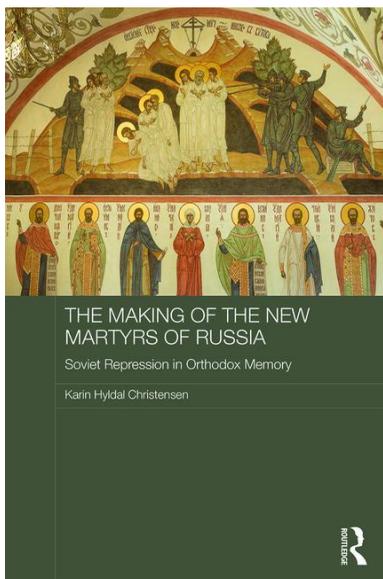


Karin Hyldal Christensen



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Reviewed by

Mihai-Liviu Dinu

Karin Hyldal Christensen is a PhD Student at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. She claims that venerating saints is an essential element of Russian Orthodox Christianity, and underlines that the '*new martyrs all died or suffered as a result of*

Review

*THE MAKING OF
THE NEW MARTYRS
OF RUSSIA
Soviet Repression in
Orthodox Memory*



PhD Student Mihai-Liviu Dinu, Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University "1st December 1918" Alba Iulia, Romania

Soviet and anti-religious persecution' (1).

The book is divided into three parts: Part I – Canonization. The author came with the hypothesis that the idea of the new martyrs came from the martyrdom of the first priest killed by the Bolsheviks, Father Ivan Kochurov, in October 1917, and from this point of view, the relation between patriarchate and the Soviet government starts to decline. Hegumen Damaskin points that "The *Soviet Union had officially proclaimed freedom of conscience, so it had to find other official charges than religion affiliation*"(37); and the Synodal Canonization Commission said then the new martyrs were killed without trial, and when they were actually condemned to death by a court, most of the time the accusations directed against them were not directly related to their confession of Christ.

The author sees martyrdom as a normative concept; the first aspect is that martyrdom is a witnessing of Christ, and the second aspect implies the purification, the martyrs purify themselves through their deeds, they are purified through their suffering.

Another interesting subchapter is related to canonization criteria. The Church authority has the power to canonize or to refuse any potential saint, and church defines the guidelines for authorized sainthood.

The Orthodox Church distinguishes between different types of a saint: apostles and equal-to-the apostles. Martyrs, ascetic, saint prelates, and lay saints and the canonization criteria refer to these aspects: *a righteous life; immaculate orthodoxy, popular veneration, miracles, and incorruptible relics.*

The Russian Orthodox Church has the power to distinguish between 'victims' and 'saint victims', determining who is a saint and who is not, according to the canonization criteria. In December 2012 it was a so-called '*de-canonization*' in which the names of 36 new martyrs had "*disappeared*" from the newly

Church calendar, and leads to the canonization controversy, verifying the criteria and methods of the Synodal Canonization Commission.

The arguments for and against canonization stands from the fact that the interrogation records are untrusted and therefore useless, so each argument deserves further examination (64).

Karin Hyldal Christensen brings into light one interesting interview with Zinaida Inozemtseva, where she stressed that the closed door of the prison was one of the main challenges that distinguished the condition of the new martyrs from the ancient ones, and the individual was powerless against such '*machinery*'.

One controversial issue was the distinction between daily hardship and confesseship, which is a canonization criterion; and metropolitan Ilarion consider the daily hardship of the Orthodox believers to be part of their martyrdom.

On the historical level, the Russian Orthodox Church, canonized the new martyrs (1.776) because the Soviet State persecuted the Church and thereby '*produced*' martyrs whom the Church had the possibility of canonizing them after the fall of Soviet Union.

Part II – Iconization. The liturgical art is essential in the saint veneration because what word transmits through the ear, the panting silently shows through image; words and images are modalities which complement each other in liturgical art. When the Russian Orthodox Church canonizes a new saint, The Church canon orders an icon of the new saint to be painted, and what is important, the author said, is that the people interact with icons (106).

The photographs as a source for icons raised a fundamental question, and offer elaborate reflection on the impact of photography on icon painting, and in the icon painters view, '*the photographs may intrude in this mimetic chain to become an*

<extra link> *between the original and the icon,*' and they may interfere with the painter perception of the 'true' saint image, where you have to feel and see the sanctity (121).

In the third part, named '*veneration*' the author tries to actualize the faith through the active liturgical life. The first examples became Butvo Polygon, a site of memory and symbol of Great Terror (146). All remaining monuments on the Butvo are religious and constitute an important element to the icon of the Assembly of the New Martyrs of Butvo, and in the memory of the local parishioners, the Church of the New Martyrs become '*the stone church*', a metaphor of Russian Golgotha carved in stone.

The liturgical life of the Orthodox tradition has a particularly mission to show the new martyrs as an example for personal life, and to understand their sacrifice, not only in a formal manner but a personal approach. The parish of Butvo celebrates more liturgies than the average of Russian Orthodox Church parish, even if there is national canonization; the veneration is more local – in Butvo.

The remaining point is that the making of the new martyrs is tied with the '*usable pasts*' and historical consensus; the new become reminders of what happened during the Great Terror, they become the preservers of the memory of the misdeeds of the antiheroes, the perpetrators (217).

This book presents an interesting point of view of the methodology of making new martyrs today, and also shows that there is a complex process, fully assumed by the Church, and in the broadly Christian world, the Russian Orthodox Church stands near to the Romano-Catholic Church in terms of canonization, but when we look in the pan-orthodox level, we see that the local orthodox churches canonized few saints or have not canonized at all.

It is addressed to the believers of the church, and its basis is found in empirical studies, interview, and Russian Orthodox Church debates over the understanding of the proofs, of the people veneration and may require further documentation, and why not an example of how we can canonize our saints. On the other hand, this book is a first of her kind in an academically word; it may be a source for better understanding of the '*ajurnamento*' of the church.