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EKATERINOSLAV MOLOKANS AND DOUKHOBORS

Excerpt from Part II.

Reasons for the Unhindered Spread of Doukhoborism Preached by Kolesnikov

How did the Kolesnikov family, as propagandists, escape government persecution, and how did the followers of Siluan Kolesnikov and his sons grow unhindered into a separate religious society, so that only at the end of the 18th century do we find the first examples of government punishment of Ekaterinoslav Doukhobors? This question would be harder to answer if we did not know that Siluan Kolesnikov preached and bequeathed to his followers one of the most practical truths. He taught the Ekaterinoslav Doukhobors to outwardly conform to the regulations of the church and government, no matter in which province or country they lived: in Poland, to submit to Polish authorities and the Catholic religion; in Russia, to the Orthodox religion; in Turkey and Persia, to the Muslim religion. Only Kapustin later forbade this to the Ekaterinoslav Doukhobors who had resettled to the "Milky Waters," fearing that external stimulation of feelings through rituals might tempt some Doukhobors and lead them to apostasy. This is why, among other reasons, the first traces of government punishment of Ekaterinoslav Doukhoborism are found only at the end of the 18th century, specifically in 1791, when some careless Doukhobors were tried by the Ekaterinoslav governor Kakhovsky for openly preaching against authority, and in 1799, when 31 people were shackled and exiled to Yekaterinburg for life for publicly preaching that spiritual authority in the state was unnecessary, to work in the mines and perform the heaviest labor, "so that, as stated in the imperial decree, the Doukhobors, rejecting the higher authority established by God on earth, might feel through this what it means to have authorities established by God for the protection of the good and the punishment of evildoers."