

satisfaction for their religious needs. They have thus been led into forming for themselves as much of an organization as the many legal shackles have permitted them to form.

Organization and Form of Worship.—The highest office of this very elementary organization is that of elders or presbyters, who are chosen by the communities, and are, as far as possible, men of age and experience. Their principal duty is to lead the public services, and to preside at marriages and funerals. They need not have oratorical talent or deep theological learning, but they must be well versed in the Scriptures and be able to explain them. Each elder has supervision over one or two communities, often over a whole district. They visit the villages of their district where their brethren are scattered, and take charge of the funds which are given them for the sick and needy. One important duty is to confer frequently with the presbyters of other districts, and also to act as intermediaries between the brethren who are imprisoned or exiled and their families. We can see how much tact and prudence it requires on their part not to excite the suspicions of the police.

Next in importance to the elders are the deacons, who are generally younger men full of zeal, but at the same time men of discretion. The deacons have charge of the Sabbath-schools, and preside at the regular services in the absence of the presbyter. They keep the records of births, marriages, and deaths, and attend to the meting out of assistance to the aged and sick.

The elders and deacons do not form a clergy distinct from the people.* They work for their living just as their brethren do, usually tilling the soil. They receive no salaries, simply their traveling expenses when they make trips in behalf of their congregations. In the beginning the Stundists thought to have more of an organization, with lists of the members regularly recorded and periodical meetings of the elders and deacons, a common treasury, etc.; but all these features, which give unity and cohesion to a movement, were broken up by persecution. Every movement of their leaders was watched, and as soon as their plans were known by the priests or the police, measures were taken to thwart them. If they attempted to appoint an elder or deacon, he was immediately ordered by the civil authorities to another district, and not even permitted to remain there any length of time. Often the lists containing the names of the members were seized by the police, and being thus in their power, we know the treatment which, at a moment's notice, they could be forced to undergo.

But despite these difficulties, the movement has preserved a remarkable unity. Some inevitable divisions have occurred, which nothing but the existence of one recognized head would have been able to prevent. The different congregations keep in communication as well as possible with each other. The head men exchange visits as often as they can, and keep

* The elders usually receive the laying on of hands, but not always; for the persecutions of late have been so bitter, that none of these functions could be regularly administered.