreiakh (1649-1825)* St.Petersburg 1886, Vol. 1, 642; T. I. Butkevich, *Obzor russkikh sekt i ikh tolkov* Khar'kov 1910: 368 -387, 393. See also: Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* Ithaca, N.Y. 2005.

⁵ See: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii (hereafter – GARF), f.109, 1 ekspeditsiia, op.40, d.21, part 2, l.40-41. In the 1860s the creed of the Russian Sabbatarians who followed Hebraic theology and practices included: '1. A complete belief in various acts of the Holy Spirit; 2. Non-admittance of sinful people to the meetings; 3. A public repentance in front of the whole meeting or the elected person; 4. A celebration not only of New Testament holidays, but Old Testament biblical holidays as well (Sabbath). Following the old Jewish tradition, they kept observance of three such days: 1 September, Day of Labor (or Pipes); 10 September, Day of Purification, and 15 September, a celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. They celebrate both the Old Testament and New Testament holidays according to the lunar calendar rather than the general Christian one.' *ibid.*, l.6-8ob.

⁶ The development of Stundism has been covered in detail by both Russian and Western historians. See: Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* Bloomington 2005, and O.V. Beznosova (Kudinova), 'Pozdnee protestantskoe sektantstvo Iuga Ukrainy (1850-1905)' Ph.D. diss., Dnepropetrovsk University 1998.

Württemberg, who were called the Stundist Brothers, brought their new religious experience to the German colonies in the Russian province of Kherson in 1817 where the German colony of Rohrbach became a centre of Pietist activity. The Pietist minister Johann Bonnekemper was the pastor of the Lutheran community in Rohrbach and a leader of the new Pietist Stundist movement among local Germans. From 1824 his meetings known as 'the Stundist meetings' laid a foundation for a broad Pietist movement among the German-speaking settlers of the province.⁷ This German Pietist movement converged with religious revivals among the members of the Nazareth sect in the German colonies in Bessarabia during the 1840s and among Mennonites in the provinces of Ekaterinoslav and Tavrida during the 1850s. Along with the Western Baptist influences, which were brought by German missionaries to southern Russia during the late 1860s, these evangelical awakenings among the German and Mennonite colonists laid the foundation for the movement among Ukrainian peasants, who were called 'the Ukrainian Stundists' ('Khokhly-Shtundy') by Russian contemporaries.⁸

By the beginning of the 1890s thousands of peasants from the Ukrainian provinces (the overwhelming majority were ethnically Ukrainian) joined this evangelical movement. Beginning with only twenty members in 1862 the Stundist sect among the Ukrainian peasants grew to thousands and spread over southern and central Ukraine in the 1870s. During the 1880s Stundism reached the provinces of Tavrida, Ekaterinoslav, Poltava, Kharkov, Chernigov, Volynia and Podolia (there were 2,956 dissenters in the province of Kherson in 1886, 2,006 in the province of Kiev in 1884, 300 in the province of Ekaterinoslav). Overall, in 1885 the members of the Ukrainian Stundist meetings, who were registered by the local police, numbered more than seven thousand people.⁹

⁷ C. Bonnekemper, 'Stundism in Russia,' *Missionary Review of the World*, March 1894, vol.17, 203.

⁸ The Ukrainian Stundists did not fit into an official scheme of dissident movement in Russian historiography. All historians now agree that eventually Ukrainian Stundism contributed to the development of the broad evangelical movement in Russia and the Soviet Union as well. However, the history of the Stundist peasants and their theology and religious practices is still unclear and confused. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century Russian observers of the Stundist movement were not sure about its real origins. The obvious similarities between German and Russian sectarians, who were both referred to as the 'Stundists,' confused both liberal and conservative authors. At the same time, all observers noted millenarian trends in the theology of Ukrainian peasant dissidents. The more insightful Orthodox scholars of Stundism, such as Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, Alexei Dorodnitsyn and Piotr Kozitskii, expressed their uncertainty about the origin of Russian Stundism in their listings of different views regarding various theories on Stundist roots in the Russian empire. See Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii shtundizm* St.Petersburg 1889: 12-13, 42-43, 59-60; A. Dorodnitsyn, *Yuzhno-Russkii Neobaptism, izvestnyi pod imenem shtundy. Po offitsial'nym dokumentam* Stavropol 1903: 117, 122; P. Kozitskii, *Vopros o proiskhozhdenii yuzhno-russkago Shtundizma v nashei literature* St.Petersburg 1908: 3ff. According to their analysis, it is possible to single out the following points of view in the Russian literature on Stundism: 1) Stundism was primarily a Russian phenomenon and influenced by native Russian sects (Molokans, Shalaputs and Dukhobors); 2) although Stundism may have foreign (mostly German) origins, its development was dependent on the psychology of the Russian people; 3) Stundism was a product of German propaganda but other causes, which prepared the ground for it in the Russian countryside, were more important; 4) Stundism was entirely a product of German propaganda and the Germanization of the Ukrainian peasantry; 5) Stundism was not simply a product of Russian conditions or of the propaganda of German Stundism among the German colonists, but also a direct result of German Baptists' impact on southern Russian society.

⁹ Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii shtundizm*, 145, 147. According to the official report of the Kiev governor, there were 3,085 Stundists in the province in 1885. In the province of Kherson the local governor counted 3,049 Stundists in 1885. In Volynia the police registered from 36 to 65 Stundists. In the province of Ekaterinoslav by 1890 the police registered 267 Stundists. Before this 260 Stundists had returned to the Orthodox Church. Therefore between 1885 and 1890 we can calculate 527 officially

By 1889 the Kiev administration alone counted more than 3,500 Stundists and by 1892 there were 4,897 (predominantly Ukrainian) Stundists within its boundaries. The Stundists themselves estimated their figures at between 100,000 and 200,000 in 1882-83.¹⁰ These figures are apparently exaggerated. The local administration and police in their secret annual reports usually presented far smaller numbers of local religious sects and dissenters. Based on calculations of these annual reports and their appendices, the number of Stundists had grown from 200 in 1872 to 5,002 in 1890 in Kiev province, from 20 in 1862 to 4,648 in 1890 in Kherson province, from 300 in 1888 to 1,000 in 1897 in Ekaterinoslav province. What these figures do not reveal is that Stundist influence was much greater than the numbers suggest. In fact, Stundists dominated the villages in which they comprised more than two percent of the local population, influencing no less than one third of population there.¹¹

In his report to the tsar, the Kherson governor noted in 1890 that the Stundist sect spread 'on three fourths of the entire territory of the province.'¹² In 1890 Stundists lived in 167 localities in the province. The Kherson governor also noted their increasing organisational skills. 'The huge number of Stundist leaders (one for every 29 adult members),' the governor wrote, 'indicated the larger inner strength of this growing sect.'¹³ By 1895 there were nearly 7,000 Stundists in the province of Kherson, according to official calculations.¹⁴ The governor of Kiev also noted the growth of Stundism and criticised the Orthodox clergy's underestimation of the numbers of dissidents among Ukrainian peasants. By 1895 there were more than 6,000 Stundists in the province of Kiev.¹⁵ Stundism had become, during the 1890s, the

registered Stundists in the province of Ekaterinoslav. Between 1885 and 1890 the Kharkov police registered 240 Stundists among the local peasants. See: RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4546, l.836; d.4543, l.424ob.; RGIA, *Otchet Volynskogo gubernatora za 1885 god*, 8; *Otchet Volynskogo gubernatora za 1889 god*, 7; *Otchet Ekaterinoslavskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, l.371ob.; *Otchet Kharkovskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, l.607

¹⁰ Russian journalists from a popular Moscow newspaper calculated in 1884 that there were 24,700 Stundists in Kiev province, 9,000 – in Kherson province, 7,500 – in Bessarabia province, 4,000 – in Ekaterinoslav province, and 1,000 – in Tavrida province. *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1884, No. 326. Compare with: KEV, 1885, No. 19, 902.

¹¹ See: Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii shtundizm*, 134-6, 145, 147. All other scholars base their studies on the calculations of Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii. Compare with: A.I. Klibanov, *Istoria religioznogo sektantstva v Rossii (60-e gody XIX v. - 1917 g.* Moscow 1965: 208 ff. My calculations are based on data from: TsDIAU, f. 442, op.52, d.433, l.35, 36ob., 61-2; f.127, op.690, d.43, l.5ob.; f.442, op.53, d.357, l.14, 29; f.442, op.55, d.447, l.67-67ob.; f.442, op.623, d.364, l.36ob., 37. RGIA, *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1881 god*, p.8, 23,24; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1882 god*, p.8, 21-2; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1883 god*, p.8, 25-6; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1884 god*, p.7, 24; *Obzor Ekaterinoslavskoi gubernii za 1889 god*, p.27, 56-7.

¹² RGIA, *Otchet Khersonskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, 13. In the Russian original, the governor literally complained of 'the spread' of Stundism influence. [He wrote in Russian: 'Raion rasprostraneniia shtundizma okhvatyvaet okolo ¾ obshchei ploshchadi gubernii.']

¹³ RGIA, *Otchet Khersonskogo gubernatora za 1890 god*, 14. The majority of the Kherson Stundists were concentrated in Elisavetgrad district – 64 places: including 20 towns and cities, 42 villages and 105 rural settlements. The number of Stundists who had officially separated from the Orthodox Church comprised 4,648 people (including 2,169 children under the age of 21). The police discovered that 83 leaders ruled the Stundist communities of the province. Among these leaders 30 were called the ministers (*presviteri*), who performed the religious ceremonies, 'including the baptism of the children, the weddings, the communion and burial rituals.'

¹⁴ RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4182, l.431-4.

¹⁵ RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4868, l.138ob. According to his report, in 1890 the Stundist movement in the province of Kiev had increased by 131 members and comprised 5,002 activists. The governor noted an expansion of Stundism in 18 new localities of the province as well. The Orthodox clergy reported the figure of 4,681 Stundists the same year, i.e. 320 people less than the police detected. According to the report of the General Governor of the South Western Region (which included the provinces of Kiev,

most numerous evangelical movement among the rural population of southern Russia. According to our calculations, in the main provinces of the southern Russian Empire: in Kiev, Podolia, Volynia, Kherson, Tavrida, Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Bessarabia, and Stavropol', and Astrakhan' between 1891 and 1895 the police registered no less than 20,000 Stundist activists.¹⁶

When German Baptism influenced Ukrainian Stundism in 1869, it resulted in its division in two parts: 1) Stundo-Baptism, which was more conservative in theology and religious practices and tried to reproduce the institutions of the German Baptist congregations in the Ukrainian countryside; and 2) more radical 'New' or 'Young' Stundism, which resisted the institutionalisation and formalisation of the movement and emphasised the unmediated spiritual communication of believers with God and millennial expectations of social justice and equality. The religious radicals made up a majority in Ukraine from the outset. According to the first reports from Kiev province in 1874, members of the radical branch of Ukrainian Stundism made up the overwhelming majority (85%) of detected Stundists there.¹⁷

Russian Jews participated in this evangelical movement from the early days of Stundism. A police officer from the Odessa district reported to the Kherson governor that in 1870 he discovered in the village of Adamovka a Jewish woman who had converted to Stundism.¹⁸ As early as 1875 the Orthodox press noted the unusual activities of the Jews among the Kherson and Kiev Stundists. These Jews were attracted to Stundism 'because of its Protestant character,' the journalist wrote, and 'its stress on the inner spirituality which had disappeared from the Jewish religion long ago.' Therefore, along with the Ukrainian peasants, Jews from the southern provinces of Russia became active members of Stundist communities.¹⁹ The first records of Kherson Stundists mention a seventeen-year old Jewish boy named Israel who 'had been invited to join Stunda and baptized into the new faith' and followed 'loyally everywhere' a leader of the Ukrainian Stundo-Baptists, Ivan Riaboshapka. Riaboshapka baptized this Jewish boy, who became one of the first Jews converted to the Baptist faith.²⁰ Another Jew, Joseph (Ios'ka) Zeeserman, a pub-owner in the village of Chaplinka (the province of Kiev) assisted another leader of the Ukrainian Stundists, Gerasim Balaban. The local Stundists and their co-religionists from neighbouring villages used Zeeserman's tavern for 'Stundist agitation' among peasants who visited it.²¹

The Orthodox missionary organisation of Kherson diocese in its report for the year 1887-88 described the proselytising activities of converted Jews, who became 'zealot Stundist preachers.' The Orthodox missionaries complained about 'one unknown Jew

Podolia and Volynia), by 1893 in the province of Kiev alone between 5,500 and 6,000 Stundists lived in 200 localities. See in: RGIA, f.1276, op.17, d.189 (1911), l.88.

¹⁶ RGIA, f.1263, op.1, d.4868, l.138ob. According to his report, in 1890 the Stundist movement in the province of Kiev had increased by 131 members and comprised 5,002 activists. The governor noted an expansion of Stundism in 18 new localities of the province as well. The Orthodox clergy reported the figure of 4,681 Stundists the same year, i.e. 320 people less than the police detected. According to the report of the General Governor of the South Western Region (which included the provinces of Kiev, Podolia and Volynia), by 1893 in the province of Kiev alone lived between 5,500 and 6,000 Stundists in 200 localities. See in: RGIA, f.1276, op.17, d.189 (1911), l.88.

¹⁷ RGIA, f.1284, op.241, d.181. Calculations based on the material from: RGIA, f.821, op.133, d.21, l.275ob.-277ob.

¹⁸ Episkop Alexii [Dorodnitsyn], *Materialy dlia istorii religiozno-ratsionalisticheskogo dvizhenia na iuge Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX-go veka* Kazan' 1908: 174.

¹⁹ 'Izvestiia o shtundizme,' *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie*, 1876, No.1, 810-1.

²⁰ *Kievskaya starina*, 1884, N 10, p.316-7.

²¹ *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (Kiev, 1884), vol. 1, 192.

who was preaching Stundism' in the village of Izhitskoe (Tiraspol' district) in March 1888. According to another report 'in the small village of Soldatskoie of Novoukrainskii district a Jewish preacher, who had been converted from Judaism to Orthodox Christianity before joining the 'Stunda', delivered purely Stundist sermons for local peasants.'²²

The Russian secret police traced the dangerous relationship between Jews and Ukrainian peasants from the first Stundist meetings in the 1860s and 1870s. Famous revolutionary populists (both of Jewish and Russian origin) such as L. Deich, I. Fesenko, and E. Breshko-Breshkovskaia tried to organise revolutionary propaganda among sectarians, but their efforts came to nothing. In February 1888, Lazarev and Drovogub, two revolutionary populists, tried to settle among the Stundists from Zvenigorodka district and propagate socialist ideas among them. They were unable, however, to influence the peasant evangelicals because the police arrested them immediately after their arrival in the Ukrainian village.²³

In the police materials Jews were linked to conspiratorial activities involving religious dissidents in other cases as well. In 1875 the Jewish populist Lev Deich lived with Tavrida Molokans and unsuccessfully tried to propagate socialist ideas among the members of this sect.²⁴ Other revolutionary Jews attempted to do this among the Kherson and Kiev Stundist peasants during 1874-75. The most alarming case of Jewish involvement was the Chigirin conspiracy of 1877, when at least three Jewish intellectuals – Lev Deich, Anna Rozenshtein and Mark Natanson – took part in an organisation of the peasant movement in the province of Kiev.²⁵ The Russian police discovered these connections first, but the Orthodox clergy and Russian conservative press used this information about the collaboration of Jews and Stundists for their ideological campaign against the evangelical peasants. The Jewish theme contributed to the construction of the anti-Russian image of the first Russian Stundists, who were Ukrainian peasants by origin.²⁶

Because of the Jewish revolutionaries' involvement in socialist propaganda among Stundist peasants, the police were very suspicious of any contact between them and religious dissidents. Sometimes local literate Jews composed letters for Stundist peasants who had problems with grammatically correct writing. Despite the fact that such Jews were not engaged in socialist activism, the police still persecuted them. In March 1891, the administration of Kiev province submitted a request for the exile of Leiba Itskov Portnoi from Vasil'kov district. The local Stundists (who called themselves 'evangelical Baptists') from the villages of Romashki, Ol'shanitsa and Teleshovka (in Vasil'kov district) sent letters to the Russian Minister of Interior asking that they be allowed to hold their religious meetings for worship. When the police checked these letters, it turned out that the 'Stundist petition' and letters were composed and hand-written by the local Jewish 'resident' Leiba Portnoi and his twenty-one-year old son, Nekheim. On 29 March 1891, Portnoi was exiled by the police to Radomysl in the western part of the Russian Empire. According to the police papers, Portnoi was punished 'because Jews writing for Stundists was considered very

²² 'Otchet Odesskogo Bratstva Sv. Apostola Andreia Pervozvannogo za 1887-88 g. *Khersonskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1889, No. 4, 115.

²³ GARF, f.102, op.88 (1890), l.1ob.

²⁴ L.Deich, *Za poveka* Moscow 1926: 60, 66-7, 110-31, 134-5.

²⁵ Erich Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Russia* Cambridge 1995: 139.

²⁶ See: I. Strel'bitskii, *Kratkii ocherk shtundizma i svod tekstov, napravennykh k ego oblicheniyu* Odessa 1893: 17,22,198; Compare with other publications: 'Kommunisticheskaya propaganda v Rossii,' *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1890, No. 106, 2; 'Sotsialisticheskaya propaganda shtundizma,' *ibid.*, 1890, No. 183, 2; 'Stunda i eya protivogosudarstvennyi kharakter,' *Russkoe slovo*, 1895, No. 107, 1-2.

undesirable, especially since an unemployed Jewish person [without certain profession] composed various petitions and documents for [the ignorant local peasants].²⁷

The police records from the 1870s until the February Revolution of 1917 show the unusually tolerant attitudes of Stundists towards Jews. While the Orthodox Ukrainian peasants participated in the infamous anti-Semitic ‘pogroms’ of 1881 and 1905, the Stundist peasants not only avoided any violence against their Jewish neighbours, but also tried to help them and invited them to their meetings for worship.²⁸

The expectation of the Millennium and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ also explains the new and more tolerant attitudes of the radical peasant evangelicals such as the Maliovanty towards the Jews. The first followers of Kondrat Maliovanets tried to preach to the Jews about the Millennium. Like all the groups of the Radical Reformation, they considered the conversion of the Jews to Christianity as the main condition for the beginning of the Millennium. One Maliovanets, a peasant from the district of Vasil’kovka, visited on a regular basis the synagogue in the town of Belaia Tserkva from September 1891 to March 1892. He preached to the Jews about Maliovanets and the Millennium. But the local police stopped proselytising activities of this Maliovanets, and eventually sent him to the Kiev mental asylum.²⁹

The most confusing for the police was a case of the ‘Spiritual-Biblical Brotherhood’ in Elisavetgrad (Kherson province) because both Jewish intellectuals and peasant Stundists participated in the activities of this organisation. At the end of 1888, the Russian secret police submitted its report with an analysis of the issues of the local periodical of the Russian Orthodox Church, published in Kherson. Police officers paid special attention to information regarding the anti-sectarian St Andrew Brotherhood of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox correspondent complained of the activities of the Jewish ‘Spiritual-Biblical Brotherhood,’ which involved Orthodox Christians and Stundist peasants. In the debates of the Orthodox missionaries with Stundists, he wrote, ‘those Jews took the Stundist side and supported the sectarians in everything.’ A police agent noted in his report a fragment from the Orthodox publication about the active participation of Jews in the Stundist meetings in Elisavetgrad area. He cited a sentence in this publication describing how ‘during a meeting one pale Jew solemnly argued that the present day Orthodox Christian Church did not resemble the original Christ’s Church of the first century AD and that Jesus Christ would drive out the

²⁷ Tsentral’nyi derzhavnyi istorichnyi arkhiv Ukrainy (hereafter – TsDIAU), f. 442, op.620, d. 22, p.1-3ob. As John Klier noted the Russian Orthodox Church was concerned about the risk of ‘Judaizing’ by peasants exposed to Jewish religious life and cultural influences. This concern of the Orthodox Church was translated into law in 1825. See John Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the ‘Jewish Question’ in Russia* Illinois 1986: 166.

²⁸ This happened with the peasants of Zvenigorodka district in April 1882. TsDIAU, f.442, op.832, d.126 (1882), l.1.

²⁹ Ivan A. Sikorskii, ‘Psikhopaticheskaya epidemia 1892 goda v Kievskoi gubernii,’ Ivan A. Sikorskii, *Sbornik nauchno-literaturnykh statei... V 5-ti knigakh.* (Kiev, 1900), vol. 5, 78; *Privetstvie Russkomu narodu ot Kondrata Maliovanogo* Moscow, 1907: 10, 11-2. For Ivan Sikorskii’s influence on Russian psychiatry see Irina Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius: A Cultural History of Psychiatry in Russia, 1880-1930* Baltimore 2002: esp. 136-9. Compare with the confusing picture of these events in the recent article by Daniel Beer, ‘The Medicalization of Religious Deviance in the Russian Orthodox Church (1880-1905),’ *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Summer 2004, Vol. 5, No. 3, 451-82. Beer obviously dismissed original documents about the movement of Maliovanets. Moreover, he mistakenly treated the Maliovanty as the Old Believers and called their leader not Kondrat, but Vitalii.

Russian people from their new churches as he had done before with the Jews in Jerusalem.³⁰

In response to requests from the administration of the Orthodox Church, the police began their own investigation. In December 1881 the head of the local police in Kherson noted the activities of Iakov (Iankel') Mikhelev Gordin, a Jewish resident from Vitebsk, who had organised 'the Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood' in Elisavetgrad. In fact, Iakov Gordin pioneered the efforts of liberal Jewish intellectuals to create organisations for a cultural dialogue with Christian dissidents of the southern Russian Empire. His society particularly targeted the Stundist peasants.

Gordin is an interesting figure in the history of Russian and American Jewry. He was born on 1 May 1853 in Mirgorod in the Ukrainian province of Poltava to a poor Jewish family. Although he did not receive a formal college education, he was a talented student of both Jewish and Russian literature. Since 1870 he had been contributing essays and articles to various Russian periodicals. During the 1870s he worked as a farm labourer, longshoreman, travelling actor, teacher and journalist. He became a permanent author for such periodicals, as *Zaria*, *Nedelia*, and *Elizavetgradskii vestnik*, where he worked as an editor as well, and *Odesskie novosti*, where he published under the pseudonym 'Ivan Koliuchii' (Ivan the Sting). During his travels he met different people and visited Stundist meetings in the Ukrainian countryside. The police noted that Gordin was a close friend of the revolutionary populists who visited Elisavetgrad where he had lived since the late 1870s. He even published a novel 'Liberal-Narodnik,' in which he described his personal experience and his meetings with religious dissenters and populists.³¹

In 1877 Iakov Gordin invited all the progressively minded Jews of Elisavetgrad to establish a Jewish Bible society in the city. This society would unite those who 'denied all religious dogmas and ceremonies and acknowledged only the moral doctrines of the Bible.' Its members rejected 'all mercantile pursuits, and endeavoured to live by physical labour, primarily by agriculture.'³² The main goals of this society were the religious education of Jews, the transformation of Jews into farmers living on land, and the prevention of their further practice of usury and financial speculation.

Under pressure from the Orthodox clergy, the police reported on Gordin's old connections in Elisavetgrad with the revolutionary circle of the 'People's Will' (a populist organisation involved in the assassination of the tsar in 1881). The police also confirmed Gordin's connections with the Ukrainian Stundists, who often visited his 'Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood.' Moreover, the police learned that he lectured to Stundists on the political economy of Karl Marx. In May of 1890 a Kherson police officer tracked down revolutionaries, such as Galushkin (Teraspol'skii), Gaevskii, Afanasii Mikhalevich and Ivan Basovskii 'who came to Elisavetgrad, in particular, to

³⁰ A report of the Spiritual Affairs Department to Police Department authorised an investigation about Jewish involvement in Stundist activities: GARF, f. 102, op.84 (1888), d. 454, l. 2, l.2 ob.; RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.97. See the article: 'O polozhenii sektantstva v Khersonskoi eparkhii,' *Khersonskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1888, No. 21, 315-6.

³¹ See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidor Singer New York 1904: Vol.6, 46; S.M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, Transl. by I.Friedlaender Philadelphia 1918: Vol. 2, 333-335; Kalman Marmor, *Yaakov Gordin* New York 1953, Nora Levin, *While Messiah Tarried: Jewish Socialist Movements, 1871-1917* New York 1977: 143-6; Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* Cambridge, Mass., 1981: 56-7; John Klier, 'From Elisavetgrad to Broadway: The Strange Odyssey of Iakov Gordon,' in *Extending the Borders of Russian History: Essays in Honor of Alfred J. Rieber*, ed. Marsha Siefert Budapest 2003: 113-25.

³² Quoted from: S.M. Dubnow, Op.cit., vol.2, 333.

propagate revolutionary ideas among Stundists.’ All these Populists were Jews! According to the police reports, ‘all revolutionary efforts to collaborate with Stundist peasants turned out to be a failure.’ That was why the disappointed Populists decided to combine their propagandist efforts among Stundists with their activities among local Jews, who in 1877 founded ‘an organization for Jewish artisans’ (the above-mentioned ‘Brotherhood’ with Gordin, Zlatopol’skii and Portnoi as their leaders). The Jewish populists even used the meetings of the ‘Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood’ for their readings of Marx, Ferdinand Lassale and other Western socialists. They sent their own agents -- Vasili Gorbunov, Vladimir Tsenkovskii and Pavel Levandovskii - - to the Stundist meetings and ‘by presenting Jesus Christ as the first socialist in world history, they tried to persuade the Stundists to quit the sect and join the revolutionary movement’.³³

But the religious Jewish ‘Brotherhood’ and its leader Gordin did not approve of these populist efforts. Members of the organisation moved to the countryside and organised their own community on communist principles, following Lev Tolstoi’s ideas of non-violence. Gordin’s supporters rejected the violence and terrorism of the Populists and distanced themselves from revolutionary radicalism. The activists of the society, including Gordin himself, visited cities with a significant Jewish population, such as Odessa. They promoted ideas of cultural dialogue between Jews and Christians, and, for the Jewish community, agricultural activity and non-violence in politics.³⁴

The Jewish members of the ‘Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood’ also distanced themselves from the local traditionalist Jewish community. As the governor of Kherson province reported in January 1885, the local administration had already permitted this society to establish its own separate synagogue and elect its own rabbi in July 1884. The Ministry of the Interior initially supported this society because it rejected ‘Jewish nationalism and fanatical religiosity’,³⁵ and on 8 December 1888 the Ministry of Justice agreed to the Bible Brotherhood’s request to establish a register of births, separate from other Elisavetgrad Jews. This organisation also demonstrated its non-traditional Jewish character by attempting to appear more ‘civilised’ and ‘Russified.’ Jewish members of this society kept all their records ‘exclusively’ in the Russian language, and they rejected circumcision, prenuptial agreements and other old Jewish traditions as ‘barbarous customs.’³⁶

In 1888 they elected the founder of their ‘Brotherhood,’ Iakov Gordin, as their new rabbi. They asked the local administration for special privileges for their agricultural community and demonstrated their innovative practices in the distribution of goods, mutual assistance, rejection of traditional circumcision and permission for marriage between Christians and Jews according to the ancient Hebrew rituals described in the Old Testament. Kalenik Kozhemiachenko and Larion Dragulenko, two Ukrainian Stundists, both former Orthodox peasants, participated in the meetings and followed the rules and rituals established by the Brotherhood. The marriage of Evgenii Gar, the Russian Orthodox doctor, and Rosa Fainzilberg, the Jewish obstetrician, according to the rituals of Brotherhood demonstrated the ideal of this society – the rapprochement

³³ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter – RGIA), f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.36.

³⁴ RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), 38ob. The police especially mentioned Lev Tolstoi’s influence on Russian Jews.

³⁵ The Russian administration praised the goals of the new society, which ‘attempted to eradicate the coarse fanaticism and religious delusions in the Jewish masses.’ RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.3-4ob.

³⁶ RGIA, f.1405, op.89, d.2269, l.1-1ob., 3-3ob.

of Christians and Jews. Members of the Brotherhood declared that their main goal was ‘the spiritual and moral renovation of the Jewish religion, and introducing Jews to Christian teaching.’³⁷

At first, the Russian police permitted the activities of the Jewish Brotherhood because it did not appear to be a dangerous organisation, especially after its conflict with the Jewish revolutionaries and its opposition to terrorism. According to police reports, the Brotherhood tried to create a version of Christian Tolstoianism among Elisavetgrad Jews and brought the pacifist evangelical groups, such as Stundists, into their improvised Judeo-Christian community. Only the persistent demands of the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church and conservative leaders of the Jewish community provoked police persecutions of the new Jewish agricultural community in the Elisavetgrad district. Police agents reported that the Jewish members of the ‘Brotherhood’ settled in the Ukrainian countryside and tried to establish contacts with local Stundist peasants ‘without any terrorist goals.’³⁸ But new cases of socialist propaganda among the Ukrainian Stundists of Kherson and Kiev provinces during 1888-1891, and the disclosed connections of Evgenii Gar and Iakov Gordin with peasant evangelicals changed the police’s attitude.

A police detective noted in 1890 the unusual popularity of Stundist ideas among young radical Jewish intellectuals such as Iakov Gordin, who visited numerous Stundist meetings in Kherson province. According to the police, these young Jews were influenced by populist ideas of socialism. As a result, they decided to combine the evangelical ideas of social justice with a communist utopia, but without political violence. Therefore, they tried to organise communist agricultural colonies in localities with a strong Stundist influence. On 18 June 1890, a police officer informed his superiors that in November of 1889 ‘prominent members’ of the ‘Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood’ established an ‘agricultural colony on communist principles in Glodossy [a famous centre of Ukrainian Stundism], got acquainted with local peasants, invited these peasants to their houses and read to them the Gospels with their own Jewish interpretation.’³⁹ The members of the ‘Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood’ followed Lev Tolstoi’s interpretation of Christianity as well. Along with the Bible and socialist literature, they began to read and discuss Tolstoi’s work. They even tried to put Tolstoi’s ideas into practice in their colony. In 1889 they opened a building for the distribution of agricultural products among members who were in need and among local peasants. Simultaneously, the ‘Biblical Brothers’ used this building for reading

³⁷ GARF, f.102, op.87 (1889), d. 606, l.20, 61ob., 65ob., 71ob.

³⁸ See about Stundist pacifism and rejection of revolutionary violence and terror in ‘the manuscript, written by Timofei A. Zaiats’ published in: *Materialy k istorii i izucheniyu russkogo sektantstva i raskola*, ed. Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich. Vol. 3. St. Petersburg 1910: 15-6. Russian priests worried about the positive example Stundist communities represented for Ukrainian and Russian peasants because ‘sectarians reject violence and live like members of one family and in this regard they serve as an exemplary model of brotherly relations, help each other by advice and in a material way, and in their contacts they are tender and cordial.’ *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, 1899, July-August, 103.

³⁹ GARF, f. 102, op.87 (1889), d. 606, p. 4, 11, 19-21, 23-4, 57-57ob. In his report this officer noted, ‘in November 1889 Isaac Finerman, a prominent member of the Jewish society bought two peasant houses, rented 20 desiatins of the land in the village of Glodossy in Elisavetgrad district, settled there with like-minded Jews having in mind the propagation of their religious anti-government notions among the adherents of the Stundist persuasion who densely inhabit this area. Finerman’s wife, Khana Liubarskaia, Antolii Butkevich, Mark Goldfeld, Kelman Galitskii and his wife Roza Kogan, Izik Ostry and Isaia Burshtein, who followed after Isaac Finerman, were the most active propagandists among the settlers of this Jewish colony.’ See also memoirs of the Russian Jew who converted to the Baptist faith and emigrated later to England: Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Tsar and Queen Victoria: The Experiences of a Russian Reformer* London 1895: 109-111.

and discussions with the peasants about the Bible and Tolstoi's books. The Glodossy Stundists became active participants in these discussions. As the police officer noted, the practical peasants liked their new neighbours because the Jewish colonists helped them with medication and with 'various advice of a medical and agricultural character.' At the same time, the colonists disseminated the evangelical literature and tried to influence the Stundist peasants, as one officer noted, in 'a direction that was unreliable from the political point of view.'⁴⁰

In August 1891, after a special investigation, the Department of Police came to a final conclusion about the negative results of the 'Biblical Brothers' activity among the Stundists. The police had confirmed the spread of the socialist ideas among the religious radicals. As a result, they closed the 'Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood' on 7 October 1891 and cancelled the election of a new rabbi for a new synagogue established by Gordin's adherents. Moreover, the police agents began a secret surveillance of Gordin and ordered his arrest in January 1892. But the police missed their chance. Gordin and his sixty followers had immigrated to the United States a year earlier and had become American citizens. Nevertheless, the secret police ordered frontier-guards all along the Russian border to arrest Iakov Gordin as 'a dangerous criminal', if he appeared, even if he was carrying a US passport.⁴¹

Iakov Gordin, as far as we know, never returned to Russia.⁴² Gordin, who was convinced that 'the only remedy for Jewish persecution was economic reconstruction,' tried to establish a Tolstoian-type agricultural colony in America for Russian Jews. But his attempts failed. Eventually he settled in New York City and became a famous Yiddish playwright and writer for the local radical press. Until his last days, he played an important role among New York's socialists and kept the old traditions of his Spiritual Biblical Brotherhood alive among Russian-speaking Jews. In his works and lectures he resisted any kind of nationalism, including Zionism. He also rejected political violence (even in the name of socialism). Gordin remained convinced that the Judeo-Christian ideal of the Bible pointed to the friendship of all nations, rather than to the superior position of one particular ethnic group.⁴³

In 1882 the young Jewish intellectuals in Odessa made another attempt to establish a cultural dialogue between Jews and Christians. Iakov Priluker, a Jewish teacher from Odessa, followed Gordin's example and organised the group of 'New Israel,' which was open to both Christians and Jews. As Semion Dubnow has noted, 'New Israel' followed only the teachings of Moses 'and rejected the Talmud, the dietary laws, the rite of circumcision, and traditional forms of worship; the day of rest was transferred from Saturday to Sunday; the Russian language was declared to be the 'native' tongue of the Jews and made obligatory in everyday life; usury and similar distasteful pursuits were forbidden.'⁴⁴ As with the case of Gordin's group, a majority of the Jews did not support the idea of cultural dialogue. According to contemporaries, as well as historians, the Russian Jews opposed Gordin's and Priluker's experiments. They accused Gordin and Priluker of 'seeking to win from the Russian government those equal rights denied to the Jews collectively.' As conservative critics in the Jewish

⁴⁰ RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.118-9ob. During the 1880s these Christian Jews even tried to establish a Baptist colony in the Crimea. See: Christopher M. Clark, *The Politics of Conversion: Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia 1728-1941* Oxford 1995: 246.

⁴¹ GARF, f.102, op.87 (1889), d. 606, l. 60-1, 65-6, 71, 73, 90-1.

⁴² See a different opinion: John Klier, 'From Elisavetgrad to Broadway,' 113-25.

⁴³ For his socialist ideas see Ezekiel Lifschutz, 'Jacob Gordin's Proposal to Establish an Agricultural Colony,' *The Jewish Experience in America*, Ed. by Abraham J. Karp New York 1969, vol. 4, 253-64; Nora Levin, *Op.cit.*, 143-5.

⁴⁴ S.M.Dubnow, *Op.cit.*, vol.2, 334.

community argued, 'reform of Jewish religious practice would be accepted by the masses [of Jews] only if based on the Talmud and sanctioned by established rabbis.'⁴⁵ After the pogroms of the 1880s, Russian Jews became preoccupied by the problems of physical survival. A mass emigration from Russia was a more realistic solution for the majority than the utopian projects of Jewish-Christian communities. Only a radical minority of Jewish intellectuals, who had been involved already in revolutionary activities of Russian intellectuals, joined Gordin's and Priluker's organisations. When the police stopped the activities of the 'New Israel' in Odessa at the end of the 1880s, Iakov Priluker emigrated to England, joined one of the local Protestant congregations, and devoted his life to Christian missionary activities among the Jews.

Attempts to establish new relations between Jews and evangelical peasants resulted in the conversion of some of these Jews to Christianity. As a result of this cultural dialogue with Russian evangelicals, a new movement began among young Jewish intellectuals, whom Russian contemporaries called 'New Testament Jews.' This movement converged with the evangelical movement of Ukrainian peasants and demonstrated again the international character of the religious revival, which only confused its outside observers. The participation of the Jews in the evangelical movement also influenced the peasant dissenters, who developed more tolerant and more cosmopolitan attitudes.

The most important representatives of the New Testament Jews were the members of the group established by Iosif Rabinovich in 1884 in Kishinev (Bessarabia). As the governor of Bessarabia reported to the Ministry of the Interior on 3 November eleven Jews from Kishinev requested permission to establish a community separate from the Old Testament Jews. Their community included the Jews who believed in Jesus Christ and the New Testament. Their leader, Iosif Rabinovich, entered a special Protestant theological seminary in Berlin (Germany), converted to Christianity, and was ordained as a 'Congregationalist minister' in March 1885. In Russia he prepared for the publication of four books about the Christian Jews and submitted the manuscript of these books to a censor. At the same time, he established connections between his 'New Testament Israelites' and local evangelicals and Orthodox Christians. The governor of Bessarabia supported his activities among Bessarabian Jews and asked his superior in St. Petersburg to satisfy Rabinovich's request for the official registration of his 'sect' and publication of his books. Rabinovich planned to expand the activities of the New Testament Jews to other provinces of the Russian Empire and to attract the young Jews to Christianity. Therefore he planned for a propagandist 'literature and special schools for Jews who would join Christianity.'⁴⁶

The Ministry of the Interior consulted the Holy Synod about Rabinovich's 'New Testament Israelites.' Meanwhile, the local Orthodox clergy and Kishinev landlords submitted their complaints about Rabinovich's activities among the peasant population of the province. According to these complaints, the movement of New Testament Jews 'recast all Christian principles in their own Jewish fashion,' and brought 'obvious German influences to the Russian countryside,' confusing the local Orthodox population. In their letters to the Holy Synod, Russian conservatives, who knew about his graduation from a German theological institution, treated Rabinovich as a German spy and portrayed him as 'the secret agent of German imperialism and the German Protestant Church.' The Holy Synod asked the police to stop the anti-

⁴⁵ S.M.Dubnow, *Op.cit.*, vol.2, 334.

⁴⁶ RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l.1, 11-11ob., 14-5, 16-7, 22-3. The detailed description of Rabinovich's plans is presented in a special police report 'The Religious Movement among the Jews in the South of Russia.' *Ibid.*, 1.45-83.

Russian activities of Rabinovich and his Jewish adherents. In 1886 the secret police began a special investigation of the case of the 'New Testament Israelites,' but found nothing criminal in Rabinovich's activities. Nevertheless, K. Pobedonostsev, the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, who was called by historians 'the symbol and the author of Alexander III's program of reaction,'⁴⁷ insisted on banning the New Testament Jews' movement in southern Russia. Pobedonostsev explained to the officials of the Ministry of the Interior that it was pointless to permit officially 'the activities of Rabinovich sect in the localities noted for the mass spread of Baptism and various rationalist sects like the Stundists.' According to Pobedonostsev, 'this sect promoted a new religious dissent among Russian citizens and their defection from Orthodoxy.' Therefore, he recommended that Rabinovich join the officially permitted Protestant church in Russia rather than establish a new sect. On 4 August 1886 the Holy Synod refused to grant Rabinovich's request and banned all his publications. Nevertheless, Rabinovich tried to persuade the local administration that his activities were legal. He stopped his contacts with the Stundist peasants and in December 1888, he wrote to the Minister of the Interior with an explanation of his intention to promote a rapprochement of Jews and Christians. He even agreed to register his sect with the police and to follow the rules and requirements of the Orthodox Church. But the Ministry and the Department of Police did not want to contradict the Holy Synod. The police were influenced by the scandalous rumours about Gordin and Priluker's Jewish organisations, and they feared new socialist and German propaganda among the peasants.⁴⁸

However, the police could not sever the ties of the New Israel sect of Rabinovich with the Stundists in Kishinev. During the 1890s, the Christian Jews and Russian and Ukrainian evangelicals received religious literature through the German co-religionists of Rabinovich. The Stundist peasants regularly visited meetings for worship in Rabinovich's house in Kishinev. Nikita Sharakhovich, one of the Russian followers of Rabinovich, played a prominent role in maintaining contacts with dissident peasants. In 1895 the local clergy complained to the governor of Bessarabia about new cases of defection from the Orthodox Church under the influence of the 'New Israel' and the Kishinev Stundists. As it turned out, all suspected Stundists, including Sharakhovich, were using the meeting house of Rabinovich for 'Stundist' propaganda among the local Orthodox peasants. In December 1895, the district court of Kishinev sentenced Sharakhovich and his co-religionists to imprisonment for their Stundist propaganda among Orthodox Christians. As we can see, during the 1890s, Kishinev, along with Odessa, became an important centre in the expansion of the evangelical movement among the rural population of southern Russia.⁴⁹

This movement connected the New Testament Jews, radical intellectuals, and peasant religious radicals in one mainstream of opposition to Russian Orthodoxy and to the tsarist administration as well. As it turned out, all these groups participated in the same 'eschatological' discourse, and shared the same belief concerning the end of 'this sinful world of social injustice' and the ultimate destiny of mankind. Socialists,

⁴⁷ James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* New York 1966: 439.

⁴⁸ RGIA, f. 821, op.8, d.345 (1884), l. 24, 34, 41-4, 47, 102-7ob. See also a biographical study of Rabinovich in English: Steven J. Zipperstein, 'Heresy, Apostasy, and the Transformation of Joseph Rabinovich,' *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, Ed. by Todd M. Endelman New York 1987: 206-31. Compare with Kai Kjaer-Hansen, *Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement* Edinburgh, 1995.

⁴⁹ RGIA, f. 796, op.176, d. 2145, l.1-8, 10-4.

radical evangelicals and New Testament Jews believed in the possibility of ‘a new human Paradise on Earth’ without exploitation and humiliation.⁵⁰ At the same time, all these radicals viewed the future society as a congregation of individuals, based on principles of moral purity and human dignity. According to their eschatological dreams, such a society would have no racial or ethnic hatred. This ideal attracted intellectual radical Jews, who took part in the Russian revolutionary movement and collaborated with peasant evangelicals as well.

Under the influence of different Western Christian missionary organisations some Russian Jews converted to Christianity. Moreover, the leaders of the local Ukrainian Stundists and Baptists, such as Riaboshapka and Balaban, invited Jews to join the evangelical movement and convert to the Baptist faith.⁵¹ The police worried about cases of Jewish conversion to Stundism and Baptism. For instance, from the 1880s to 1910s they followed closely the formation of the Jewish evangelical organisation in Odessa. Its agents analysed publications of the Jewish newspaper *Zions Freunde*, which concerned the activities of Jews who preached for the evangelical Christians. They found out that Isaac-Leon Rosenberg, an Odessa Jew, regularly preached evangelical sermons at the Stundist meetings for worship every Tuesday and Friday evening. During these meetings in 1908-1909, the police counted that forty Stundists usually visited the ‘meeting house with the Jewish preacher’ on 23 Kouznechnaya Street in downtown Odessa. As the police discovered, the Ukrainian Stundists and Baptists used to meet with local Jews in other meeting houses of Odessa as early as 1891.⁵²

The police documented the convergence of New Testament Jews and Stundo-Baptists. One police agent reported that the Jewish Baptist Christian community in Odessa had a ‘Jewish priest Rosenfeld who was preaching Christian sermons exclusively in Hebrew.’ The Russian administration worried about this Jewish involvement in the Christian sectarian movement, because ‘given the Jewish inclination to political intrigues, the Jewish intrusion in the Russian sectarian movement could turn these sectarians to an undesirable anti-Russian political direction.’ The administration of the Russian Orthodox Church informed the police about four Jewish Baptist ministers in southern Russia, but the police found only three -- Vladimir I. Melamed, Barukh N. Shapiro and Leon Rosenberg, who all served as Baptist preachers for local Stundo-Baptist communities. In addition, the police discovered that Rosenberg, a Jewish shopkeeper from Odessa, corresponded with another Christian Jew, Samuil Vilshenzon, an agent of the London Biblical Society, who sent money and literature to Jews and Stundists in the Odessa district.⁵³

⁵⁰ See this description in memoirs of different participants in the events such as the Ukrainian Stundist Tymophii Zaiats and New Testament Jew Iakov Priluker. The adherents of Lev Tolstoi, P.Biriukov, and V.Chertkov used their periodicals published abroad for promoting principles of religious toleration. They published letters and other materials about persecution of sectarians in Russia. The most active among Chertkov’s correspondents was the Ukrainian Stundist peasant, Tymofii Zaiats, who was exiled to Siberia for his non-Orthodox beliefs. In 1913 Anna Chertkova translated from Ukrainian into Russian, edited and published memoirs of T. Zaiats in Sytin’s magazine: ‘Zapiski Timofeia Zaitsa,’ *Golos minuvshogo*, 1913, No. 8, 152-76, No. 10, 149-74, No. 11, 162-93, No. 12, 168-83. Compare with: Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Tsar and Queen Victoria: The Experiences of a Russian Reformer* (London, 1895), 109-11.

⁵¹ Jaakoff Prelooker, *Under the Tsar and Queen Victoria*, 105ff.

⁵² Rosenberg was a respected bookseller in Odessa. According to his announcement he sold exclusively ‘Biblical spiritual-moral’ books. See: TsDIAU, f. 268, op.1, d.448 (March 19-November 3, 1909), 1.14, 16.

⁵³ TsDIAU, f. 268, op.1, d.448 (March 19-November 3, 1909), 1.17, 18-23ob.

In November 1902, in the village of Snegourovka (Vasil'kovka district of Kiev province), the police agents arrested a group of 'enthusiastic' Stundist peasants who were waiting for 'the works and performance of the Holy Spirit.' Among the 126 spectators of this 'performance' at least two were Jewish. One of them was 'a Jewish resident of town Korsun' (Kanev district, the province of Kiev) Berko Ievsei Gershkov Ostrovskii, who called himself a Stundist and who had been arrested as a Stundist on April 10 [1902];' the other was 'a subject of the Austrian crown, a baptized Jew, Piotr Kramar', who had converted to Greek Roman Christianity (Uniate Church) from Judaism.' As it turned out, these Jews were connected to the New Testament Jewish movement, and they brought new religious literature and money to local Stundists.⁵⁴

The Orthodox press and police shared the fear of foreign (Jewish and German) influences on the Orthodox peasants. All observers noted that the Stundists were different 'ethnographically' from their Orthodox peasant neighbours.⁵⁵ In their cultural protest, the Stundists preferred to associate with German colonists or even Jewish city dwellers rather than with their Orthodox peasant neighbours. 'The German colonists live much better than the Orthodox peasants,' Stundists told the Orthodox missionary, 'therefore we prefer to live like the Germans and that is why we join the German nation.'⁵⁶ They cut off all relations with the Orthodox peasant community, which they associated with 'heavy drinking, corruption, theft, violence, adultery and sloth.' They used the model of the German colonists' lifestyle to construct their new social identity.⁵⁷ The denial of their local Ukrainian identity was so evident among the Ukrainian Stundists, that some authors called them anti-Ukrainian:

The Stundists removed all elements of Ukrainian folk culture from their life. They changed their morals, customs, character and songs. Even their language changed – it became a strange mixture of Ukrainian, German, Polish and literary Russian. Stundists suppressed any expression of the folk culture – Ukrainian songs, dances, customs and dress. There is no sound of a folk song or sign of traditional Ukrainian folk rituals in the localities where Stundists live. It looks as if the Stundists aspire to become a separate nation, distinct from their Orthodox peasant neighbors.⁵⁸

The denial of their peasant past and their traditional Orthodox peasant identity became the main component of the 'Stundist reformation' in the Ukrainian countryside. Stundists changed more than just their lifestyle. To contemporaries they looked more like European farmers who tolerated Jews than anti-Semitic Russian Orthodox peasants.⁵⁹

This radical denial of the Orthodox peasant identity reached a peak among the Stundist followers of 'charismatic prophet' Kondrat Maliovanyi during the 1890s. In

⁵⁴ GARF, f.102, op.226, d.12, part 5, p.35; TsDIAU, f. 275, op.1, d.1 (1902), 1.89-89ob.; *ibid.*, f.1597, op.1, d.7, 1.8-8ob.

⁵⁵ Alexii, *Materialy*, 69, 70; see also about the stereotypes of Stundists in: GARF, f. 102, 3 d-vo, op. 88, d.281, 1.1-2.

⁵⁶ On the ethnographic differences of the Stundist peasants see *Ekaterinoslavskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1890, No. 13, 342-343.

⁵⁷ Alexii, *Materialy*, 305.

⁵⁸ *Ekaterinoslavskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, 1889, No. 23, 658-9. The observers noted that these changes took place during ten years, from 1878 to 1888.

⁵⁹ RGIA, f.1284, op.222 (1902-1904), d.29, 1.31, 35.

their expectation of the Millennium of Jesus Christ, the Maliovantsy stopped working and changed their diet, dress and hairstyle. They replaced all peasant aspects of their everyday life with practices that they had associated with an urban middle-class existence. They wore the fashionable dress of city residence. They used decorations, perfumes and make-up, which were unusual for Ukrainian peasants. Rather than following a peasant diet, they ate more sweets, candies and chocolate, and they drank tea and ‘other non-peasant beverages.’ They changed their manner of speaking, trying to avoid peasant words and imitate the language of the literate elite.⁶⁰ Members of the investigating committee discovered in May of 1892 that followers of Maliovannyi had expensive food in their houses and were dressed in fashionable European dress. A community of the Maliovantsy paid a large sum of 140 rubles to Jewish merchants for a set of expensive clothes for their community. As Vasili Skvortsov, one of the members of the investigating committee, noted, ‘The dissenters threw away their national costumes as peasant emblems of their former slavery and labor; their new dresses served as the symbols of their anticipated new forms of the better social life and of their expected privileged position in the kingdom of their ‘Redeemer,’ which will be established for them here on Earth rather than in Heaven.’⁶¹

Ukrainian dissenters rejected both their peasant and Ukrainian identities because they were associated with exploitation and humiliation. Denying the national principle in the construction of their identity, they admitted Jews as ‘Christian converts’ into their community. By doing so, the dissenters invoked one of the conditions for the Advent of Jesus Christ – the conversion of Jews to Christianity. Some Jewish intellectuals responded to the invitation of the Ukrainian evangelicals and joined their Christian movement.

The Orthodox authors always pointed to ‘the Jews who exploited our countryside and our peasants in particular.’ These authors argued that Jews incited the Stundist peasants against the Russian Church and the Russian state, and pushed them in the direction of ‘communist revolution.’⁶² But police documents show a different picture of the relations between Stundist peasants and the New Testament Jews, that of friendship and mutual assistance. Educated Jewish intellectuals tried to help the Russian and Ukrainian peasants in their search for a better life and social justice. Evangelical religion and the revolutionary movement created a common ground between the two groups of outsiders in Russian society: Jews and poor Ukrainian peasants.

⁶⁰ See I. Sikorskii, *Op. cit.*, 52-4 (A description of 1892), and RGIA report of the Kiev General Governor (of 1895).

⁶¹ Vasili Skvortsov, ‘Novoshtundism,’ *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1892, No. 227.

⁶² P. Petrushevskii, ‘O shtundizme...,’ *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (Kiev, 1884), vol. 1, 187. See also: I. Strel’bitskii, *Kratkii ocherk shtundizma i svod tekstov, napravlennykh k ego oblicheniyu* (Odessa, 1893), 17, 22, 198; Compare with other publications: ‘Kommunisticheskaya propaganda v Rossii,’ *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 1890, No. 106, 2; ‘Sotsialisticheskaya propaganda shtundizma,’ *ibid.*, 1890, No. 183, 2; ‘Stunda i eya protivogosudarstvennyi kharakter,’ *Russkoe slovo*, 1895, No. 107, 1-2.