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CANONISATION OF NEW MARTYRS AND CONFESSORS OF THE 20th CENTURY IN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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‘Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you
and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven,
for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.’
(Mt 5:11–12)

At present, the Russian Orthodox Church faces a serious evaluation of the history of the Church in the 20th century. As it is known, the 20th century for the Russian Orthodox Church was a tragic one. The communist regime realised not only mass physical and spiritual terror, but created falsifications and myths of history as well. One of the main ideals of the communist regime was the extermination of Christian faith and the aspersion of religious practice. Therefore one of the essential steps in the direction of renewal of historical truth was the canonisation of the victims – the new martyrs and confessors – of communist terror in the Local Councils of the Moscow Patriarchy. Similarly, saints have always served as examples of religious practice. That would serve as well as a reminder about the goals of human life, the value of life and the highest example for respect towards a person. In the first part of the article, the bloodiest pages of history of the Russian Church are examined, when the Bolshevik, coming into power, started the persecution of the Orthodox Church. The article observes the persecutions commenced by the Soviet state in the 1918–1941 period, as during this time the most ruthless persecutions took place, and the martyrs of this age form the greatest proportion in number within the body of holy new martyrs and confessors of the 20th century. Next, the relevance of studying the archive documents and the methodology of analysis are examined, as the process of canonisation is based on the study and analysis of historical facts; the conformity of the person being canonised is rigorously examined. The second part of the article reviews the very process of canonisation as well as the chronological sequence in accordance with the decisions of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. Similarly, the decisions of the Synod regarding the veneration practice of saints are attached. The end of the article focuses on the tasks that derive from the fact of canonisation.

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Heiligsprechung der Neumärtyrer und Bekenner des 20. Jahrhunderts in der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche: Die russisch-orthodoxe Kirche steht heute vor der Aufgabe, ihre Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert angemessen zu bewerten. Wie allgemein bekannt, war dieses Jahrhundert für die russisch-orthodoxe Kirche eine äußerst tragische Zeitspanne. Während der kommunistischen Herrschaft wurden nicht nur unzählige Menschen körperlich und seelisch terrorisiert, sondern auch die Geschichte gefälscht und neue Mythen geschaffen. Eines der wichtigsten Ziele der kommunistischen Staatsmacht war, den christlichen Glauben zu vernichten und die Glaubensausübung zu verhindern. Aus diesem Grunde wurden als unerlässlicher Schritt in Richtung einer Erneuerung der historischen Authentizität Opfer des kommunistischen Terrors – die Neumärtyrer und Bekenner – vom Obersten Kirchenrat des Patriarchats zu Moskau heiliggesprochen. Heiligen dienten immer schon als Vorbilder in der Glaubensausübung. Gleichzeitig wurde damit auf würdige Weise an die Ziele menschlichen Seins, den Wert des menschlichen Lebens und höchste Ehrfurcht vor dem jeweiligen Menschen gemahnt. Der erste Teil des Beitrags schildert die blutigsten Tage der Geschichte der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche, als die Bolschewiken nach ihrer Machtergreifung mit der Verfolgung der orthodoxen Kirche begannen. Am gnadenlosesten war die von der Sowjetmacht ausgehende Unterdrückung zwischen 1918 und 1941, deshalb machen die Opfer dieser Zeit die Mehrheit der heiliggesprochenen neuen Märtyrer und Bekenner des 20. Jahrhunderts aus. Anschließend wird in der Studie die Bedeutsamkeit einer Untersuchung der Dokumente in den Archiven dargestellt sowie die Methodik der Analyse beschrieben, denn der Prozess der Heiligsprechung basiert auf einer Untersuchung und Analyse der historischen Ereignisse und es muss aufs Gründlichste überprüft werden, inwieweit die heiligzusprechende Person dessen würdig ist. Im zweiten Teil der Studie werden der Prozess der Heiligsprechung sowie die von der Kirchenversammlung der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche getroffenen Entscheidungen chronologisch dargestellt. Hierbei wurden auch die Beschlüsse der Synode über die Verehrung der Heiligen mit aufgenommen. Abschließend werden die sich aus der Heiligsprechung ergebenden Aufgaben erörtert.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Staat und Kirche, Sowjetunion/Russland, Kommunismus, Staatssozialismus, Diktatur, Geschichte, Rückblick, orthodoxe Kirche, Märtyrer, Verfolgung, Heiligsprechung

1. The persecutions of the Orthodox Church in Soviet Russia

The Bolshevik revolution in 1917 resulted in cruel and massive persecutions of the Russian Orthodox Church; persecutions which continued to ebb and flow until the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s. The Bolsheviks, in their attempt to subdue all opposition, arrested many of the clergy and laymen of the Orthodox Church. In January 1918, a decree was issued mandating the total separation of state and church (TSIPIN 2006, 360). This decree immediately resulted in the closing of all theological seminaries. In fact, in 1918 theological education, theological scholarship and the official publication of Christian literature were effectively terminated in Russia. Furthermore, on 18 February 1918 the Sovnarkom (the Council of People's

Commissars),¹ with the approval of Anatoly Lunacharsky, declared that teaching lessons of the Christian faith in schools was now forbidden. In addition, the same decree prohibited all lectures with religious content to children under the age of 18. This prohibition extended not only to all schools and parishes, but even to all homes. On 8 May 1918, the Justice Committee of Sovnarkom was established (with P.A. Krasikov as chairman) to ensure total separation of church and state.

In 1918–1919, 50% of the property of the monasteries in Russia, 722 in total, was expropriated (DAMASKIN 2008). During this time thousands of arrests of believers took place, many of them resulting in the death penalty. For instance, in the regions of Perm, Stavropol, and Kazan, almost all of the clergy were arrested. According to some estimates, 827 clergymen were put to death in 1918; in 1919, 88 were imprisoned. Other sources suggest that 3,000 clergymen were shot and 1,500 subjected to repressions in 1918, and 1,000 executed and 800 subjected to repressions in 1919 (DAMASKIN 2008). Many prelates perished in those years, dying a martyr's death, including Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) of Kiev, Archbishop Andronicus (Nikolsky) of Perm, Bishop Sylvester (Olshevsky) of Omsk, Archbishop Mitrofan (Krasnopolsky) of Astrakhan, Bishop Laurentius (Knyazev) of Balakhnin, Bishop Macarius (Gnevushev) of Vyazemsk, Barsanufius (Lyebedev) of Kirillov, Hermogen (Dolganov) of Tobolev and others. In December 1921 the first director of the Bolshevik secret police (Cheka), Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, notorious for torture and mass summary executions, wrote that 'the church is falling apart and we do not need to help her to renew in any way' (BEGLOV & VASILYEVA 2007, 138, our trans.).²

As a result of this devastating civil war, famine was widespread in Russia in the second half of 1921. In May 1922, 20 million people were starving in 34 provinces of Russia, resulting in one million deaths from starvation. The Patriarch, on 6 February 1922, addressed the Orthodox Church, calling all Christians to help starving people by donating church-owned jewellery not used for liturgical needs (e.g., incrustations around icons). However, the Soviet regime ignored the church's willingness to help (BEGLOV & VASILYEVA 2007, 144). Furthermore, on 23 February 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) decreed to confiscate all the property of the church. In addition, on 3 March 1922 Leon Trotsky, a member of the Politburo, proposed not only to expropriate church property but to completely destroy the very organisation of the church as well. The Red Army acted with extreme violence in carrying out this expropriation. The goal was threefold: to confiscate material assets, to defame the clergy for unwillingness to help those starving, and to degrade the authority of the church. It was also decided that state authorities would patronise those of the clergy who would voluntarily hand over everything and cooperate with the Bolsheviks; the goal was to cause division among the clergy.

The commission started the process of expropriation in 1922. The relics of saints were profaned. In many cities believers held protests, resulting in physical

¹ Soviet Narodnykh Komissarov, the government of the early Soviet republic.

² Original text: 'Церковь разваливается, поэтому нам надо помочь, но никаком образом не возрождать ее.'

conflict between the crowd of believers and the authorities. Bolsheviks knew that the best time to strike a death-blow to the church was during a time of famine and national discontent. The Church was accused of being unwilling to cooperate with the Soviets in providing assistance to people in need. Following the expropriations, V.I. Lenin therefore implemented death penalties on those who disobeyed. Initially, the first period of persecution (1918–1919) occurred without due process of the law. However, in 1922 persecutions took place with legal judgements involving the revolutionary tribunals. Such trials happened in Moscow (26 April – 8 May 1922), Petrograd (29 May – 5 July 1922), and Smolensk (1–24 August 1922). In those trials the following were sentenced to death and executed: Metropolitan of Petrograd Benjamin (Kazansky), priest Sergius (Shein) and laymen Yuriy Novitsky and Joann Kovcharov. One of the reasons for the death sentence by revolutionary tribunals was to attribute legal status to the persecutions. 2,691 persons from the white clergy, 1,962 from the monastic clergy (hieromonks), and 3,447 nuns were killed, a total of 8,100 victims (DAMASKIN 2008).

During this period of persecution the State authorities did not limit themselves to direct physical repressions against the clergy and believers. Their intention was to also destroy the administrative structure of the Church from within by supporting and creating a special group of clergy under their command – the so-called Renovationists (in Russian: ‘obnovlentsy’). The Bolsheviks intended to destroy the so-called ‘disobedient’ clergy by creating the ‘obedient’ clergy, resulting in the Renovationists in charge of the church (SHVAROVSKIY 2010, 94).

E.A. Tuchkov, using Section 6 of the OGPU,³ which deals with church affairs in combating the Orthodox Church, other denominations, and sects, put forth enormous efforts to split and disorganise the Orthodox Church. During this period, however, the Bolsheviks were not successful in taking total control of the Church’s hierarchy because many of the clergy, at the cost of their lives, refused to cooperate.

The repressed ones who were not immediately sentenced to death found themselves in the Gulag (Soviet forced labour systems). The Gulag was the main instrument of political repression in the USSR from 1930 to 1960. One of the first camps, the forerunner of Gulags, was created in 1923 in the Solovetsky Islands (or Solovki). In 1923, in accordance with the decision of the Archangelsk Committee, all the churches in the Solovetsky Islands were closed and all the property transferred to the organisation of the North (Labour) Camps, using the premises of the monastery as the SLON (Russian abbreviation of the ‘Solovki Prison Camp’). The first repressed clergymen were sent to this Gulag the first year. In 1928 the Soviet authorities began to prepare for large-scale displacement (collectivisation) of peasants. After the first wave of persecutions there still existed a living and active but hidden religious life in the nation. Many peasants preserved the old model of religious life, where Orthodoxy was not only the mode of thinking but also the mode of everyday living. In many rural areas churches

³ Obyedinnoye gosudarstvennoye politicheskoye upravleniye (The State Political Directorate or All-Union State Political Board) was the secret police of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and the Soviet Union from 1922 until 1934.

and monasteries still functioned, but now were legally formed corporatives, societies, and communes. The Soviet regime still considered these churches and monasteries dangerous to Soviet authority and the building of socialism and wanted to destroy them. At the end of 1928 the Politburo instituted special persecutions with a special decree listing the scope of persecutions and methods approved for it, 'The Improvement and Intensification of Anti-Religious Operations'. L.M. Kaganovich,⁴ secretary of the Central Committee and Y.M. Yaroslavsky, director of the Anti-Religious Committee of the Central Committee were commissioned to design and implement special persecutions. This resulted in mass persecutions that affected both the clergy and laymen; churches and monasteries were closed. In June 1929, the Second Congress of Warring Atheists was established under the guidance of Yaroslavsky. This congress planned and launched a ruthless war against all the aspects of religious life in Soviet Russia. The State, realising that the activities of the Antireligious Commission were ineffective, concluded that the persecutions should have a more active character, and therefore abolished the Antireligious Commission, and all the affairs were handed over to the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Thus, the coordination of all persecutions was concentrated in one centre and the persecutions affected not only the clergy but extended to all the inhabitants of the country. Persecutions started in 1929 and continued until 1933, when most of the clergy was arrested and deported; many of them died as martyrs. A total of 40,000 clergymen were arrested, 4,000 of them from Moscow (DAMASKIN 2008). Most of the arrested clergy were sent to camps where they were executed or died of diseases.

In 1935 an analysis of the results of the antireligious campaign was conducted, and the state authorities were unpleasantly surprised because the poll showed the Orthodox Church still had high authority and influence. At the beginning of 1937, the Bolsheviks concluded that a total destruction of the Orthodox Church was needed. Stalin, having a practice of delegating relevant decisions to others, tasked G.M. Malenkov with launching the repressions. Under his direction, the most bloody and ruthless persecutions began with the intention of exterminating Christianity in the Soviet Union. Records of the State Commission revealed that victims of the 1937 political repressions totalled 136,900 clergymen, of whom 85,300 were shot. In 1938, 28,300 clergymen were arrested, resulting in 21,500 martyrs (*Sbornik dokumentov* 2001, 89). The records also show that in 1939 and 1940, the arrested clergy totalled 6,600, of whom 2,000 were put to death. The arrests continued in 1941 with 5,900 arrests, with 1,900 put to death. In 1937 alone, the political repressions resulted in the death of 1,000 clergy in Moscow, while in the region of Tver 200 clergymen were put to death (DAMASKIN 2008).

During the Great Terror and repressions of 1937–1938 in the Butovsky or Butov Polygon (literally, the Butov Shooting Range), 21,000 people were shot to death and buried in mass graves, many of them clergymen. In 1937 one of the most promi-

⁴ During the Great Terror, L.M. Kaganovich was among the people close to Stalin who took part in establishing the lists of those to convict and participated in sentencing them. The signature of Kaganovich is under 189 lists authorising to shoot 19,000 people to death.

ment hierarchs of the Church, Seraphim (Chichagov), Metropolitan of Leningrad and Gdovsk, was martyred. Given the range and ruthlessness of these persecutions from 1937 to 1941, it is estimated that more people were martyred in this period than in the entire history of Russia and the history of Christendom. All in all, these persecutions, which lasted for 20 years, caused permanent damage. In 1938 there were no working monasteries left in Russia. Churches were ruined and turned into cereal warehouses, more than 100 hierarchs were put to death, and tens of thousands of priests and clergymen, and hundreds of thousands of laypeople were irreversibly struck from the Orthodox Church and from Russian society. Had it not been for World War II, all the clergy and believers would probably have been eliminated.

2. Archive documents: the basis and historical grounds for creating hagiographies of new martyrs and confessors of the 20th century and their canonisation

In 1956, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union revealed, for the first time in the Soviet Union, the truth about the political repressions that took place in the decades following the Revolution. This revelation occurred within the program of anti-Stalinism. Nevertheless, no one in this Congress spoke about the anti-religious terror that occurred. In fact, the government of Khrushchev was preparing for a new wave of religious persecutions. Only in the second half of the 1970s did information from the West reveal the extent of religious persecutions that had taken place in the USSR ('Mucheniki i ispovedniki' 2009).⁵ However, the official Soviet historiography was silent about repressions of clergy and believers. All archived materials were kept secret, and it was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, at the end of the 1980s, that it became possible to study this material. When exposed to public scrutiny, these archived materials revealed the most horrifying crimes and the darkest pages of the 20th-century history of Russia.

Beginning with the 1990s, court and investigation documents were used as sources of history, but it should be mentioned that the study of these archived materials is very difficult. One should have knowledge of how to study these archives, hagiography, juridical sciences, as well as knowledge of the structure of that time, such as penalties, law courts, the working principles of prosecution or the incrimination mechanism, and the mutual cooperation schemes of persons involved in the investigation process (investigator, witnesses). It is also necessary to explore all possible materials, track all the documents of court processes, and all materials of the collection of court investigation during several stages of life of the accused persons. The reason being is that during one period of repression the accused person could have acted differently than he or she did in the other periods. Similarly, the analysis of these materials as statements of martyrdom requires not only professional knowl-

⁵ Russian new martyrs and confessors in the context of cases of archival investigations.

edge but also religious experience in order to embrace the spiritual level and meaning of these documents.

These documents record historical data, showing that thousands of members of the Russian Orthodox Church repeated the act of heroism and martyrdom of Early Christianity. It is of significance that the hagiographies of the Early Christian martyrs and those of new martyrs of the 20th century are similar – both are based on the documental witness and repression materials of the authorities. Here especially one should emphasise the contribution of Abbot I. Damaskin. As early as the 1970s, Damaskin started to collect available materials about communist repressions against the Orthodox Church. More than 100,000 court investigation cases during the period of 1917 to 1950 were studied. These documents included warrants of arrests, testimonies of witnesses, protocols of interrogation, troika decisions, correspondence, and so on.

The facts stated in the works of Damaskin are documental proofs. His written hagiographies are not works of literary imagination. In addition to facts, they also contained photos; they are unique because the appearance of a person who goes to eternity has been eternalised in them. Exclusion of any artistic subjectivism in descriptions makes many hagiographies very succinct and brief. The act of heroism of a Christian person is displayed in those life descriptions, that is, the moment when his life and death depends on confessing or denying his faith. Therefore the work of DAMASKIN in its laconism is impressive. In such a way a modern historic conscience has been enriched with unique material, a study in 7 volumes (1992–2007), *Mucheniki, ispovedniki i podvizhniki blagochestiya Rossiyskoy Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi XX stoletiya (The Martyrs, Confessors and Heroes of Faith of the Russian Orthodox Church of the 20th Century)*, which can be considered as the epopee of the nation's spiritual life at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In the 7 volumes there are a total of 900 hagiographies and this work served as a fundamental basis for the canonisation of new martyrs and confessors of the 20th century.

This leads to an important question. Why not recognise all Orthodox believers who went through severe repressions as saints and canonise them? Namely, why is it not possible to canonise all who have been shot or who suffered from Bolshevik repressions, especially if the State has now declared them innocent? However, the public recognition that they were all innocently arrested and falsely sentenced does not automatically mean that they could all be canonised by the Church. That would not be in accordance with the Church principles for canonisation, and would be against the historical truth. Therefore the Church set as its goal to familiarise itself with and study all possible materials that are accessible regarding the fate of the repressed, and take exactly these materials as a basis in order to decide about the canonisation of a particular person.

It is known that in the Early Church a person was considered a martyr if his or her blood was shed for Christ. However, it is important to note that the Church itself in the pagan Roman Empire was outside the law and therefore those belonging to it were sentenced to death on the basis of Roman law. The only possibility of preserving

one's life and gaining freedom was to deny the faith and withdraw from the Church. But the new martyrs and confessors of the 20th century accomplished their way of the cross in different conditions than those experienced by earlier martyrs. Often they were put to death without a court trial and when sentenced to death in accordance to the rulings of the court, were, in almost every case, charged with crimes that were not directly connected to the Church or faith in Christ. Most often they were sentenced based on Paragraph № 58 – a political paragraph for counter-revolutionary and anti-state activity. That put the accused in a very difficult position so as not to become a false witness to himself and his fellow brothers and sisters in faith. Many endured but many broke under pressure. There were a variety of reasons, such as involvement in forming a division, refusal of priesthood, betrayal of fellow believers, and cooperation with the NKVD (Secret Police) authorities (DAMASKIN 2009).

In accordance with the regulations of the Church, the canonisation of such members of splitting or schismatic groups as well as betrayers and informers is not authorised if they later suffered from repressions themselves. There is a difference between the holiness and salvation of a soul by God's grace. The Church does not say that those committing sin because of their weakness do not deserve the grace of God and forgiveness; however, only those that fully endured the trials can be taken as example and bear witness to the high criteria of holiness. Therefore it should be said that all those being canonised as saints are canonised not simply because they were put to death but because of their heroism in faith and martyrdom. They are canonised for the special faith quality that they confirmed in their way of life from the moment of their arrest to a martyr-like death. Therefore it would be without reason to consider all the sufferers and victims of repressions as martyrs just because they were sentenced to death. For this reason the process of canonisation undergoes a most thorough examination of documents and facts (Komissiya Svyaschennogo Sinoda 1999, 172).

3. The process of canonisation in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 20th century

In the period following the revolution, and during the communist persecutions up to 1970, no canonisations took place. Only in 1970 did the Holy Synod make a decision to canonise a missionary to Japan, Nicholas Kasatkin (1836–1912). In 1977, St. Innocent of Moscow (1797–1879), the Metropolitan of Siberia, the Far East, the Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and Moscow was also canonised. In 1978 it was proclaimed that the Russian Orthodox Church had created a prayer order for Meletius of Kharkov, which practically signified his canonisation because that was the only possible way to do it at that time. Similarly, the saints of other Orthodox Churches were added to the Church calendar – in 1962 St. John the Russian; in 1970 St. Herman of Alaska; in 1993 St. Silouan, the elder of Mount Athos, already canonised in 1988.

In the 1980s the Russian Orthodox Church re-established the process for canonisation; a practice that had ceased for half a century. In 1989 the Holy Synod es-

established the Synodal Commission for Canonisation. The primary hardship that the Church faced during this time was that even though the canonisation was a narrowly ecclesiastic issue, it was included in the context of political and ideological struggle at the beginning of the 1990s. That confirmed an alternative perspective of 20th century history of Russia and appeared to be a critical analysis of the time of revolution. However, the Church mentioned everywhere that the task of believers is to analyse the age from a moral viewpoint and therefore canonisation of new martyrs, victims of communist terror, cannot be considered a tool for political struggle. The Church confirmed that Christians who had been tortured, died from starvation, or were shot as a result of communist repressions were not victims of tragic coincidence but deliberately gave their lives for Christ (Komissiya Svyaschennogo Sinoda 1999, 122).

In 1990 the Local Council gave an order for the Synodal Commission for Canonisation to prepare documents for canonisation of new martyrs who had suffered from the 20th century communist repressions. In 1991 it was decided that a local commission for canonisation would be established in every eparchy which would gather the local documents and would send them to the Synodal Commission. Its task was to study the local archives, collect memories of believers, record all the miracles that are connected with addressing the martyrs. However, commissions in eparchies faced several problems.

First, the oral heritage of generations was discontinued. In many regions there were now newcomers living whose roots lay elsewhere. They were not aware of what had happened there many years earlier. Furthermore, the members of eparchial commissions who worked at the archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) did not know how to analyse such documents. It was not clear what to do with the protocols of interrogations, or what kind of useful information for the Church lay there. Also, the personality of a person to be canonised cannot cause disagreement or ambivalent feelings among believers or frustrate them. A saint should have a clean reputation as canonisation cannot divide but must unite believers. When the eparchial commission had thoroughly studied documents on every martyr and confessor and had no doubts about the holiness and acts of martyr heroism of a particular person they were recommended to the Synodal Commission for Canonisation and the process of their canonisation or glorification at local level was started; later it continued at the Council of the Church. In accordance with the practice of the Orthodox Church, a particular hero of faith can initially be canonised only at a local level – within local churches and eparchies. Such rights belong to the ruling hierarch and it can only happen when the blessing of the patriarch is received (MAKSIMOV 2003).

The task of believers of the local eparchy is to record descriptions of miracles, to create the hagiography of a saint, to paint an icon, as well as to compose a liturgical text of a service where the saint is glorified. All of this is sent to the Synodal Commission for Canonisation which decides whether to canonise the local hero of faith or not. Then the patriarch gives his blessing and the local hierarch performs the act of canonisation at the local level. However, the liturgical texts in honour of a saint are not published in all Church books but only in local publications; in the same way

these saints are not yet glorified and venerated by the whole Church, only locally. When the glorification of a saint exceeds the limits of an eparchy, then the patriarch and Holy Synod decides about their canonisation on the Church level. After receiving the Synod's support and the patriarch's blessing, the question of glorification of a particular saint on the scale of the entire Church is given for consideration to the Council of the Church. Taking into account the scale of repressions and that besides the known new martyrs and confessors, many other unknown martyrs suffered, there was a suggestion to canonise all others that had suffered for Christ who are known only to God. In the history of the Church, canonisation of such unknown martyrs is well known. Thus, on 28 December the Orthodox Church venerates 20,000 martyrs burned in Nicomedia; and on 29 December, 14,000 infants in Bethlehem killed by King Herod.

In 1992 the Church established 25 January as a day when it venerates the new 20th century martyrs of faith. The day was specifically chosen because on this day in 1918 the Metropolitan of Kiev Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) was killed, thus becoming the first victim of communist terror among the hierarchs of the Church. In 1992 the decree was passed to begin examining the issue of the Imperial Family. This issue aroused wide polemics in society. Tension escalated due to the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad had, in 1981, canonised the Imperial Family and their servants. This fact was not welcomed unambiguously because there was a lack of historic and canonical proof. Also, one of the canonised servants was Catholic, the other Lutheran. The Church had not previously been faced with the canonisation of those belonging to other Christian denominations. The study and analysis of this issue went on for several years.

In the process of canonisation of the Imperial Family, several issues were discussed:

- a) the Church's attitude towards Holy Royal Martyrs – 'Passion-bearers';
- b) the Church's view about the time of the reign of Tsar Nicholas II;
- c) Nicholas II and the events of 9 January in 1905;
- d) the Church policy of the Tsar,
- e) the Tsar's resignation of the throne and the attitude of the Orthodox believes regarding this fact;
- f) the Imperial Family and Rasputin;
- h) the last days of the Imperial Family.

The Church immediately stressed that canonisation of the Imperial Family was not a political act, nor was it the canonisation of monarchy (Komissiya Svyaschenogo Sinoda 1999, 211).

During the Church Council of 2000, the Imperial Family was canonised as Holy Royal Martyrs – 'Passion-bearers'.⁶ This special Church Slavonic designation in the Russian Orthodox Church designates that those saints following Christ in His patience (submissiveness) and humbleness have endured both physical and spir-

⁶ 'Strastoterptsi' in Church Slavonic.

itual suffering from their political opponents. Special veneration of these Holy Royal Martyrs show that the Russian Church does not make a distinction between death as a martyr for Christ and death and martyrdom by following Christ's example of non-resistance and endurance (FEDOTOV 1990). In the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, the following are considered as saints, as Holy Royal Martyrs ('Passion-bearers'): Holy Christian Princes Boris and Gleb, Igor of Chernigov, Andrei Bogolubsky (or prince of Bogoliubsk), Michael of Tver, and Crown Prince Dimitri.

In the canonising of the family of Tsar Nicholas II, the relevance of monarchy or the style of reign of Nicholas II was not stressed, only the time the Imperial Family had spent in imprisonment and their martyr-like death at the hands of their political opponents – a death which they accepted with real Christian humility. There are documental proofs that they were practicing Christians during the time spent in imprisonment. They were killed as symbols of Orthodox Russia (Komissiya Svyaschennogo Sinoda 1999, 192).

During the Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in 2000, the greatest general canonisation in the history of the Orthodox Church took place; not only regarding the number of saints but also as in this canonisation, all unknown saints were mentioned. There were 1,765 canonised saints known by name and others unknown by name but known to God. They were added to the following orders of saints: bishops, priests, deacons, hiero-martyrs to the order of hiero-confessors; archimandrites, abbots and abbesses, hiero-monks, hiero-deacons, holy monks and nuns to the order of holy monks or holy monk-confessors; laypeople martyrs to the order of confessors.

The Council arrived at the following decisions regarding the canonisation of saints:

1. To canonise for glorification of all the Church the Russian new martyrs and confessors of the 20th century known by name as well as the unknown ones but known to God;
2. The Imperial Family as Holy Royal Passion-bearer Martyrs;
3. Glorified are also the saints of local importance, but in the Council of 2000 they are added to the veneration of all the Church;
4. The relics of new martyrs and confessors are to be venerated as holy relics. Where their whereabouts are known, to show them adequate honour; if their whereabouts are not known, then leave it to God's providence;
5. Bishops, priests, deacons, hiero-martyrs are to be added to the order of hiero-confessors;
6. Archimandrites, abbots and abbesses, hiero-monks, hiero-deacons, holy monks, and nuns to the order of holy monks or holy monk-confessors; laypeople martyrs to the order of confessors;
7. To create a special united order of service in the honour of all new martyrs and confessors. To create a separate service for every particular saint, and until then,

- to celebrate their memory after the common *Menaia*⁷ – to everyone according to their order or rank;
8. 25 January (7 February in the old calendar) – the day of commemorating all the new martyrs and confessors; to appoint each martyr a special celebration day on the day of their martyr death;
 9. To paint an icon for every saint in accordance to the regulations of the Seventh Ecumenical Council;
 10. To write the hagiography of the saint;
 11. To announce the fact of canonisation of these saints to all believers;
 12. To announce them to the other Orthodox Churches as well so that they can also add the new saints to their calendars of commemoration;
 13. The adding of a new saint known by name to the list of already canonised order of new martyrs and confessors can happen only with the decision of the patriarch and the Holy Synod, and only after preliminary investigation performed by the Synodal Commission for Canonisation;
 14. The ruling hierarchs in cooperation with the Synodal Commission should continue to gather information and study the acts of martyrdom of other witnesses of faith of the 20th century so that they may also be added to the order of new martyrs and confessors (*Sbornik dokumentov* 2001, 132).

4. Conclusion

Due to the canonisation of many saints in the Russian Orthodox Church during the last years, there is a question of importance about the practice of veneration of a saint. When canonising a saint, the Church invites the faithful to venerate this saint within the practice of liturgical life of the Church. The icon is painted, the hagiography is compiled and special liturgical prayers are created. Icon, hagiography, and texts of the service in which a saint is lauded are created by carefully studying the saint's life and observing all the canons of liturgical veneration and to what order of saints he or she belongs. There are currently many created common texts of use in services for the New Martyrs and saints of the Russian Church but there is still the need to create an individual prayer for every saint as well as texts for veneration. Today in the Russian Orthodox Church there is an urgent need for icon painters, hagiographers and hymnographers. There is a need for new *akathists*, *troparions*, and *kontakions*⁸ which could be included in liturgical practice. In the same way, there is a need to improve the hagiographies of saints with the new facts if possible, since there is a lot of material in the archives that has not yet been studied. A very relevant part of the veneration

⁷ The 'Menaia' (Greek 'menaion') is the name of the twelve books, one for every month, that contain the offices for immovable feasts in the Eastern Orthodox Church's rite.

⁸ Forms of hymns performed in the services of Eastern Orthodox Church: *akathist* is a hymn dedicated to a saint, holy event, or one of the persons of the Holy Trinity; *troparion* is a type of short hymn of one stanza; *kontakion* is a type of thematic hymn used in services.

cult of saints in the Orthodox Church is the painting of an icon. However, icons are not painted for all New Martyrs. Practice has shown that it is relatively easy to paint the icon of a saint and write their hagiography, but liturgical prayers and chants, poetic texts come into being with great difficulty due to the lack of specialists in this field. The creation of the texts for Liturgy is a special art. With the help of chants and hymns of the Church, the life of a saint is illustrated by revealing their act of spiritual heroism, to laud their example of faith by finding the right words that would create the atmosphere of prayer and awe before God as well as touch the heart of a modern man – something not easy to accomplish (SAMOYLOV 2009).

The head of the Synodal Commission of Canonisation of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, emphasised at the Bishop's Council of 2008 that the veneration of New Martyrs today has become a typical feature of the Russian Orthodox Church. The veneration should especially happen in those places where New Martyrs were born and performed acts of faith and heroism. The new generation of Christians that have not faced the cruel persecutions of the past times should know the history of their land and the Church. As a visible sign of veneration of New Martyrs, new buildings, churches, and monasteries are consecrated to their memory. In the same way the giving of the names of New Martyrs to the newly baptised is an important part of veneration as the newly baptised person receives not only an example to follow but also a strong heavenly protector. The veneration of saints should not only be theological-liturgical but it should also cultivate morality; namely, during the lessons of religious education, special attention should be paid to the questions of Church history of the 20th century and to the hagiography of New Martyrs.

Without any doubt, this would create a good foundation for a critical evaluation of the history of the 20th century in Russia itself. Today, among other historical evidence, the hagiographies of New Martyrs of the Russian Orthodox Church provide an essential contribution in forming public opinion related to the critical re-examination of the ideas of the Communist regime and condemnation of a realised terror, and they help believers draw on the power of faith and love from the example of holy martyrs.

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