The Persecution of the Georgian Church

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Sad and piteous is the situation of the Georgian Orthodox Church! News has been received of the confinement of the most revered Kirion in the Sanakar hermitage, of the removal from his post of the member of the Georgian Imeretian office (of the Holy Synod) and of severe punishment of falling on the heads of the best representatives of the Georgian clergy. They are all being punished because of their expressed sympathy for the autocephaly of the Georgian Church. Ill fated in the life of the Georgian Church has been the question of the restoration of her trampled-upon rights. In the course of three years persecution and repression have broken down the just testimony of the Georgian hierarchs and placed on them the seal of silence: The last martyrs to the attempt to restore the canonical organization existing in Georgia since the 9th century were fixed for the beginning of the New Year.

The Ruling Synod as well as the Russian Patriarchs, recognizing from the day of its foundation the Iberian church authocephalous, had until 1811, i.e. until ten years after the Union of Georgia with Russia, relations with its highest prelates addressing them as the most blessed patriarch and catholicos of Mtzkhet and Iberia. The suppression of the autonomy of the Georgia Church in 1811 by General Tormasoff cannot be recognized as canonical because the Council of Georgian hierarchs never declared a revolution of pg 2 the union of the Georgian Church to the Russian and the sanction of the Eastern Churches has never been given, consequently the Georgian church remains autocephalous.Then being thus how were the punished Georgian hierarchs and priests guilty before the Synod? Only that losing confidence in the fruitfulness of the administration rule by Russian hierarchs of the Georgian Church they submitted a lawful demand for the recognition as the autocephalous Iberian Church. So much has been written of the manner in which the Georgian Church has been governed since 1811 that it is better not to open unhealed sores. In reply to the Imperial order regarding the organization of affairs in the Georgian Church followed in 1907in order for the transfer of the supporters of Georgian autocephaly. Bishop Kirion was removed from the seat of Sukhum to Kovno and the Bishop of Imereti Leonid to Guria. Now the revision of the Georgian Synodal official Jatzhkevitch exposed

the embezzlement during many years of the Church monies of the Exarchate, the authors of which will never, of course, be found.

The revision was partly undertaken by the desire to discover the mystery surrounding the murder of the Exarch of Georgia, Archbishop Nikon. The murderers are still unknown. [pg 2] In any case, the autocephalists could have taken no part in this infamous crime, because the Exarch Nikon, as it now appears, was a supporter of autocephaly. His murderers may have been his enemies, sowers of disorder who, judging by the declaration of the Viceroy of the Caucasus Count Vorontsov, Dachkoy, obeys the proclamations of the Union of Michael Archangel to raise an agitation for the recall of the Count, while other monarchical organizations with indignation bring this proclamation to the notice of the administration. Meanwhile the Georgian autocephalists are called accomplices in the murder of the Ecarch in a speech full of absurdities of Purishkevitch, the member of the Duma. The Viceroy of the Caucasus and his representative Baron Nolde dissipated this unjust accusation. But his speech had its effect, the Synod hastened to imprisoned in January of the present year in the Sanakar Monastery of the Tambov government, 65 versts from a railway station the benevolent and enlightened Bishop Kirion who had been sent away from his office without any pension to the Kharkoffs Monastery. Purishkevitch accuses Bishop Kirion of taking part in a conspirative meeting on the 22nd Feb and 18th May 1908 in Tiflis at the house of the priest Chidjabadze who also evidently will suffer punishment for this accusation. [pg 4]

As a matter of fact Bishop Kirion from April 22nd never moved from Kharkov Monastery and was far from sympathizing with the desire to restore autocephaly by violent measures. There is no doubt that the accusers themselves consider the charge against Bishop Kirion, Archimaudrite Ambrose and priest Chidjabadze fantasy and unproven. The churchmen in question are suffering misfortunes from the most powerful archpriest of the Georgian Church and its best defenders. Everything has been done to humiliate the Georgian Church and to trample on its rights! That church is now governed by the junior bishop of the whole Ecarchate, Grigor Bakhuin, who does not know the Georgian language instead of by a Catholicos. The Russian clerical deputies at the Tiflis ecclesiastical congress refused to join with 28 Georgian, 5 Greek, and 2 Aisorg priests to express disapproval of the calumnies of Purishkevitch. The defenders of the Georgian Church are declared to be revolutionaries, and its persecutors orthodox monarchists!

We believe that the Supreme Divine Judge who has preserved the Iberian Church for 15 centuries will not let it perish.