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Good for the Souls

A History of Confession in the Russian Empire

NADIESZDA KIZENKO

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To my three sisters and my three brothers.

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I dedicate this book to my three sisters and three brothers, who stood by me in confession lines—and much more.

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Abbreviations

Akty	*Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye arkheograficheskoi kommissiei*
ARAN	*Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk*
ChOIDR	*Chteniia v imperatorskom obshchestve istoriii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete*
Dopolneniia	*Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim sobrannymi i izdannymi Arkheologicheskoi Kommissiei*
GIM	Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei
IKE	*Izvestiia Kazanskoi Eparkhii*
KA	*Krasnyi Arkhiv*
KFZh	*Kamer-fur'erskie tseremonial'nye zhurnaly*
KhCh	*Khristianskoe Chtenie*
KhEV	*Khersonskiia Eparkhial'nyia Viedomosti*
MiV	*Minskiia Eparkhial'nyia Viedomosti*
MV	*Moskovskiia Viedomosti*
NART	*Natsional'nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Tatarstana*
NIOR RGB	*Nauchno-issledovatel'skii otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Biblioteki*
PSPR	*Polnoe sobranie postanovlenii i rasporiazhenii po viedomstvu pravoslavnago ispoviedaniia Rossiiskoi imperii*
PSZ	*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*
PTsV	*Pribavleniia k Tserkovnym Viedomostiam*
RA	*Russkii Arkhiv*
RdSP	*Rukovodstvo dlia siel'skikh pastyrei*
RGADA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov
RGAVMF	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota
RGIA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv
RGIA g. Moskvy	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv goroda Moskvy
RNB	Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka
RP	*Russkii Palomnik*
RS	*Russkaia Starina*
SEER	*The Slavonic and East European Review*
SEV	*Smolenskiia Eparkhial'nyia Viedomosti*
Sin.	Sinodal'noe sobranie, GIM
SV	*Siel'skii Viestnik*
TsANO	Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Nizhegorodskoi Oblasti
TsDIAK	Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnnyi Istorichnyi Arkhiv Kyiva

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TsGIA SPb	Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga
TsV	*Tserkovnyia Viedomosti*
Vat.slav.	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Slavic collection
VD	*Voskresnyi Den'*
VVD	*Viestnik Voennago Dukhovenstva*
ZhMNP	*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnago Prosveshcheniia*

The Day of Atonement is the time of repentance for everyone, for the individual and the multitude. It is the goal of the penitential season, appointed unto Israel for pardon and forgiveness. All are under the obligation of repenting and making confession on the Day of Atonement.

Maimonides, *Laws of Repentance*
Chapter 2, section 7

Introduction

> It was necessary that during his exile in Romagnano, Fabrizio should not fail to go to Mass every day, take for his confessor a man with his wits about him, devoted to the cause of the monarchy, and confess at the bar of penitence to only the most irreproachable sentiments.
>
> Stendhal, *The Charterhouse of Parma*

Even if they have never been to confession, most people think they have a reasonably good idea of what the sacrament is: a moment when, concealed from prying eyes, one tells the truth about one's sins to a man standing in for God. People who have read James Joyce may remember the intense, tormented confessions of Stephen Dedalus, the narrator of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. People who have read Michel Foucault may recall his arguing that confession was how the West constructed the individual: in listing the sins committed throughout the course of a day, people turn self-analysis into an autobiographical narrative.[1] Even people whose knowledge of confession comes entirely from Hollywood, Agatha Christie, or Netflix know the essential thing about confession: the seal. A priest cannot disclose whatever he hears at confession, even upon pain of death.

By these standards, neither Orthodox Christianity nor imperial Russia seem to fit. Boosters of Orthodoxy often claim that Orthodox confession is more 'authentic' and less aggressive than the practices and doctrines introduced in the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent: where Catholicism is 'legalistic', with notions like 'satisfaction' before a judge, Orthodoxy is 'therapeutic', with the priest as doctor and fellow sinner.[2] Some argue that confession need not be part of Orthodox penance at all. To them, the seventeenth-century Russian and Ukrainian borrowing from Roman Catholicism was precisely what led them astray.[3]

[1] Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds. (Amherst, MA: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16–49.

[2] A. Amato, 'La dimension "thérapeutique" du sacrament de la penitence dans la théologie et la praxis de l'Eglise greco-orthodoxe', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 67 (1983), 230–8.

[3] Vasyl Popelyastyy, 'Bogoslov'ia sviatogo taïnstva pokaiannia: skhidnyi pravoslavnyi pogliad (druga polovina XVI – persha polovina XVII stolit')', *Analecta of the UCU* (Series: Theology) 2 (2015), 224–58; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, ed., *Enlightenment and Religion in the Orthodox World* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2016).

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Others think, by contrast, that East Slavic Orthodoxy did not go far enough in its borrowing. To them, Russia 'fails' the modernity test because of how it used confession. If there is state compulsion, confession cannot be spiritually 'authentic'. To show what was most wrong in imperial Russian Orthodoxy, critics point to the 1722 Supplement to the Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great. In that document, where priests were required to report anything treasonous they might hear at confession, the seal, so supposedly sacrosanct in the Latin West, seems fatally undermined, with far-reaching consequences.[4] Never mind the KGB: in the 1990s Yukos affair, the priest who confessed Aleksei Pichugin, one of the defendants, was called in for questioning to see if he had learned anything relevant.[5] For better or worse, the Russian practice of confession seems to most indelibly mark it as 'other', and as most different from those things that define the modern Western world.

But does it? We have looked too little at how confession in imperial Russia actually worked. To paraphrase the Book of Common Prayer, we may have looked too hard for things that were not there, and left unstudied those things we ought to have studied. To understand the unique role confession played in the legal, political, social, and cultural world of imperial Russia—unique relative to Western Europe and unique relative to the rest of the Orthodox world—we need to start with that moment in the seventeenth century when Tsars as well as hierarchs, shaken by their experience of the Time of Troubles, decided that having their subjects go to confession would make them better citizens as well as better Christians. They were helped in this pursuit by Ukrainian theologians from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, who had seen first-hand the benefits of more frequent confession among Roman Catholics after the Council of Trent. As in Reformation-era Europe, a major religious schism, that of Old Belief, also fostered confession's importance: it helped to define who was Orthodox and who was 'other'. From this point onward, through the revolutions of 1917, confession in Russia became simultaneously a means of education, a political tool, a devotional exercise, and a literary genre. It became all the more important as Russia extended its empire. From first encouraging Russians to participate in confession to improve them and integrate them into a reforming Church and state, Church and state authorities then turned to the sacrament to integrate converts of other nationalities. Sacramental confession might blur with criminal confession, as it did in some political interrogations. Confession thus became the point at which several goals—salvation, education, discipline, control—met.

[4] Viktor Zhivov, 'Pokaiannaia distsiplina i individual'noe blagochestiie', in *Druzhba: ee formy, ispytaniia i dary: Uspenskie chteniia* (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2008), 303–43.

[5] Despite article 56 of the Russian Legal Code protecting the confessional seal, the father-confessor decided to speak on Pichugin's behalf. Marina Lepina, 'Sviashchennosluzhiteliu veleno prisluzhivatsia', *Kommersant* 192 (October 21, 2003), 1.

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Perhaps surprisingly, the role of the state did not make people in imperial Russia automatically mistrust the sacrament of repentance. In fact, it may have invested confession with more importance than it might otherwise have had and brought it closer to the forefront of Russians' religious lives—certainly to a more prominent role than it had occupied in earlier periods. Perhaps precisely because the state was so interested in one's inner life, and because the ruler's family was incorporated into public religious observance, private piety became more closely linked to civic responsibility, first for the elites, and then for the rest of society.

By the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55), confession became accepted as a litmus test of—and the point of intersection for—individual piety and state control. It was then that state and Church clasped hands most strongly to discipline those entrusted to them. In high-profile cases, as with the officer who killed the poet Lermontov in a duel, the emperor might personally try to make sure that his subjects went to confession to repent of their sin. Elite women embraced confession as both a means of self-fashioning and as a literary genre. Converts from Alaskan and Siberian animism, Jewish boys drafted into the army as cantonists, and Muslims baptized but neglected for decades were called to confess to demonstrate their 'sincerity'. State records finally caught up with peasants, making it possible to track their participation with a precision that had previously been feasible only for the military and the elites.

The liberal Great Reforms of Alexander II (1855–81), so momentous in other respects, touched confession as well. Bishops enjoined priests to show more latitude. An ever-increasing stream of pamphlets on confession sought to reach an ever-broader literate public. Journals for priests provided both meditations to foster a sense of compunction and practical tips on how to hear confessions when long lines of waiting penitents snaked through church. The charismatic Father Ioann of Kronstadt (1829–1909) was allowed to introduce mass public confessions. The last Romanovs found genuine meaning in the sacrament and wrote about it warmly in their diaries. Confession became an object of interest for Russian writers including Tolstoy, Leskov, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, and Charskaia. The last decades of the nineteenth century mark the highest overall rates of annual confession in the Russian empire at any point in its history.

The Revolution of 1905, however, revealed mounting tensions. Terrorists in the 1870s had already begun to refuse the confession and communion offered to them before they hanged. Changes set into motion by rapid industrialization got an extra jolt from the luckless Russo-Japanese War and the first empire-wide strike in history. The language of rights and freedoms, and the experience of riots and estate torchings, spread into confession as well. Before 1905, annual diocesan reports to the Holy Synod, the ruling body of the Russian Orthodox Church, had generally expressed confidence in the flock's confession rates. After the manifesto on freedom of religious conscience (April 17, 1905), and the October Manifesto ending unlimited autocracy (October 17, 1905), they grew worried. Bishops now

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complained that young people, especially those who left the village for the factory, were growing 'cold' to confession and communion.[6] Confession seemed something increasingly for the elderly, especially old women. Bishops blamed 'the spirit of the time' and anti-religious publications for 'political and religious freethinking, a contemptuous attitude towards the Church, and total indifference'.[7] Although after the restoration of law and order confession rates in most areas of the empire rose to their previous rates, the momentary breakdown suggested what might lie ahead.

A more lasting crisis came with the Great War in 1914. At first, the emotional fervour of support for the war expressed itself in more people going to confession and communion, especially in the cities. To reach more people more quickly—both at the front and at home—some priests began to experiment with 'general' confession. The dislocations and losses of war, however, led to Nicholas II's abdication just as the empire was beginning Lent in February 1917.

That was the last time institutionalized Lenten confession and communion would proceed as it had for centuries, both for the imperial family and for the Russian empire. Only weeks after Nicholas abdicated, the diocesan administrative bodies known as Religious Consistories received notice that they were to stop assigning Church penances as part of criminal sentences. That was the beginning of the end for confession as Russia had known it. The years of revolution would test the old sacramental practices as never before. The elements of discipline and control that had for centuries distinguished auricular confession in Russian Orthodoxy vanished. With no state compulsion, then official atheism, and ultimately persecution, what would happen to confession: would people continue going out of inertia, press for changes, or stop going altogether? Had confession become so tainted that people would refuse it? Would the new regime try to use confession for its own purposes? Would the Church hierarchy rethink it? Were these changes remotely similar to anything happening elsewhere? What does this tell us about confession and compulsion broadly speaking? The answers to these questions lie in the centuries of confessional practice that came before them, and at the core of Russian practice now.

This book tells the story of how the confession project in Russia evolved from the point in the seventeenth century at which the new Romanov rulers joined hierarchs in encouraging it to the point in 1917 when the Church–state project officially fell apart. Confession offers a valuable, and sometimes surprising,

[6] L. I. Emeliakh, *Antiklerikal'noe dvizhenie krest'ian v period pervoi russkoi revoliutsii* (Moscow: 'Nauka', 1965), 84, 128; and *Istoricheskie predposylki preodoleniia religii v sovetskoi derevne* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), 117–22.

[7] Gregory L. Freeze, 'A Pious Folk? Religious Observance in Vladimir Diocese, 1900–1914', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* Bd. 52, H. 3 (2004), 335–9. For growing indifference overall, see L. A. Andreeva, 'Fenomen religioznogo indifferentizma v Rossiiskoi imperii', *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 4 (2008), 114–24.

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perspective from which to assess Russia: as regards the West, as regards other historically Orthodox nations, as regards Church–state relations, as regards social relations, and as regards the intimate lives of its inhabitants. But, although this book pays close attention to the role of rulers and state structures, it is important to remember that the practice of the sacrament was not only something that state and religious authorities sought to impose on an unwilling populace. This is not a story of coercive power being the main driver of penitential activity. After all, confession in Muscovy was not something new. The minimum practice of annual confession and communion royal authorities now sought to enforce had been preached as something desirable for centuries. Lenten liturgical services, too, had existed long before the seventeenth century and were a familiar part of penance and seasonal piety. In seeking to foster the cleansing of Russian souls, the Orthodox Church sought to ensure that people would approach the chalice 'worthily', as Scripture enjoined—a concern they shared with both Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches.[8] As elsewhere in Europe, women tended to go to confession more often than men. Finally, if there was one aspect of confessional practice on which serf, noblewoman, Tsar, and hierarch agreed, it was that the Orthodox Christian must die in a state of repentance and reconciliation by confessing and communing of the sacraments before death. The issue was not *whether* Orthodox Christians ought to confess and receive absolution from a priest, but how often they should do so—and what would happen to them if they did not.

But the requirement of annual confession proved to have broader ramifications than those envisioned by the framers. While the initial purpose of requiring annual confession was to control and catechize a large, undisciplined flock, that flock showed itself capable of surprising enterprise. Confession could provide an opportunity for carefully crafted complaint. Courtiers used confession to advance their own side in an intrigue. Peasants became adept at using the confession requirement against their landlords, insisting that they were entitled to their full week off for *govienie*, the Russian term for the sequence of daily church attendance, fasting, and confession followed by communion. Similarly, people might make a show of resisting going to confession to call attention to other grievances—or report grievances at confession. What state and Church authorities initially imagined as a way of controlling an unruly population could be used by the same population as a way of telling their own story, or simply getting time off to attend to their inner lives. Confession was an instrument that all sides could swing.

The situation was even more charged in the diverse borderland regions of the Russian empire where Orthodox Christians were a minority, or where Orthodox

[8] Cornelis P. Venema, 'The Doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions', *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 12 (2001), 135–99.

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peasants were administered by non-Orthodox masters, or where Old Believers, with their unique forms of penance, clustered particularly thickly. Rulers and Ober-Procurators insisted that 'peasants of the Russian confession' be given every opportunity to meet their religious needs, prescribing stern penalties for non-Orthodox employers who might interfere. While disputes over confession were primarily social conflicts in areas where both landlords and serfs were Orthodox, they became issues of state interest when those interfering were not Orthodox. The role that confession of sins played in all their lives is the subject of this book.

Premises, Sources, and Methodology

This book began with the discovery of written confessions in the Russian archives. The vivid voices of their writers described everything from sleeping with a neighbour to going to church dirty, from swearing at babies to hurting birds and cursing the wind. They were deeply, intimately, human. To do them justice, this book tried to resist the usual Church–state paradigm, and to suggest that, whatever external commands may have surrounded confession, when people went, it was about them describing their inner lives. In other words, in Russia, as in other places, confession was something personal, felt, and real.

This argument was all the more important because, compared to the explosion of scholarship on confession in the West, penance in imperial Russia remained astonishingly little studied. Some studies focused on such prescriptive sources as penitentials; others on individual parishes or dioceses; others on specific periods.[9] What started as an attempt to understand written confessions thus turned into an attempt not to deconstruct, but to reconstruct the larger Russian Orthodox experience of confession under the Romanovs, and to bring it into the broader history of penance in Europe.

What emerged was a very different story from the one I first meant to tell. Confession did not take place in a void. As in other places at other times, Russian Orthodox Christians also went to confession because they had to. To tell the story of how most Russian Orthodox Christians experienced confession most of the time, it was therefore not enough to consult homiletics, hagiography, and hymnography. Nor was it enough to look at individual written confessions. It required looking at the laws of the Orthodox Church and the Russian state, and in archives

[9] See, for example, Daniel H. Kaiser, 'The Sacrament of Confession in the Russian Empire: A Contribution to the Source Study of Ispovednye rospisi', *Dubitando: Studies in History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski,* Brian J. Boeck, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland, eds. (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2012), 383–97; Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Maria V. Korogodina, *Ispoved' v Rossii v XIV–XIX vv.* (St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2006).

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describing how confession laws were violated and enforced. It required trying to plot incomplete confession statistics. It meant consulting confession-related cases in the archives of RGADA (the Russian State Archive of Early Acts); RGIA (the Russian State Historical Archive); GARF (the State Archive of the Russian Federation); ARAN (the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences); GIM (the State Historical Museum); RGB (the manuscript section of the Russian State Library); and RGAVMF (the Russian State Military History Archive). Seeing how confession worked on the ground meant consulting the Consistory archives of cities including Moscow, St Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Rostov, Kazan, Kyiv, and Pereiaslav-Boryspil. This made it possible to note variations in the practice of confession across the Russian empire, and especially to see what was distinctive about confession in areas with large populations of converted Muslims and animists, as well as Protestants, Roman and Greek Catholics, and Jews.

But confession remained at least as interesting in private and in its liturgical setting as it did in the courtrooms, prisons, and police stations of the Russian empire. And this is precisely the problem. Studying a practice as private as sacramental confession poses a number of difficulties. In the vast majority of cases, what happened at confession in imperial Russia remained known only to the penitent and the father-confessor. How, then, can we know what they thought, said, and did? This book tries to see confession not only from the point of view of the imperial institutions that tried to bring Orthodox imperial subjects to confession, but of the individual souls who approached the sacrament. How did they experience confession liturgically, personally, legally, communally, individually, orally, aurally? What did they encounter when they went?

This called for a broader range of sources. First, I consulted clerical guides to the sacrament of confession. This meant not just penitentials and the devotional confessions known as *ponovleniia*, but also different editions of service-books like the *Lenten Triodion* and the Book of Needs (*Trebnik*), sermons, and homilies. These prescriptive sources not only told people what they *ought* to do at confession, but also called attention to what they did wrongly. Condemnations of this 'wrong' behaviour shed light on what people actually did. Saints' lives, especially the encyclopaedic collection of uncanonized eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'strugglers of piety', show how steadily participation in confession became a marker of holy life. In some cases, the information contained in visual depictions of the sacrament in those books and on church iconostases was as important as the texts themselves. Furthermore, I have used such autobiographical documents as the written confessions and examinations of conscience of laypeople who penned their confessions to hierarchs like Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) and priests like Father Ioann of Kronstadt—or who wrote for their own eyes only. This book thus had to bring into dialogue texts that normally did not talk to one another: laws and legal cases, penitentials, homilies, saints' lives, private

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examinations of conscience, written confessions, pictures, great and minor works of literature, and prayer books.

The earlier chapters make particularly extensive use of theological texts, liturgical texts, and legislation. By the end of the eighteenth century, when literate lay Russians began to describe their experiences at confession and their preparation for the sacrament, their memoirs, diaries, letters, and poems allow us to construct a fairly detailed picture of the role of sacramental confession in the life of the elites, the clergy, and the merchant classes, and of the different gender patterns in approaching the sacrament. The Great Reforms brought with them an explosion of sources making non-elite practice more accessible. To the genres described above, one can now add collections of folk tales, ethnographic accounts of rural behaviour at confession, priests' diaries, clerical journals, children's and young adult stories, and devotional pamphlets. Especially valuable are cases involving confession in the empire's Religious Consistories. Unlike the theological and literary sources, these documents emphasize points of stress and possible rupture rather than how confession might have worked to hold society together. Still, these cases provide illustrations of what both legal authorities and those who came before them regarded as bad confession behaviour—and how those infractions were punished. This applied to clergy who attempted to collect fees for confession or who did not honour requests for last rites as much as it did to peasant shirkers. They show how much variation there was across the Russian empire: not surprisingly, peasants went to confession more often and more willingly in the lands of present-day Ukraine, for example, than they did in those of present-day Tatarstan.

Most importantly, these records show that, both before and after the emancipation of the serfs, from the perspective of the Orthodox Church, peasants were *souls*—souls for which they were responsible and souls which needed saving. When priests were accused of confession violations, illiterate peasants in the nineteenth century were queried as seriously as were courtiers in the eighteenth. Their testimony had legal weight. They observed what happened in their village church as keenly as did the nobility who craned their necks to see if a known adulterer would be at communion the day after his confession, or whether he would be assigned a penance and not be admitted. These documents show that, for the lower classes as for the elites, by the mid-nineteenth century annual confession had become normative behaviour: even if people did not go to confession during Lent, they knew they were supposed to, and knew that not going could mean trouble. Similarly, they knew that if anyone, whether a bottom-line employer or a controlling spouse, tried to keep them from fulfilling the complex of actions associated with making a good confession, they could turn confession into a weapon against their oppressor. The revolutions of 1905, the Great War, and 1917 cut across class boundaries in prompting more fundamental challenges to confession for Orthodox Christians in all of the Russian empire.

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Elements of Continuity: Liturgy and *Govienie*

As this is a work of history, this book tends to focus on what *changed* in confession after the start of the seventeenth century. It is therefore important to bear in mind also what remained constant and allowed the rite of confession to maintain the sense of being reassuringly traditional and familiar even as it was being turned to new purposes. The most important element of continuity in these three centuries is the location of confession in a larger complex of behaviour and ritual known as *govienie*. It is *govienie* (deriving from an Old Slavonic term for reverence) that had already distinguished Russian approaches to preparing and cleansing oneself for communion in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[10] Confession in Russia was not only and not mostly about telling one's sins to the priest, but also about that action as part of a focusing and purification process that began with fasting, several days' church attendance at services designed to foster compunction, and limitations on secular activity. Only then could one conclude with confession and communion from one's parish priest. With very few exceptions, when most Orthodox inhabitants of imperial Russia took part in *govienie* from the age of seven onwards, they did so during Great Lent.

The relatively narrow slice of time in which most people went to the sacrament means that confession in imperial Russia cannot be understood exclusively as an individual act of conscience and self-fashioning, but must be situated within its liturgical and social context no less than its legal one. Like Roman Catholic practice before the Council of Trent, and like Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Moravian, and other traditions of preparation for communion, *govienie* in Russian Orthodoxy was a seasonal act meant to cleanse the group as well as the individual in preparation for their greatest liturgical feast: the celebration of Christ's resurrection after his redemptive sacrifice on the cross. Thus, although confession was a private conversation between penitent and priest, its ritualized timing and performance also made the sacrament a communal action that most Orthodox Christians in the Russian empire undertook at the same time. *Govienie* integrated the penitent into the community in the most literal way possible: first as a marker of spiritual responsibility around the age of seven, then as a seasonal rite, then before marriage, and finally as part of last rites. Schoolchildren went with their classmates, soldiers with their regiments. In its combination of communal fasting, confession, and penitential atonement, Russian *govienie* resembled Jewish practice in the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Most literary representations of confession, whether autobiographical, didactic, hagiographical,

[10] For fifteenth- and sixteenth-century confession guides in which *govienie* is used as a synonym for the Church's fasting periods ('Velikoe govienie, Petrovo govienie, Filipovo govienie'), see S. I. Smirnov, *Materialy dlia istorii drevne-russkoi pokaiannoi distsipliny (teksty i zamietki)* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tip., 1914), 112–14, 184.

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or fictional, replicated and reinforced that liturgical context. To make that context understandable to the non-specialist, this book therefore begins with an outline of the liturgy of penance and its books.

This liturgical and communal context in which confession and communion occurred is important to emphasize because in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, some liturgical reformers and theologians decried the Russian practice of annual *govienie*. They argued for restoring the centrality of the Eucharist to Orthodox piety, and for separating confession from communion (as happened in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II). They described the practices analysed in this book as a deviation from early Christian practice, as inimical to true Christianity, and as something to be rejected.[11]

That is fair enough. But the goal of this book is not to argue what inhabitants of imperial Russia should have done, or what Orthodox Christians ought to do now, but to consider what they actually did for centuries. And what they did was to create a unique confessional and liturgical culture that remained remarkably durable. Tellingly, even after decades of revolutionary turmoil, persecution, and official atheism, as soon as communism fell, the Russian Orthodox Church returned to many of the same pre-revolutionary forms that reformers bemoaned. Almost uniquely in the Orthodox world, the contemporary Russian Orthodox Church still requires confession before almost every communion. This book tries to explain why, and asks whether it will continue to.

Treating so rich a topic has imposed certain limits. First, in an attempt to bring Russia and Orthodoxy into the European story, I have examined Orthodox Christian sacramental confession primarily in its Russian-language context, and have compared it to confession in Western Europe. But it would also be fruitful to examine Russian penitential practices alongside such other historically Orthodox Christian traditions as those of Greece, Georgia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Middle East. I hope this study will encourage others to undertake such explorations. Studies of other denominations in the Russian empire would also be helpful. Second, I have focused on the practice of confession as it worked for most people most of the time—that is, the confessions of laypeople to their parish priest in their parish church. This is a study of sacramental confession as a rite, not of disclosure of thoughts or the spiritual father–child relationship broadly speaking. Although I consider confession within the context of pilgrimage, guidance by spiritual elders, and monastic incarceration, the penitential practices of monks and nuns receive less attention. But as the penitential practices of nuns and monks sometimes had a symbiotic relationship with those of laypeople, and in some ways set the example for the broader community, it would be useful to more fully

[11] Alexander Schmemann, *Great Lent: Journey to Pascha* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1974); Aleksei Vinogradov, 'Ticket to Heaven: Sketches on Confession', and Selyuminov, 'Confession: A Critical Layman's Perspective', *The Wheel* 21–22 (Spring/Summer 2020): Conscience, 82–87, 88–94.

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explore their mutual interpenetration. Third, although I engage theology, I have preferred to emphasize practice over theory. That is, rather than assuming that doctrine necessarily forms practice, I have tried to look for manifestations of that influence before reaching conclusions on the basis of theology alone. Finally, although this book concentrates on how Russian rulers and Russian clerics tried to channel religiosity into the acts of confession and communion, for most Russian Orthodox, being a good Christian also continued to mean many other things, including prayer, making the sign of the cross, venerating icons and relics, keeping the commandments, blessing water and fruit and beehives and fields, singing psalms and hymns, celebrating holidays, and keeping the fasts. Rather than measuring their piety by their *govienie*, we might try to see it as they did: a solemn requirement of their faith, but not its only, or its fullest, expression.

Terminology, Translation, and Transliteration

Translation and transliteration of names from the Russian empire is a perennial problem, especially given that some of the areas covered in this book are now independent states. I have spelled names as they appeared in my sources: before 1917, that meant Kiev not Kyiv; Mogilev not Mahilau; and so on. When current and former names are so far apart as to be unrecognizable, I include both (for example, Nyslott (Savonlinna)). I have followed Library of Congress transcriptions of old orthography Russian: *ispovied'* not *ispoved'*; *govienie* not *govenie*. I have generally followed Library of Congress transliteration with the exception of using standard English spellings for such well-known figures as Russian rulers (Peter, Paul, Anna, Elizabeth, Catherine, Alexander, Nicholas), cultural figures (Tolstoy, Tchaikovsky, Dostoyevsky), place names (Tver not Tver'; Yaroslavl not Iaroslavl'), and non-Slav historical figures (Paisios not Paisii). Biblical citations follow the Septuagint. Dates before February 1918, when the Bolsheviks shifted to the Gregorian calendar, are in the Julian calendar used in the Russian empire.

Finally, I am aware that confession is only one aspect of the sacrament of repentance. The Eastern tradition requires contrition, confession, and absolution; requirements in the Western tradition are more elaborate and dogmatized. Although I occasionally refer to the sacrament of confession, I remain aware that confession as such is not a sacrament, but only part of one.

The Liturgy of Penance and Its Books

Orthodox Christians in the Russian empire were expected to complete their annual *govienie* during Great Lent, the season set aside by the Church for cleansing the soul through penance and confession of sins. The first and most

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universal layer of words meant to dispose people to repentance, and train them in it, came from the Lenten cycle of the Orthodox liturgy. The liturgical book known as the *Lenten Triodion* contained the corpus of liturgical texts for every day, including Biblical readings and hymnody.[12] The period it encompassed, from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee (named for the Gospel read at that service) four Sundays before the start of Lent proper through Easter eve, provided a template that anchored the penitential process.

The following guide covers the services most people preparing for confession would have attended. Thus it omits some Lenten Sundays, but includes such key Lenten weekdays as the first four days of Lent and the Wednesday of the Life of St Mary of Egypt. No less important in training for confession were the four weeks before Lent officially began.

Preparation for Penance

Each of the four weeks before Lent had a specific penitential theme read at that Sunday's Gospel. Preparation for Lenten repentance began with the parable of the **Publican and the Pharisee**. The idea was that one should not repent showily, like the Pharisee, or be complacent about one's prowess in prayer, tithing, and fasting, but rather, like the Publican, maintain a mood of constant compunction (Luke 18:9–14). The next week's parable suggested that each person was the **Prodigal Son**, who had squandered his inheritance in riotous living and crawled back in shame to his father, admitting that he was no longer worthy to be called a 'son'. God, the loving Father, gladly welcomed back His broken child (Luke 15:11–32). The Sunday of the **Dread Judgement** then showed Christians what would happen to those who had not fed the hungry, taken in the stranger, clothed the naked, nursed the sick, or visited the prisoner: they, like the goats, would be sent to everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:31–46). This reminder to focus on the needs of others was an important corrective to the popular association of Lent as abstinence from meat, dairy, and sexual relations. It also emphasized that one could only repent in this life, and therefore should take care to confess sins while one still could (a common sermon topic as well).[13]

The last Sunday before Lent had a double theme: **The Expulsion of Adam from Paradise**, and **Forgiveness**. The theme of forgiveness expressed in Matthew 6:14–21 read at that service summed up the goals of repentance, from its opening, 'if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you

[12] For the evolution of the Triodion, see I. A. Karabinov, *Postnaia Triod': Istoricheskii obzor eia plana, sostava, redaktsii i slavianskikh perevodov* (St Petersburg: tip. V. Smirnova, 1910). The Church Slavonic edition used here is *Triodion', siest' Trispesnets (Triod' Postnaia)* (Kiev: tip. Kievo-Pecherskiia Uspenskoi Lavry, 1907).

[13] See, for example, the stikheron beginning with 'Obratisia, dushe okaiannaia', in *Triodion*, 55.

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do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours', to not fasting 'like the hypocrites', looking doleful and haggard, but with a washed face and a clean, shiny head of hair. Adam and Eve locked outside the gates of Paradise stood in for everyone who had tasted bliss and lost it through bad decisions.

Although these Biblical stories were powerful, their effect was strengthened by how their themes were elaborated in hymnody. The figure of Adam mourning Paradise lost and his nakedness was so resonantly expressed in a stikheron from that day's Vespers, for example, that *it* rather than the Biblical text (which was not in fact read at the service) was reworked in numerous East Slavic popular songs and verses.[14] In other ways, too, the liturgy of penance brought out and developed the Gospel message. While Matthew's Jesus explains the link between forgiving others and expecting forgiveness from God, Orthodox liturgy drove home the point with the ritual closing of Forgiveness Sunday Vespers: each person had to ask forgiveness of, and themselves forgive, every other person present with a full bodily prostration. Indeed, although dairy and fish were still allowed on Forgiveness Sunday until midnight (although priests bemoaned the carousing that many people had allowed themselves), Lent began liturgically during Forgiveness Sunday Vespers, after the singing of the Great Prokeimenon ('Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted!'), the changing of vestments to black, the singing of litanies in a minor key, and the prostrations during the Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian. The Prayer of St Ephraim would be repeated numerous times at every subsequent Lenten service, lodging itself firmly in Russian Orthodox consciousness.[15]

First Four Nights: The Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete

For many, *govienie* started with 'Clean' Monday, the first day of Lent. The Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete, known popularly as *Efimony*, was read in church at Great Compline in the first four nights of Great Lent in four sections from Clean Monday through Clean Thursday.[16] This text, drawing extensively on typology from both the Old and New Testaments (David, Noah, Sarah, Leah), is a dialogue with one's soul and an exhortation to repent. It prepared the Orthodox Christian

[14] See Olga Savel'eva, '"Plach Adama": Krug istochnikov i literaturnaia sem'ia pamiatnika', in *Pamiatniki literatury i obshchestvennogo soznaniia v epokhi feodalizma v Rossii*, E. K. Romodanovskaia, ed. (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1985), 165–82. For an exploration of liturgical commemoration versus Biblical reading in Orthodox cultures, see Sean Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus'* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 117–21.

[15] Alexander Schmemann, *Great Lent*, 13–15. For carousing during *Semaine Gras* (Maslenitsa), see A. Vysotskii, 'Pouchenie v nedieliu miasopustnuiu', RdSP t. 1 #5 (January 30, 1866), 160–2.

[16] Although the term *efimony* is usually held to be taken from the Greek *meth' imon*, *μεθ' ἡμῶν* (God with us), because it also refers to the word for 'refrain' (*evfimion*), it may allude to the Great Canon's repetition of 'Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me'. See the discussion in *PTsV* 1902, No. 8, 282–3.

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for confession, beginning with self-examination ('Where shall I begin to lament the deeds of my wretched life?'), urged them to repent and confess ('Come, wretched soul, with your flesh, and confess to the Creator of all. Refrain from your former brutishness and offer to God tears of repentance'), and warned that time was short ('The end is drawing near, my soul, but you neither care nor prepare. Rise! The Judge is at the very doors').[17]

In the Slavic-language context, an Ode 9 verse on the first day of Lent is especially relevant. When Orthodox Christians in the Russian empire heard the Great Canon urge them to obtain mercy through 'prayer, fasting, purity, and *govienie*', they thought it referred to their own *govienie* process.[18] Liturgy thus both echoed and formed their own experience. The Canon also served the purpose of 'framing' one's Lenten penance: it began penance at the start of Lent over four days, and, by being read in its entirety at the fifth week, it offered a chance to check over one's progress and improve before it was too late. The Great Canon offered so thorough a penitential experience that the two occasions after it was read, whether the first Saturday of Great Lent (St Theodore of Tyro) or the fifth (St Mary of Egypt), were favourite choices for Russians doing their annual *govienie*.

The liturgical context of Russian repentance has another aspect. Most of the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete is written from the point of view of the individual soul undertaking its penitent journey, as are other Triodion texts. Almost every text in Vespers and Matins of the Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise is in the first person ('Come today, my wretched soul; weep over your deeds, remembering how once you were stripped naked in Eden and cast out from delight and unending joy'). The weekly Matins hymn sung throughout all ten weeks of the Triodion begins with the words, 'Open to *me* the gates of repentance'. One is meant to internalize penance: that is not surprising. But as important is that the *Triodion* also depicts the process of cleansing, repentance, and union with Christ, as something collective. Lenten texts and services reminded the individual soul that they undertook the journey from old to new, from spiritual stupor and death to spiritual paschal rebirth, not alone, but together with the rest of sinful humanity.

The very first words of the Triodion at Vespers of the Week of the Publican and the Pharisee, written as they are in the plural and addressed to everyone present, emphasize that prayer and humility are acts undertaken together.[19] A stikheron from Matins on Tuesday of 'Butter' Week before Lent, again in the plural, exhorts

[17] For the Church Slavonic readings (Monday Ode 1:1, 1:2, and 4:2), see *Triod'*, 92, 93ob–94. For English, see *The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete*, at http://austroca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/greatcanon_sts.pdf.

[18] *Triod'*, 97. English translations render the Greek σεμνότητι in this phrase as 'reverence', so that the implied reference to confession and communion—obvious to the Slavic ear—is missing.

[19] '**Brethren**, let **us** not pray as the Pharisee: for he who exalts himself shall be humbled. Let **us** humble **ourselves** before God, and with fasting cry aloud as the Publican: God, be merciful to **us** sinners'. *The Lenten Triodion*, Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos Ware, trans. (London: Faber, 1978), 99.

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all members of the community to set out on the same path of Lenten fasting and abstinence in pursuit of the reward of the gift of the Holy Spirit.[20] Such plural references to aspects of *govienie* occur on literally every page of the Triodion, as when the Orthodox are likened to the Ninevites needing to fast and repent like Jonah, Daniel, Elijah, and other prophets. Through *govienie*, the Russian Orthodox rediscovered their collective identity as the people of God. Just as Lenten liturgy reminded Russian souls that they undertook the annual journey from old to new, from spiritual stupor and death to spiritual rebirth, together with the rest of humanity, so in real life most Orthodox Christians in imperial Russia experienced *govienie* with others in their group, whether their family, their parish, their school, their workplace, or their regiment.

The Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

During Lent, Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Saturdays and Sundays only. To offer the Eucharist to Christians on some Lenten weekdays, the Orthodox Church served the Liturgy of Presanctified (previously consecrated) Gifts. Although most Orthodox Christians in Russia tended to commune on Lenten Saturdays, they went to Presanctified liturgies as part of their *govienie*'s minimum preliminary three-day church attendance. The result was their familiarity with a beloved short, intimate service including settings of the hymns 'Let my prayer arise' and 'Now the powers of Heaven', figuring prominently in contemporary Russian *govienie* accounts.

The Sunday of the Cross

A second common occasion for *govienie* was the third week of Great Lent, the **Veneration of the Cross**, when the flower-decorated cross was solemnly taken out of the altar. It remained in the middle of the church for a week to remind people of the redeeming crucifixion of Jesus and the point of their Lenten penance. The Gospel (Mark 8:34–8, 9:1) and epistle readings reinforced the theme of taking up one's cross and following Christ, the unique 'high priest who in every respect has been tempted as we are . . . appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins' (Hebrews 4:14–16, 5:1–6). Tchaikovsky's and Rachmaninoff's settings of two chants from this week ('Before thy Cross' and 'Save, O Lord, Thy People') are among the most celebrated.

[20] 'O peoples, let **us** greet the Fast with joy, for the beginning of the spiritual contest is at hand. Let **us** lay aside the comforts of the flesh; let **us** make God's gifts of grace increase within **our** souls; let **us** suffer with Christ as His servants, that we may be glorified with Him as **children** of God. And may the Holy Spirit, dwelling in **us all**, give light to **our** souls'. *The Lenten Triodion: Supplementary Texts*, Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos Ware, trans. (South Canaan, PA: STS Press, 2007), 20.

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The Life of St Mary of Egypt

The Life of St Mary Egypt was read in its entirety on the evening of the fifth Wednesday of Great Lent, interspersed among the final reading of the Great Canon of St Andrew. It provided the template of a great sinner, a sex addict who attained holiness through forty-seven years of solitary repentance and asceticism in the desert. Mary is sent to humble Zosimas, a pious monk of fifty-three who has begun to think that he is 'perfect in everything and needed no instruction from anyone', and thus to hearten those struggling with either sexual temptation or smugness.[21] The next evening was the **Laudation of the Mother of God** (which included the communal singing of the beloved *Akathist* hymn). Both celebrations made that week's Saturday another popular day for concluding *govienie*.

Lazarus Saturday

Lazarus Saturday celebrating the raising of Lazarus of Bethany (John 14:1–45) and Palm Sunday marked a caesura between the 'bright sadness' of Lent proper and the dark mourning of Passion Week. They were a favourite choice for ending *govienie* because, 'Having completed the soul-saving forty days', individual soul-searching was over. Reflecting the festal bright spot, fasting rubrics relaxed to allow caviar (Lazarus Saturday) and fish (Palm Sunday), and vestments shifted to green as a symbol of new life (and the same colour used at Pentecost).

Passion Week and Great and Holy (Maundy) Thursday

The first three days of Passion Week prepared Orthodox Christians for communing at the Holy Thursday liturgy commemorating the institution of the Eucharist. Hymns evoking the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and the unprepared, included 'Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight', and 'Thy bridal chamber I see adorned, O my savior, but I have no wedding garment that I may enter'.[22] Readings included the parable of the fig tree (used to great effect by Dostoyevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*), the Saviour weeping over Jerusalem, and the testing of Job.

Most relevant for the experience of confession was Great Thursday's epistle, 1 Corinthians 11:23–32. The first section, containing the 'words of institution', read:

[21] 'The Life of St. Mary of Egypt', in Alice-Mary Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), 65–94.

[22] Although Great Tuesday's powerful stikheron by St Kassia about the woman who washed Christ's feet and dried them with her hair was a favourite both of Greek Orthodox and of Boris Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago*, most Russians focused on the texts described here.

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> [23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,[24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

If the reading were to stop there, it would be simply a solemn commemoration and encouragement of communion. Ending at that point became the practice of the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II, when auricular confession stopped being a requirement for communion. But the Russian Orthodox Church also read the verses that followed. These verses, raising a last red flag even after one had been absolved, sternly reminded people of the dire consequences of unworthy preparation: communing unworthily was *dangerous*. They explain the logic of thorough cleansing via church attendance, fasting, and confession—and the real dread many Orthodox Christians in the Russian empire felt before the sacrament:

> [27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.[28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.[29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have fallen asleep.[31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.[32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

The effect of this warning was heightened by the Gospel readings that followed, relaying both the Last Supper and the Saviour's betrayal and subsequent arrest.[23] The prayer Orthodox Christians heard before every communion, and sang on Holy Thursday instead of the Cherubic hymn, repeated: 'neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss'. Beginning as it did with a request to be *accepted* as a communicant, the prayer reinforced the acknowledgement of unworthiness and the risk of communion as condemnation.[24] The one bright note in both the communion prayer and Holy Thursday's communion verse—'But like the thief do I confess Thee: remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom'—may also explain the love Russian Orthodox Christians had both for the figure of the good thief and the *exapostilarion* hymn about him sung at Vespers that evening: although one had

[23] Matthew 26:2–20; John 13:3–17; Matthew 26:21–39; Luke 22:43–4; Matthew 26:40–27; 2.

[24] Sermons before communion consistently emphasized the risk of communion as condemnation as well. Priest V. Vauchskii, 'Pouchenie pred prichashcheniem svv. Tain', *RdSP* (March 1907), 114–15.

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the uncomfortable feeling that one was like Judas, the good thief offered the chance to repent at the last minute and be accepted into the Kingdom.

At that point, most people had completed their annual *govienie*. From Thursday evening on, Orthodox Christians focused on Christ's betrayal, suffering, and death on the Cross. Thursday evening's Passion Gospels (technically the Matins of Great Friday), the taking out of the Shroud on Great Friday afternoon, and Christ's symbolic burial on Matins of Great and Holy Saturday were the most sombre services of the year.

Great and Holy Saturday

With the reading of Ezekiel's vision of dry bones coming to life and the triumphant words, 'Let God arise and His enemies be scattered', Great and Holy Saturday signalled the end of darkness, something reinforced by the changing of the vestments from black to white. This morning's service was the last day at which a typical Orthodox Christian in the Russian empire might have gone to communion. For many reasons explored in this book—beliefs about purity and sobriety before and after communion, the association of *govienie* with continence versus the paschal desire to once again embrace the pleasures of the flesh—perhaps counter-intuitively, almost no Russian Orthodox Christians communed on Easter itself. Other possible occasions for confession and communion, usually supplementing Lenten *govienie* rather than replacing it, were the feasts marking the end of other lengthy fasting periods—St Peter and Paul (June 29), Christmas (December 25), the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 15), one's own namesday, or the feast of one's parish church.

The Confession Rite Proper

After attending church services for several days, penitents came to church and stood in line, awaiting their turn to confess. Confession usually took place on one of the choir (*kliros*) areas in front of the altar. When one's turn came, one went up the few steps to where the waiting priest either stood or sat near a lectern holding a Gospel and a cross. The penitent made three prostrations, venerated the cross and the Gospel, received a blessing from the priest, then knelt if physically capable of doing so. Unlike Roman Catholic practice in this period, the priest knew whom he was confessing. After covering the penitent's head with his stole, the priest addressed them with:

> Behold, my child, Christ standeth here invisibly and receiveth thy confession: wherefore, be not ashamed, neither be afraid, and conceal thou nothing from me:

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> but tell me, doubting not, all things which thou hast done: and so shalt thou have pardon from our Lord Jesus Christ. Lo, His holy image is before us: and I am but a witness, bearing testimony before Him of all things which thou dost say to me. But if thou shalt conceal anything from me, thou shalt have the greater sin. Take heed, therefore, lest, having come to the physician, thou depart unhealed.

After the confession, the priest blessed the penitent with his stole, saying:

> O Lord God of the salvation of thy servants, gracious, bountiful, and long-suffering, who repentest thee concerning our evil deeds, and desirest not the death of a sinner, but rather than he should turn from his wickedness and live: show thy mercy now upon thy servant, N., and grant unto her/him an image of repentance, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance, pardoning her/his every transgression, whether voluntary or involuntary. Reconcile and unite her/him to thy holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom are due unto thee dominion and majesty, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The words of the absolution which followed changed in ways described in Chapter 1.

1
Confession as Encounter with Early Modernity

For these poyntes wythowte nay
He may haue leue to go hys way,
And schryue hym at another prest,
Where that hym beste lust,
Leste indyscrete hys prest were,
Hys confessyone for to here,
Or ef he knewe by ready token
That hys shchryfte he wolde open . . .
—John Myrc, *Instructions for parish priests*, England, 1470

When Great Prince Vladimir of Rus' was baptized into Orthodox Christianity in or around 988, he was part of a broad Central and Northern European trend. The rulers of Scandinavia, Poland, Hungary, Rus', and Bohemia all converted to Christianity in the decades before 1000 AD. In so doing, they inherited practices of sacramental penance developed in Christendom over centuries. From an initial variety of ways in which Christians could obtain forgiveness for sins, penance had narrowed almost exclusively towards the form of auricular confession as a prerequisite for partaking of communion, usually in the period before Easter.[1]

Unusually among the 'second-wave' convert nations, however, the ruler of Rus' chose the religion of the Eastern Roman empire, later known as Byzantium. This would affect the experience of confession for people in Rus' lands.[2] Although it is not clear whether the Rus' Church drew more on Greek or South Slavic practice (and there were varieties within each), initially, the Rus' Church seems to have followed the practices of its Metropolitan Ioann II (1080–8), according to which

[1] For similarities and differences in patterns of conversion and their implications for Church–state relations, see Nora Berend, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe, and Rus' c. 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For the evolution of auricular confession, see Bernhard Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1964).

[2] For penance in the Eastern tradition, see A. I. Almazov, *Tainaia ispovied' v pravoslavnoi vostochnoi tserkvi. Opyt vnieshnei istorii*, 3 vols. (Odessa: tip-lit. Shtaba Odesskago Voennago Okruga, 1894); S. I. Smirnov, *Drevnerusskii dukhovnik. Izsliedovanie po istorii tserkovnago byta* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tip., 1914); and Georgii Ashkov, *Dukhovnicheskaia distsiplina pozdnego srednevekov'ia na Rusi* (Voronezh: 'Kvarta', 2012).

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confession was required only for grave sins, and Christians could commune without a mandatory preliminary confession every time.[3] By the twelfth century, references to auricular confession become more prominent, and share some aspects with those further west. The questions the twelfth-century monk Kirik of the Antoniev Monastery posed to Archbishop Nifont of Novgorod, for example, suggest that Rus' tackled penance in ways similar to Anglo-Saxon missionaries.[4] But, although Constantinople and Rome were still technically in communion at the end of the tenth century, their traditions had long shown signs of divergence. The notion of the confessional 'seal', for example, entered Byzantium relatively late, only in the twelfth century. Although it was generally accepted that the confession should be private, there do not seem to have been any strict penalties for breaking the seal: in twelfth-century Byzantium, revealing what was said at confession did not keep you from being made a bishop; unordained monks could hear confession and give absolution until that point as well.[5] Rus' had its own variations. When an adult layman confessed in Novgorod, both he and his father-confessor were likely bearded, married, and with children. He would have heard the words of absolution in a Slavic language he understood, and in a formulation different from that further west.[6] After the mutual excommunications of 1054, and the 1204 sack of Constantinople by Crusaders, confessional practice continued to evolve in different directions.

The Latin Church exercised increasingly strong hierarchical control over sacramental confession. In 1215, canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council commanded all Christians (in the famous phrase *omnis utriusque sexus*, 'each one of either sex') who reached the age of discretion to confess all their sins at least once a year to their own priest: as a result, yearly confession in the Latin Church became a near-universal practice.[7] By contrast, confession in Orthodox lands presents a

[3] Smirnov, *Drevnerusskii dukhovnik*, 5–7.

[4] T. U. Fomina, 'Voproshanie Kirikovo kak pamiatnik pokaiannogo prava Drevnei Rusi', in *Kirik Novgorodets i drevnerusskaia kul'tura*, V. V. Mil'kov, ed. (Novgorod: NovGU im. Iaroslava Mudrogo, 2012), 66–81; R. G. Pikhoia, 'Vozniknovenie pamiatnikov pokaiannoi distsipliny drevnei Rusi v XI v.', *Antichnaia drevnost' i srednie veka: problemy ideologii i kul'tury* (Sverdlovsk: Sredne-ural'skoe knizhnoe izd., 1987), 73–86.

[5] A. S. Pavlov, *Nomokanon pri Bol'shom Trebnike* (Moscow: tip. G. Lissiera i A. Geshklia, 1897), 246–50; P. V. Gidulianov, 'Vopros o tainoi ispovedi i dukhovnikakh vostochnoi tserkvi v noveishei russkoi literature', *Vizantiiskii vremennik* t. 14 (1907), 409–13; Dirk Krausmüller, '"Monks who are not priests do not have the power to bind and to loose": the debate about confession in eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 109 no. 2 (2016), 739–68.

[6] Antonin Dostal, 'The Origins of the Slavonic Liturgy', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19 (1965), 67–87; Miguel Arranz, *Izbrannye sochineniia po liturgike*, v. 2: *Tainstva Vizantiiskoi Traditsii* (Moscow: Institut filosofii, teologii i istorii sv. Fomy, 2003), 96–104. For examples of early penitentials, see S. I. Smirnov, *Materialy*, 28–77.

[7] Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, trans. and ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 230–71; Andrew Reeves, 'Teaching the Practice of Confession in Thirteenth-Century England: Priests and Laity', in *A Companion to Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, Greg Peter and C. Colt Anderson, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 252–81.

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picture of increasing diversity and fragmentation. By 1300, much of present-day Belarus was ruled by powerful pagan Lithuanians; much of present-day Ukraine by Roman Catholic Poles or Hungarians; and lands including Moscow, Tver, Vladimir, and Yaroslavl had to pay tribute to the Mongols. Although the divided heirs to Orthodox Rus' continued to share the heritage of the 'Byzantine Commonwealth' with their co-religionists in the Middle East and Southeast Europe, those were ruled increasingly by Muslims. In the absence of a clear ecclesiastical centre, the lack of sovereignty meant even more variety. The religious dissenters called *strigol'niki* were accused of discouraging confession to a priest and confessing to the ground, for example.[8]

After Muscovy won its sovereignty in the fifteenth century, confession started to occupy people's minds. Donations to monasteries in the name of the dead, particularly those who might not have confessed adequately before dying, became increasingly important; icons showed the torments in Hell of those who had not confessed their sins.[9] Penitentials, the lists of questions asked at confession, became more and more detailed, first with different variants for women and men, then with different variants for different occupations and social classes, such as boyars and judges. The late sixteenth century marked the most intensive period of penitential creativity, with as much as 150 separate questions for each category. Indeed, given the large surviving number of Russian penitentials, their wide distribution throughout Russia, and the increasingly specific nature of their contents, Maria Korogodina has argued persuasively that although penitentials may have originated from and existed elsewhere, they became far more central in Russia than they were in Byzantium or in the Balkans.[10] The 1551 Stoglav Council contained several references to repentance. The repentance theme became especially prominent from the sixteenth century on, with representations of the sacrament appearing on the north doors of some iconostases and an entire wall fresco of the royal palace.[11] The Solovki hegumen Iakov (1581–97) owned a Nomocanon containing instructions for literate clerics to prepare for their own confessions by writing them down.[12] Finally, contemporary

[8] 'Pouchenie russkogo episkopa Stefana protiv strigol'nikov', *Pamiatniki drevnerusskogo kanonicheskogo prava* 6 (St Petersburg: tip. Imp. Akademii Nauk, 1880), 211–28; A. I. Alekseev, 'K izuchenii eresi strigol'nikov', *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki* 4(18) (2004), 22–34.

[9] See David B. Miller, 'Motives for Donations to the Trinity-Sergius Monastery, 1392–1605: Gender Matters', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 14 (1997), 121–45. ; Korogodina, *Ispoved'*, 45, 48–90, 329–33.

[10] Korogodina, *Ispoved'*, 23–4, 296–300.

[11] F. I. Buslaev, *Istoricheskie ocherki russkoi narodnoi sloviesnosti i iskusstva* v. 2 (St Petersburg: izd. D. E. Kozhanchikova, 1861), 312–13; I. A. Shalina, 'Bokovye vrata ikonostasa: simvolicheskii zamysel i ikonografiia', *Ikonostas: proiskhozhdenie, razvitie, simvolika*, A. M. Lidov, ed. (Moscow: Progress-traditsiia, 2000), 559–98; 'Vrata s "pritchami" kak simvolicheskii vkhod v dom premudrosti', *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Russkoe iskusstvo pozdnego srednevekov'ia: XVI vek*, A. L. Batalov, E. S. Smirnova, and N. V. Kvilividze, eds. (St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2003), 269–93.

[12] 'Dva drevnikh slova: I) Popom i prostym liudem, II) o pokaianii i o ispoviedanii griekh', in Pamiatniki drevne-russkoi dukhovnoi pis'mennosti, *Pravoslavnyi sobesiednik* ch. 1 (Kazan: v tip. Gubernskago pravleniia, 1861), 337; A. Kopanev, 'Spisok pokaiannogo stikha XV v.', *Rukopisnoe*

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saints' lives began to specifically mention confession. In the *Life* of Savvatii of Solovki, for example, Savvatii leaves the Solovki islands for the mainland to confess to a priest and receive the Eucharist. His conversation with the priest implies that he cannot commune without confessing; icons show him receiving both confession and communion.[13]

In sum, by the end of the sixteenth century, Muscovites were reflecting on the spiritual need for confession in a variety of areas. But confession was still seen as part of a complex of actions meant to bring the Orthodox Christian to the physical and spiritual purity requisite for communion. Widely copied instructions for those preparing to confess stressed not self-examination (which is not even mentioned), but regulations concerning fasting, prostrations, and not sleeping with one's spouse.[14] As the seventeenth century approached, several crises set off a process forming the Russian Orthodox confession phenomenon as we know it today.

Crisis as Catalyst in the Seventeenth Century

The 1596 Union of Brest, in which some Ruthenian Orthodox bishops accepted the authority of Rome, the dynastic crisis of the Time of Troubles (1598–1613), and the Cossack rebellions against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth led to a sense of religious urgency and a hardening of confessional lines similar to that further west. To more than a few Russian clerics, the chaotic period of interregnum, famine, civil war, invasion, usurpers, and impostors, as in earlier Reformation-era Western Europe, revealed the lack of consensus and a need for repentance and cleansing. To more than a few Greek and Ruthenian Orthodox clerics, the threat of losing adherents to Roman or Greek Catholicism also meant repentance and discipline—but, as they had witnessed first-hand Roman Catholic responses to Protestantism, they could learn from their opponents how to face religious challenges from their opponents.[15] First separately, and then together,

nasledie Drevnei Rusi (po materialam Pushkinskogo doma) (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka', Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1972), 249–53; T. F. Vladyshevskaia and V. N. Sergeev, 'Pokaiannyi stikh "Zriu tia, grobe . . ." v literature, zhivopisi i muzyke XVII veka', *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo XV–XVII vekov. Sbornik statei*, V. N. Sergeev, ed. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1981), 108–17; A. M. Panchenko, 'Stikhi pokaiannye', in *Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi. Vtoraia polovina XVI veka*, L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likhachev, eds. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986).

[13] *Povest' o Zosime i Savvatii: faksimil'noe vosproizvedenie*, M. M. Chernilovskaia, ed., 2 vols. (Moscow: Kniga, 1986); S. V. Mineeva, *Rukopisnaia traditsiia zhitiia prep. Zosimy i Savvatiia Solovetskikh (XVI–XVIII vv.)*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2001).

[14] 'Zapovied' ko ispoviedaiushchimsia synom i dshcherem', in Smirnov, *Materialy*, 112–15.

[15] I. L. Buseva-Davydova, *Kul'tura i iskusstvo v epokhu peremen: Rossiia semnadtsatogo stoletiia* (Moscow: 'Indrik', 2008); Paul Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Margarita Korzo, *Ukrainskaia i belorusskaia katekheticheskaia traditsiia kontsa XVI–XVIII vv: stanovlenie, evoliutsiia i problema zaimstvovanii* (Moscow: Kanon, 2007); Frank E. Sysyn, 'The Formation of Ukrainian Religious Culture: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *Church, Nation and State in Russia and*

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Muscovite and Ruthenian clerics in the middle of the seventeenth century began to emphasize the sacraments in ways similar to those pursued in the Roman Catholic and Protestant world. Their emphasis on confession created a culture that brought Orthodox East Slavs into the religious and disciplinary framework of modern Europe, and into the modern European 'disciplinary revolution'.

This paradigm, both extensively explored and extensively challenged in Western Europe, is less familiar in the East Slavic context. Because of the challenges to unity posed by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, so the argument goes, European religious and state authorities sought to control their populations and consolidate their religious practices. In Protestant countries, the Reformation ultimately strengthened the state. Through disciplinary techniques including communal surveillance, Calvin and his followers created an infrastructure of social control and religious governance that served as a model for the rest of Europe.[16] Roman Catholic countries met this challenge in their own ways. Clear statements of doctrine, standardization of liturgical practices, and new means of enforcing discipline all played a part.[17]

Especially important in the Roman Catholic context was a new emphasis on confession. Although annual confession and communion had been a requirement for Catholics since the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the sacraments had been more of a seasonal ritual meant to cleanse the community for Easter than an act of regular personal self-examination.[18] The Protestant reformers caused a shock in the system. Although Martin Luther initially included penance among the three sacraments he continued to recognize, among his followers penance evolved into different practices, including general confession.[19] In the Council of Trent (1545–63), Roman Catholic authorities began to emphasize the sacrament of confession both as a private, individual rite and as a form of social discipline.[20]

Ukraine, Geoffrey A. Hosking, ed. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1991), 1–22; Vasileios Tsakiris, *Die gedruckten griechischen Beichtbücher zur Zeit der Türkenherrschaft: ihr kirchenpolitischer Entstehungszusammenhang und ihre Quellen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009.

[16] Philip S. Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[17] Robert Bireley, *Religion and Politics in the Age of the Counter-Reformation: Emperor Ferdinand II, William Lamormaini, S.J., and the Formation of Imperial Policy* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

[18] See Alexander Murray, 'Confession before 1215', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series 3 (1993), 51–81; Karen Wagner, '*Cum aliquis venerit ad sacerdotem:* Penitential Experience in the Central Middle Ages', in *A New History of Penance*, Abigail Firey, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 343–75; John Bossy, 'The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series (1975), 201–18; and Lawrence Duggan, 'Fear and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation', *Archive for Reformation History* 75 (1984), 153–75.

[19] Philip Melanchthon argued that only terror at acknowledging sin and faith were necessary, rather than contrition and satisfaction. Herbert Vorgrimler, *Buße und Krankensalbung. Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte. Band IV, Sakramente, Eschatologie*, 2nd ed. (Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1978), 171–5. For general confession in early Protestant practice, see Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 47.

[20] Wietse de Boer, 'At Heresy's Door: Borromeo, Penance, and Confessional Boundaries in Early Modern Europe', in Firey, *A New History of Penance*, 343–75; Vasyl Popelyastyy, 'The Post-Tridentine

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Instructions for priests to wear full vestments for confession and the introduction of the confession booth in response to insinuations of sexual impropriety gave the sacrament new gravity and a new site designated only for the sacrament (as opposed to the previous practice of confessing people on an ad hoc basis in the nave).[21] Carlo Borromeo thought that the sacrament of penance was central both to ecclesiastical discipline and personal devotion, and therefore should not happen only once a year before Easter, but at least twice during Lent, and ideally more often throughout the entire year.[22] Sermons, instruction, and more frequent confession sought to make the population internalize doctrine in such a way as to become capable of self-censorship and indeed denouncing others.[23] Anglicans devoted more attention to confession as well.[24]

Crucially, as David Myers has noted, these reformers had the backing of secular authority and military power. In Passau in 1558, authorities threatened prison for those refusing to confess. In 1612, the vicar of Salzburg introduced a decree requiring annual confession and communion: those who refused were to have their names sent to the territorial government, not the bishop, for action. In Bavaria, the Geistliche Rat continued to seek out and punish confession shirkers throughout the seventeenth century, keeping lists of the disobedient.[25] In some dioceses in Spain, those who had not confessed by the end of the Lenten season could be summoned to the capital for prosecution; transients had to carry with them certificates of confession.[26] Political misbehaviour people relayed at confession could lead to arrest: in Speyer, one revolt was foiled because a peasant had mistakenly trusted his confessor.[27] The sacraments became visible testimony of submission and good citizenship, both to the Church and the rulers who supported it.[28] As Michel Foucault famously argued, these 'technologies of the self'

Theology of the Sacrament of Penance on the Basis of the *Rituale Romanum* (1614)', in Violet Soen and Wim François, *The Council of Trent: Reform and Controversy in Europe and Beyond (1545–1700)*, 191–220; Günther Wassilowsky, 'The Myths of the Council of Trent and the Construction of Catholic Confessional Culture', 28–59.

[21] W. David Myers, *'Poor, Sinning Folk': Confession and Conscience in Counter-Reformation Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 116, 134; Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), 49–57.

[22] Borromeo also argued for a special relationship between penitent and confessor. See Witse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 84; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 77–80.

[23] Sara T. Nalle, 'Self-Correction and Social Change in the Spanish Counter-Reformation', in *Religion and the Early Modern State: Views From China, Russia, and the West*, James D. Tracy and Marguerite Ragnow, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 302–23.

[24] Kenneth L. Parker, 'Richard Greenham's "Spiritual Physicke": The Comfort of Afflicted Consciences in Elizabethan Pastoral Care', in *Penitence in the Age of Reformations*, Katharine Jackson Lualdi and Anne T. Thayer, eds. (London: Ashgate, 2000), 70–83.

[25] Myers, *'Poor, Sinning Folk'*, 119–22.

[26] Nalle, 'Self-Correction and Social Change', 307.

[27] Marc Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560–1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[28] Ronald K. Rittgers, 'Embracing the "True Relic" of Christ: Suffering, Penance, and Private Confession in the Thought of Martin Luther', in Firey, *A New History of Penance*, 377–93.

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worked: confession in Western Europe became crucially important in constructing the modern individual.

Given the European-wide nature of this phenomenon, it is all the more striking that Russia remained largely absent from its discussion, both at the time and thereafter.[29] The few scholars to explicitly engage confession in early modern Russia in a comparative context have done so only to dismiss it is a 'failed' project. Viktor Zhivov, for example, argued that state compulsion made confession in Russia inherently flawed; Oleg Kharkhordin that the preservation of public penance rather than private confession distinguishes 'the East' from 'the West'.[30] Alternatively, scholars have argued or assumed that Russia (and Orthodox Christianity in general) was not part of the framework at all.[31] The 'silence' regarding confession is not unlike the 'silence' Florovsky ascribed to 'old Russian culture' altogether.[32]

When we examine confession in Russia more concretely, however, the similarities to Western Christendom seem more striking than the differences. The distinction between public and private penance was not absolute anywhere.[33] Rather than the narrative of an emerging 'interiority' in Western Christendom, scholars have been tending to show more interest in looking at both the social and spiritual contexts of repentance.[34] In terms of state encouragement for confession in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Muscovy did not go as far as the rest of Europe. Indeed, it is through trying to use confession as a way of meeting challenges to religious and political harmony that seventeenth-century Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine most *resemble* the broad European tendency to religious unification, social discipline, and control.

Confession in Muscovy and for the Ruthenian Orthodox in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth thus partly supports the 'confessionalization thesis'

[29] When it came to penance, Catholics and Protestants tried to rebut one another: K. B. Osborne, *Reconciliation and Justification: The Sacrament and Its Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990), 162–6.

[30] Zhivov, 'Pokaianna distsiplina i individual'noe blagochestiie'; Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 5.

[31] Heinz Schilling, 'Discipline: The State and the Churches in Early Modern Europe', in *Social Control in Europe, 1500–1800,* Herman Roodenburg and Pieter Spierenburg, eds. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004), I, 31. Such 'Othering' sometimes characterizes the scholarly treatment of Byzantium as well. Averil Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[32] Georges Florovsky, 'The Problem of Old Russian Culture', *Slavic Review* 21(1) (March 1962), 1–15. For a recent challenge, see Donald Ostrowski, 'Europe, Byzantium, and the "Intellectual Silence" of Old Rus' Culture', https://brewminate.com/europe-byzantium-and-the-intellectual-silence-of-the-rus-culture.

[33] Popelyastyy argues that over-emphasizing the private confession suffocated 'other kinds of penance, in particular solemn and public confession' ('Post-Tridentine', 216).

[34] See in particular Jean Delumeau, *L'aveu et le pardon. Les difficultés de la confession, XIIIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), and Mary C. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners. Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); R. Meens, 'The Frequency and Nature of Early Medieval Penance', in *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, P. Biller and A. J. Minnis, eds., York Studies in Medieval Theology 2 (York: Bydell & Brewer, 1998), 35–61; M. DeJong, 'What Was Public About Public Penance?', *La giustizia nell' alto medioevo (secoli IX–XI)*, II, Settimane 42 (Spoleto, 1997), 863–904.

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introduced by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard in the mid-1980s. According to that model, in the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries rulers identified themselves closely with particular forms of Christianity, and promoted them in their territories; this policy was closely connected with centralization and state-building; an alliance of secular and ecclesiastical authorities sought to promote stricter forms of religious and moral discipline, which served as an instrument for the 'social disciplining' of their subjects; and the combination of religious reform and state-formation fostered modernization and modern national identity.[35] One might, of course, question the association of confessionalization and modernity, or the applicability of either term to Orthodox lands.[36] Whether or not one finds the *confessionalization* argument convincing, however, the evidence concerning *confession* is clear: in the middle of the seventeenth century, Muscovy began to join European trends regarding sacramental penance.[37]

Encouraging confession was not something altogether new in Muscovite or Ruthenian lands, of course. In the fifteenth century, Metropolitan Fotii of Kiev had urged his clergy to accept the repentance and confession of their flocks during all four Church fasts.[38] The *Zlatostrui* and *Izmaragd*, collections of homilies drawn from Church Fathers and widely circulated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, discussed the benefits of repentance and linked confession to the traditional Lenten times of year.[39] The 1551 Stoglav Council had reminded priests that they were to educate their flocks at confession.[40] In an anticipation of the joint

[35] H. Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture and the Emergence of Early Modern Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); W. Reinhard, 'Reformation, Counter-Reformation and the Early Modern State: A Reassessment', *Catholic Historical Review* 75(3) (July 1989), 385–403; J. M. Headley, H. J. Hillerbrand, and A. J. Papadas, eds., *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); Waldemar Kowalski, 'Change in Continuity: Post-Tridentine Rural and Township Parish Life in the Cracow Diocese', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35(3) (Fall 2004), especially pp. 700–10.

[36] Alfons Brüning, 'Confessionalization in the Slavia Orthodoxa (Belorussia, Ukraine, Russia)? Potential and Limits of a Western Historiographical Concept', in *Religion and the Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe: Encounters of Faiths*, Thomas Bremer, ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 66–96.

[37] For an example of testing the confessionalization thesis against another 'outlier', see Peter Marshall, 'Confessionalization, Confessionalism and Confusion in the English Reformation', in *Reforming Reformation*, Thomas F. Mayer, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 43–65. For the importance of confession to modernity, see Ronald K. Rittgers, 'Anxious Penitents and the Appeal of the Reformation: Ozment and the Historiography of Confession', in *Piety and Family in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of Steven Ozment*, Marc R. Foster and Benjamin J. Kaplan, eds. (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 50–69.

[38] See Fotii's pastoral letter in 'Pamiatniki drevne-russkoi dukhovnoi pis'mennosti: Poucheniia Fotiia, Mitropolita Kievskago', *Pravoslavnyi sobiesednik*, ch. III (Kazan, 1860), 222, 234–5, and Archimandrite Ioann (Maslov), 'Obriadovye osobennosti pokaiannoi distsipliny drevnei Rusi', *Bogoslovskie trudy* 31 (Moscow: izd. Moskovskoi patriarkhii, 1992), 16–33.

[39] One 1626 version of the Izmaragd has homilies on repentance by St Ephraim the Syrian and St Athanasius. Glavnoe sobranie biblioteki Troitse-Sergievoi Lavry, f. 304, no. 204, ll. 98ob–104 and 129ob–133ob, http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/book.php?col=1&manuscript=204.

[40] E. B. Emchenko, *Stoglav: issledovanie i tekst* (Moscow: izd. 'Indrik', 2000). See also S. I. Smirnov, *Drevnerusskii dukhovnik*, 19.

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action of rulers and hierarchs in the seventeenth century, the late sixteenth-century *Homilies* of Valaam encouraged Tsars to require people to go to confession and communion once a year; at least one Nomocanon recommended *govienie* every week of Great Lent, Maundy Thursday, Holy Saturday, Easter, Ascension and the feast of Boris and Gleb.[41] Almazov, Smirnov, Levin, and Korogodina have analysed the innumerable manuscript rubrics for confession from the sixteenth century and earlier.[42]

But these texts did not single out confession to a priest as the essential element of penance. A homily of Paul the Simple, for example, describes a fornicator who hears a reading from Isaiah during Lent and resolves straightaway to change his life. He confesses his sins to God in private, dies immediately, and is saved. The homily concludes by exhorting sinners not to be ashamed of confessing their sins, to cast off the weight of sin, and to cleanse themselves through true repentance, fasting, almsgiving, 'and similar good works'. This suggests that a private resolve to sin no more is enough, and the absolution by, or indeed the presence of, a priest is not necessary.[43] Similarly, such local *vitae* as those of Arsenii, the bishop of Tver, had abbots express amazement when young monks repented strongly of their sins; posthumous miracles had drunken brethren 'confess their sins *before everyone*' (not a father-confessor) and 'beg pardon *before the relics of St. Arsenii*' (not a father-confessor).[44] The crucial element is repentance and a willingness to confess one's sins before the community, not in private and not at confession. When Afanasii Nikitin lost his service-books on his journey to India, the aspects of *govienie* he bemoaned missing were fasting and church attendance. In a *vita* written early in the seventeenth century, while St Iulianiia (†1604) bemoaned her eldest son's dying without confession and communion, she herself did not appear to go with particular frequency.[45]

An incident from Pseudo-Amphilocius's Life of St Basil the Great, available in Slavonic translation long before the seventeenth century, conveys several contradictory aspects of confession that would persist in popular attitudes: the need to know that one has been forgiven of an especially grave sin, the reluctance to voice the sin, the desire to be absolved without actually having to articulate the sin, and

[41] See A. A. Zimin, '"Beseda valaamskikh chudotvortsev" kak pamiatnik pozdnego nestiazhatel'stva', *Trudy Otdiela Drevnerusskoi Literatury IRLI t.* XI (1955), 198–208; Igor Froianov, '"Valaamskaia Beseda" v religiozno-politicheskikh sporakh serediny XVI veka', *Vestnik Udmurtskogo Universiteta, Istoriia* 7 (2006), 78–98; 'Dva drevnikh slova,' 341.

[42] See those in A. Almazov, *Tainaia ispovied'* I, 234–317; Smirnov, *Materialy*, 1–240; Korogodina, 101–92.

[43] Early seventeenth-century *Izmaragd* in Nauchno-issledovatel'skii otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Biblioteki (hereafter NIOR RGB), f. 304.I, ms. 202, ll. 229–30ob.

[44] *Chetii minei sv. Dimitriia Rostovskago* (Moscow: izd. Moskovskoi Sinodal'noi tipografii, 1906), kn. 7 (March), 51–2, 61.

[45] T. R. Rudi, 'O kompozitsii i topike 'Zhitiia Iulianii Lazarevskoi', 133–43; 'Afanasy Nikitin's Journey Across Three Seas', *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales,* ed. Serge A. Zenkovsky (New York: Penguin, 1974), 333–53.

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the power of God (through His saints) to forgive a sin without its having actually been articulated. In the vita, when a woman who had led a sinful life began to repent, she recalled everything she had done from her youth to her old age, and wrote it all down on a scroll. At the end, she wrote down the most grievous sin, and sealed this scroll with a lead seal. Then, having chosen a time when St Basil went to church, she put the sealed scroll into his hands, and asked him not to read it and not to take off the seal, 'but just cleanse them by your prayer, for I believe that He who gave me this idea will hear you when you pray for me'. Basil did not tell her she must confess her sins, but entered the church, holding the scroll, and, prostrating himself before the altar-table, spent the whole night in prayer for the woman. In the morning, having served Divine liturgy, the hierarch gave the woman back the still-sealed scroll, and reminded her that no one could remit sins save God alone (Mark 2:7). She replied that she knew it, which is why she troubled him with the request of imploring God's goodness. (Even as the woman knew that God alone remits, she suspected that the holy man could help entreat God.) When she opened the scroll, she saw that all the sins had been cleansed except for the worst one. She began to smite her breast and implore Basil that she be fully cleansed. Basil told her that he himself was a sinner and sent her to St Ephraim, who sent her back to Basil—only to arrive at Basil's funeral. The woman wept, blaming the saint for having sent her to someone else when he could have helped her, and threw her scroll onto the saint's bier, telling everyone of her woe. When one of the clerics dared to open the scroll, he saw that no writing remained: the entire scroll was clean. 'All the people, seeing this miracle, glorified God, who gives his servants such power even after their repose'.[46] This is hardly an endorsement for auricular confession. Even as the woman knows she must confess her sin, she cannot bring herself to do it, and God and His saints are willing to help her. Auricular confession and absolution are not what cleanse sins here—a written confession that no one save God actually reads does. Tears seem to be more essential to penance than confession itself.

To be sure, there were practical reasons to partake of the sacraments. Going to confession established one's trustworthiness in the eyes of one's parish priest, whose signature as an attestation of one's good character was required on numerous official documents, including local elections: if a priest did not know one's general moral level through confession, he might well be reluctant to sign off. In his petition to the Tsar in 1631, for example, the illiterate Pervushka of Ustianskaia Chabromakaia complained that his father-confessor had died, he had not yet had a chance to go to the new one, and the other therefore refused

[46] NIOR RGB f. 304 (Glavnoe sobranie biblioteki Troitse-Sergievoi lavry), no. 133, ll. 35–8 (http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/medium.php?col=1&manuscript=133&pagefile=133-0041), and *Zhitiia sviatykh, na russkom iazykie izlozhennyia po rukovodstvu Chet'ikh-Minei Sv. Dimitriia Rostovskago*, kn. 5, ch. 1 (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tip., 1904) (repr. Kozel'sk, izd. Vvedenskoi Optinoi Pustyni, 1993), 52–4.

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to oblige him by signing for him.[47] Russians were as likely to confess to someone who was not their parish priest: as parish priests did not have to keep records of who went to confession, the confessor–penitent connection was personal rather than institutional.[48] Over the seventeenth century, penitentials (the lists of suggested questions to ask at confession) became ever more detailed and specific, with some aimed at villagers, others at 'business people'. Such penitentials now appeared in the collections of musketeers and boyars as well as clerics and monks.[49] By and large, however, in early seventeenth-century Muscovy as in Roman Catholicism before the Council of Trent, confession was part of Orthodox penance and piety, but only a part.[50]

As the century moved on, however, Russian Orthodox hierarchs began to perceive people's not going to confession as a serious problem. Foreigners and their heresies seemed so alarming partly because the sacramental Orthodoxy of the Muscovites seemed so shaky.[51] Only now did queries about someone's Orthodoxy start to appear in penitentials.[52] When foreign officers came to modernize the Russian army at the Tsar's behest, Muscovite bishops suspected them of threatening the Orthodoxy of their underlings. In 1627, Patriarch Filaret and his son, Tsar Mikhail Romanov, jointly issued a decree forbidding foreigners to have Orthodox slaves and servants. What interests us here are their specific concerns: 'Many [of the Orthodox servants] die without repentance, without spiritual father-confessors, and during Great Lent and the other church fasts eat meat and all matter of *skorom* [non-Lenten food] against their wills'.[53] The risk of dying without confession became a generally recognized trope.

Muscovite hierarchs began to emphasize both the necessity of confession and the link between confession and communion as something self-evident and

[47] Aleksandr Amfiteatrov, *Russkii pop XVII vieka: etiudy* (Belgrade: Russkaia biblioteka, 1930), 132. The 1589 Sudebnik of Fedor Ivanovich required illiterate Russians to obtain their father-confessor's signature for all official documents. For the text of the sudebnik, see http://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Судебник_царя_Фёдора_Ивановича_1589_г./Текст_Судебника.

[48] P. S. Stefanovich, *Prikhod i prikhodskoe dukhovenstvo v Rossii v XVI–XVII vekakh* (Moscow: 'Indrik', 2002), 249–312. For the phenomenon of the 'confessional family', bound by personal ties to a shared father-confessor, see S. I. Smirnov, *Drevnerusskii dukhovnik*, 41–50, and 'Pokaial'naia sem'ia', *Russkii viestnik* v. 255 (May 1898), 295–8.

[49] Korogodina, *Ispoved' v Rossii*, 107–13.

[50] Michel Mollat, *La vie et pratique religieuses au XIVe siècle et dans las premiere partie du XVe, principalement en France* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1963), 71–2; Smirnov, *Materialy*, 184.

[51] S. I. Smirnov, *Drevne-russkii dukhovnik*, and his 'Kak govieli v drevnei Rusi?', *Tserkovnyia Viedomosti* 8 (February 24, 1901), 266–79; 9 (March 3, 1901), 305–11; 10 (March 10, 1901), 343–51; Jan Joseph Santich, *Missio Moscovitica: The Role of the Jesuits in the Westernization of Russia, 1582–1689* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

[52] Korogodina, *Ispoved' v Rossii*, 61-3. These questions also appeared in the printed Trebnik of 1623.

[53] 'Ukaz o zapreshchenii nepravoslavnym inozemtsam vladet' pravoslavnymi liud'mi, zhivushchikh v gospodskikh dvorakh', in *Zakonodatel'nye akty Russkogo gosudarstva vtoroi poloviny XVI-pervoi poloviny XVII v.*, N. E. Nosov, ed. (Leningrad: 'Nauka', 1986), 166; S. P. Orlenko, 'Patriarkh Nikon i "nemtsy nekreshchenye"', in *Patriarkh Nikon i ego vremia: sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, E. M. Iukhimenko, ed. (Moscow: Gos. Istoricheskii muzei, 2004), 55–6.

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something to impress upon Orthodox Christians of other nationalities. When a hieromonk named Iosif went as part of a mission to Georgia at the request of King Teimuraz between 1637 and 1640, for example, one of the things that struck him in Georgian practice concerned confession: 'Repentance', he wrote, 'that is, the confession of sins to a father confessor, none of you seem to know; also you do not seem to pursue communion of Christ's Most Holy Body and Blood when in good health—people only get communion when they are dying, and even then it is without confession'. According to the Russians, the Georgian bishops accepted this reproof: 'Now that our King Teimuraz has learned this from you, he has ordered that communion not be given to anyone without confession to father confessors—before we did so out of ignorance'.[54] Even at a time when they showed more willingness to adopt practices from other Orthodox nations, Russian clerics and hierarchs not only emphasized the sacraments of confession and communion and their causal linkage, but had also come to regard this aspect of their practice as being normative.

Central in the endeavour to increase and improve Russian piety were the Zealots of Piety (*revniteli blagochestiia*) priest-reformers and Stefan Vonifatiev, the Tsar's confessor. Among their concerns was confession.[55] From the 1640s onwards, encouraged by these Church reformers, hierarchs appealed to priests and town officials to get laypeople to go to confession more often.[56] Ordering people to hang without offering them a last confession was condemned.[57] In 1646, Patriarch Iosif instructed his clergy to make sure that 'spiritual fathers called their spiritual children and all Christians in this Great Lent to repentance through all the weeks of Lent, so that not a single Christian soul be left without repentance'; he sent a sterner missive to the eparchy of Novgorod, instructing them to apply punishments to those who did not comply.[58] In August 1652, Metropolitan Iona of Rostov urged monks and laypeople to go to confession and communion three times a year.[59] Patriarch Nikon's 1653 ukaz focused on baneful foreigners: the 'unbaptized Germans . . . wrought every manner of tax and restrictions on our Greek Orthodox faith, and defilement of Christian souls, and many died

[54] 'Riechi arkhimandrita Iosifa o dukhovnykh dielakh', *ChOIDR* 28 (1891), 391–410.

[55] N. V. Rozhdestvenskii, 'K istorii bor'by s tserkovnymi bezporiadkami . . . Chelobitnaia nizhegorodskikh popov v leto 7144 [1636]', *ChOIDR*, 1902, Kn. II. Otd. V, 1–34; A. S. Lavrov, 'Novye dannye o 'revniteliakh blagochestiia', Dokumenty RGADA 1649–1650 gg. *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* 2008, N 1, 195–211.

[56] PSZ, vol. 1 (1830), no. 47, 246. RGADA, f. 210, Novgorodskii stol, d. 96 (Mery k izkoreniiu bezchiniia vo vremia posta i suevernykh obychaev), fols. 1–13, 251–4, 316.

[57] Georg Michels, 'The Rise and Fall of Archbishop Stefan: Church Power, Local Society, and the Kremlin during the Seventeenth Century', in *Von Moskau nach St. Petersburg: Das russische Reich im 17. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 214.

[58] *Akty, sobrannye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh Rossiiskoi imperii Arkheograficheskoi ekspeditsiei Akademii nauk*, t. IV (St Petersburg, 1836), 160–1, 481.

[59] 'Okruzhnoe poslanie rostovskago mitropolita Iony pri vstuplenii ego v pastvu', *Akty*, 4, 172–7.

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without father-confessors, without repentance'.[60] Such fears were not altogether unfounded: in 1652, for example, the peasants of Alexander Leslie complained that Mrs Leslie did not provide them with an opportunity for morning prayer, or for going to church on holidays and Lenten times of *govienie*.[61] Similar concerns—that foreign employers might be keeping Orthodox Christians from confession and other pious practices—would continue to be expressed for centuries.

Tsar Aleksei Mihailovich wrote in language that reproduced that of his hierarchs. This is not surprising. The royal power never regarded itself, nor was it in fact, purely secular: the Tsar was the primary guarantor of Orthodox realm.[62] Like some other European rulers, Aleksei had a close personal relationship with his own confessors.[63] He took seriously his own high calling as a monarch defending the true faith, his responsibility before God for the Orthodox kingdom and his Orthodox subjects, and had no hesitation in calling those subjects to fulfil their Christian duties.[64] On October 25, 1650, for example, he sent a missive to *voevoda* Vasilii Kokorev. Worried about the bad harvests, fires, dying cows, and other natural disasters plaguing Siberia, the Tsar called for universal fasting and prayer in the coming Great Lent, and for everyone to listen to the instructions of their spiritual fathers with all earnestness. 'For we know', Aleksei wrote sternly,

> . . . that in cities and towns and villages Christians live without spiritual father confessors, many of them die without repentance, and, worse, *they do not care one whit about confessing their sins* and partaking of the body and blood of the Lord, and their priests do not teach them about this and do not call them to repentance and confession. So sternly order the priests in the Gurinskii *ostrog* and the villages that henceforth Christians are not to live without spiritual father confessors, for the canons of the holy fathers warn strictly what happens if any Christian should not go to confession every year. If anyone forgets the fear of God and does not fast during the coming Christmas fast and does not come to church, or any Christians who try to live without spiritual fathers, let them fall under our punishment.[65]

[60] *PSZ*, t. 1, #103, 292–3.

[61] T. A. Oparina, 'Vossozdanie nemetskoi slobody i problema perekreshchivaniia inostrantsev-khristian v Rossii', in Iukhimenko, *Patriarkh Nikon*, 76–7.

[62] Michael S. Flier, 'Filling in the Blanks: The Church of the Intercession and the Architectonics of Medieval Muscovite Ritual', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995), 120–37; John Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia: The Orthodox Church and Russian Nationalism Before the Revolution* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, 2013).

[63] Prot. N. D. Izviekov, 'Dukhovnik tsaria Aleksieia Mikhailovicha—protopop Andrei Savvinovich Postnikov', *KhCh* #1, 1902, 126–39; N. I. Subbotin, ed., *Materialy dlia istorii raskola za pervoe vremia ego sushchestvovaniia*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1894), 54–9, 100–3. Aleksei's father-confessors included Stefan Vonifatiev from 1646 to 1656 and Lukian Kirillov from 1656 to 1666. For the administration of penance as a key component of the Jesuits' influence on Polish kings, see Santich, *Missio Moscovitica*, 64–6.

[64] Trudy Rossiiskogo imperatorskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva t. 2. Mocow, 1869, 770–1.

[65] Letter from Alekseii Mihailovich to Vasilii Kokorev, #140, in *Sobraniie gosudarstvennykh gramot i dogovorov, khran. v gosudarstvennoi kollegii inostrannykh del*, pt. 3 (Moscow: tip. S. Selivanskago, 1822), 458–60. Emphasis mine.

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A few days later, on October 28, 1650, Aleksei sent another decree to Siberia, enjoining people to show respect for priests carrying the holy Eucharist on their way to confess and commune the sick and dying.[66] In 1659, he ordered that government secretaries, clerks, lesser gentry (*diaki, pod'iachie, deti boiarskie*), and people of all ranks go to confession and communion during Passion Week.[67] His 1660 *gramota* to the Novgorod voevoda about how to conduct confession reads like a disciplinary missive written by a diocesan archbishop.[68] When Aleksei bade Godspeed to the Muscovite army before their Polish campaign, he called them to go to confession and communion in the first week of the Apostles' fast (even during an extraordinary occasion like a military campaign, he still tied confession and communion to one of the four fasting periods linked to *govienie*) and authorized the boyars and *voevodas* (local officials) to bring their lower ranks to the sacraments by force if necessary. The mid-seventeenth-century Russian pattern—peaceful efforts to encourage confession and communion, punitive measures if encouragement was insufficient—was utterly within the modern European spectrum of penitential discipline.[69]

These attempts by Muscovite hierarchs and Tsars to get their flocks to confession are all the more remarkable because at the start of the seventeenth century, there was as yet no stable rite of confession, and none in print.[70] Despite attempts to impose some order and engage in some pruning, by the end of the sixteenth century, confession rubrics could take up more than half the entire Book of Needs (*Trebnik*).[71] The Lenten liturgical services during which confession was most likely to occur were not uniform, either.[72] The sheer length and variety of existing confession rites could only begin to be addressed by the appearance of print.

Here, the Muscovites found support from a new quarter. Ruthenians had produced the first printed rubrics for confession in the Striatinskii (Ostrog) *Trebnik* of 1606, followed by the Vilno (Vilnius) edition of 1618 and a Kievan one in 1620.[73] These printed confession rites by Ruthenian writers began to

[66] Sobraniie gosudarstvennykh gramot, no. 141, 460–1.

[67] *Akty* 4, 315–16; arkhim. Ioann (Maslov), *Obriadovye osobennosti pokaiannoi distsipliny drevnei Rusi* (Moscow: Sviato-Troitskaia Sergieva Lavra, 2005), 59.

[68] Cited in Stefanovich, *Prikhod*, 194.

[69] Myers, *'Poor, Sinning Folk'*, 119–22.

[70] For variations of Russian confession rubrics, see A. Almazov, *Tainaia ispovied'*, vol. 3: *Prilozheniia*, 102–44, 187–242; and Korogodina, 74–101. For a discussion of the variety of Western confession *ordines*, see Wagner, 'Penitential Experience', 203–13.

[71] A. Almazov, *Tainaia ispovied'* I, *Obshchii ustav sovershenia ispoviedi*, 489–90; Korogodina, 10–20. The length of the rubrics might suggest a number of things, from how seriously the sacrament was regarded, to how rare it was. The Roman Catholic Church similarly moved from a variety of rites to one core shortened form in the seventeenth century. Popelyastyy, 192.

[72] See, for example, the variations in the Lenten Triodions in the collection of the Trinity Sergius Lavra, NIOR RGB, f. 304.I, no. 25 through 29 (*Triod' postnaia*, from the fourteenth to the start of the sixteenth centuries).

[73] *Trebnik* (Ostrog, n.p. 1606); Almazov, *Tainaia ispovied'*, 1, 526. See the description of these revisions, 'Lifos, polemicheskoe sochinenie, vyshedshee iz Kievo-pecherskoi tipografii v 1644 godu', *Arkhiv iugo-zapadnoi Rossii*, ch. 1, t. IX (Kiev: tip. G. Korchak-Novitskago, 1893), 29–30.

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circulate in Russia from the start of the seventeenth century.[74] By 1639, a Moscow *Potrebnik* included as a supplement a 1624 Kievan translation of a contemporary newly-printed Greek rubric.[75] Although this text was meant to serve only as a supplement and introduction to the existing rite, it began to shift the emphasis from the priest as a fellow penitent—as was also the case in the Romano-Germanic Pontifical—to the priest as a uniquely empowered granter of absolution.[76] The 1639 version with the supplement existed side by side with the 'old-print' versions of 1642, 1647, and 1651, which continued to reproduce the versions without the supplement printed from 1623 to 1636.[77]

A Ruthenian text that went further in shifting the emphasis to the priest's unique absolving power, the 1646 *Trebnik* of Metropolitan Petro Mohyla (1596–1646), proved influential in both Muscovy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Mohyla's earlier presentations of the sacrament of confession had reflected a combination of elements, including Rus-era rubrics, the Vilno *Trebnik* of 1618, contemporary Roman Catholic rites, and the Kiev Council of 1640.[78] Having priests improve their performance in confession was one of Mohyla's chief concerns: indeed, he required priests themselves to go to confession twelve times a year.[79] Unlike Muscovite practice but like contemporary Latin practice, the Mohyla *Trebnik* told the sinner to 'Go, and sin no more'. It insisted the penitent ('as one accused') stand and the father-confessor ('as judge') sit. It also changed the wording of the absolution formula from the original deprecatory formula used elsewhere in Orthodoxy ('May *God* forgive you'), to the declarative, giving more power to the priest ('*I* forgive and absolve you') introduced in the Roman Catholic Church in the thirteenth century and again at the Council of Florence in the fifteenth century.[80]

[74] They included Lavrentii Zyzanii Tustanovs'kyi's *Bol'shoi katekhizis* (Moscow, 1627), Meletii Smotryts'kyi's *Hrammatika* (1648), and *Kniga o vierie* (Moscow, 1648).

[75] Tsakiris, *Die gedruckten griechischen Beichtbücher*, 1–122.

[76] Almazov, I 534.

[77] The 264-page 1647 'old-print' *Trebnik* in the collection of the Trinity Sergius Lavra may be consulted online at http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/staropechatnye-knigi/1218. See also N. I. Sazonova, 'Staroobriadcheskii bogosluzhebnyi tekst XVII v. kak iavlenie religioznoi kul'tury (na materialakh chasoslova i trebnika)', *Istoriia*, December 2003, 198.

[78] For an early comparison of the *Trebnik* with Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic texts, see A. Khoinatskii, 'Zapadno-russkie uniatskie trebniki sravnitel'no s trebnikami pravoslavnymi i latinskimi', *Trudy Kievskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii*, February 1867, 137–79. Priests who did not know the canons were forbidden to hear confessions, 176. For a discussion of the council, see Kasjan Sakowicz, *Sobor Kiiowski schizmaticki, przez oyca Piotra Mohile zlozony/Opisanie Kievo-Sofiiskogo sobora* (1825). For a comparison of the *Trebnik* with Kievan 1640 council resolutions, see 12, 233, 268–9, 344–5, 477. For Mohyla's borrowing from Canisius's catechism, see A. Malvy and M. Viller, *La Confession Orthodoxe de Pierre Moghila* (Rome: Pont, institutum orientalium studiorum, 1927). For hybrid borrowing, see Paul Bushkovitch, 'A Kyivan Trebnik among Moscow Musketeers', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 28(1–4) (2006), 397–404.

[79] See his instruction to ordained priests in his dioceses, Moscow Synodal Library ms 3791–442, l. 7, quoted in Lifos, 116–17.

[80] For the full text of the new wording, which became standard in Russian prayer books published from Patriarch Nikon onwards, see *Evkhologion ili Trebnik* (Kiev: izd. v sv. Velikoi Chudotvornoi Lavre, 1646; repr. Kyiv: Informatsiino-vydavnychyi tsentr Ukrainskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi, 2004),

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Much has been made of the last change, which appeared to move confession in Slavic Orthodoxy away from previous Ruthenian and Russian practice, away from that which the Greek and Romanian Orthodox continued to use, and closer to contemporary Roman Catholic practice.[81] The Greeks (despite their own borrowings from Roman Catholicism) would denounce it as a Latin error that shifted the emphasis away from God and His mercy; still later, Georges Florovsky condemned it as a borrowing that seemed to emphasize an all-powerful priest instead of the Holy Spirit.[82] From a *practical* point of view, however, it is worth noting that Mohyla's changes did not cause alarm among the Orthodox who consulted it, at least partly because confessional rubrics had continued to evolve even after the introduction of print.[83] Moreover, Mohyla's rite had clear advantages over those that had come before it: the clarity of the rubrics, the easy-to-follow nature of the ordo, and not least Mohyla's own high reputation. The use of the imperative formula may even have been seen as lessening a possible competitive advantage on the part of the Roman Catholic priests in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: the Council of Trent depicted the penitent as a culprit before the tribunal, the minister as a judge, and the absolution as 'a judicial act in which a verdict is pronounced'.[84] Perhaps because of these emphases, Mohyla's *Trebnik* was reprinted numerous times in both Lvov and Kiev.[85] The *Trebnik* also included a prayer of absolution to be placed in the hands of the dead, a practice shared with the Balkans and Western Europe.[86]

1:387. The *Trebnik* also reflects the 1640 Kiev Council discussion on how to confess villains, and how and whether to absolve them (Lifos, 68). In Roman Catholicism, stressing the confessor's unique juridical power of the keys reinforced the cleric's authority. Vorgrimler, *Buße*, 124–5.

[81] In Roman Catholic practice, theologians' definitions of what precisely brought about the penitent's reconciliation shifted in the thirteenth century from pure contrition to assigning an efficacious role to absolution. See Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*, 157–93. The 1439 Council of Florence required 'ego te absolvo', which indicated that the absolution came from the priest (Myers, *'Poor, Sinning Folk'*, 126). For Romanian practice, see Mircea Pacurariu, *Geschichte der Rumänischen Orthodoxen Kirche,* Oikonomia 33 (Erlangen: Lehrstuhl für Geschichte und Theologie, 1994), 208–14, 257–62, 321–6.

[82] Prot. Vasilii Petrov, Razreshitel'naia molitva v grecheskoi tserkvi kontsa XVII veka na primere knigi pre. Nikodima Sviatogortsa 'Rukovodstvo k ispovedi', http://www.religion.in.ua/zmi/foreign_zmi/20860-razreshitelnaya-molitva-v-grecheskoj-cerkvi-konca-xviii-veka-na-primere-knigi-prep-nikodima-svyatogorca-rukovodstvo-k-ispovedi.html; Georges Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris, 1937), 49.

[83] Popelyastyy, 'Post-Tridentine Theology', 192.

[84] Council of Trent, 'Teaching Concerning the Most Holy Sacrament of Penance and Anointing', in Tanner and Alberigo, eds., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2, 704, 707; Alfons Brüning, 'Peter Mohyla's Orthodox and Byzantine Heritage: Religion and Politics in the Kievan Church Reconsidered', in *Von Moskau nach St. Petersburg: Das russische Reich im 17. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut, 2000), 63–90.

[85] One such reprint was *Evkhologion ili trebnik* (L'vov: Drukarnia Bratska, 1698).

[86] 'K riesheniiu voprosov iz oblasti pastyrskoi praktiki', *RdSP* t. 3, no. 50 (December 2, 1899), 356–8. For a more exhaustive discussion of the absolution prayer for the dead, see Iu. K. Guguev, 'Obychai klast' razreshitel'nye dokumenty v mogilu umershego v drevnei Rusi, na Balkanakh, i v Zapadnoi Evrope', in *Fakty i znaki. Issledovaniia po semiotike istorii*, vyp. 4, B. A. Uspenskii and F. B. Uspenskii, eds. (Moscow: Neolit, 2020), 130–58; Nikolaos Chrissidis, 'Between Forgiveness and Indulgence: Funerary Prayers of Absolution in Russia', in *The Tapestry of Russian Christianity: Studies in History*

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In the same year that Mohyla's *Trebnik* appeared, a new abbot named Nikon came to Moscow. Nikon impressed the Tsar, who asked him to stay to join the work of the Church reformers. Shortly afterward, in 1648, Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi led a Cossack uprising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This meant, among other things, new opportunities for the Ruthenian Orthodox clergy. During the 1620s, in their appeals to Moscow for protection against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's persecution, they had developed language emphasizing the unity of 'Little' and 'Great' Russians as part of an Orthodox East Slavic people.[87] Moreover, unlike most of their Muscovite counterparts, these Ruthenian clerics had received an education that allowed them to compete with the skilled Roman Catholic and Protestant propagandists.[88] From their neighbours, they could observe the importance of discipline and organization in establishing conformity to proper practice, and the necessity of getting the secular authorities to back their programme. More than a few came to Moscow to work on the reforms of now-Patriarch Nikon. With their support, in 1651, the Muscovites decided to adopt a combination of Greek and Ruthenian penance rubrics based on the 1639 *Potrebnik*.[89] In 1658, Nikon—in one of his last acts as Patriarch—presented a shorter version as the *only* one acceptable.[90] Nikon was thus proceeding both in the line of those Roman Catholic reformers who attempted to impose a uniform confession rite and a single formula of absolution while rejecting other, even non-heretical versions, and the similarly exclusionary Anglican approach to the 1662 revision of the Book of Common Prayer.[91]

Both the changes and Nikon's intransigence caused alarm. Although changes had been made to Muscovite rubrics of confession throughout the century in

and Culture, Nicholas Lupinin, Donald Ostrowski, and Jennifer B. Spock, eds., Ohio Slavic Papers, vol. 10, Eastern Christian Studies, vol. 2 (Columbus, OH: Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, Ohio State University, 2016), 261–93. For posthumous absolution in Roman Catholicism, see Robert W. Shaffern, 'Learned Discussions of Indulgences for the Dead in the Middle Ages', *Church History* 61(4) (December 1992), 367–81.

[87] Frank E. Sysyn, 'Orthodoxy and Revolt: The Role of Religion in the Seventeenth-Century Ukrainian Uprising Against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth', in *Religion and the Early Modern State*, Tracy and Ragnow, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 154–84.

[88] David Frick, *Meletij Smotryc´kyj* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute Publications, 1995).

[89] A manuscript version of the 1651 printed *Trebnik* confession rite (ll. 135–43), NIOR RGB, f. 304.I, ms. no. 238, ll. 1–27, contains two variants of the closing confession prayer to be read at the end of the Apostles' Fast, ll. 39ob–42, and penitentials for Orthodox tsars, nobles, priests, laymen, and laywomen, ll. 53–210ob, corresponding to ll. 144–98 of the printed 1651 *Trebnik*. Kievan versions of the Lenten Triodion reproduced the changes of the 1640 revision until 1791; Muscovite versions of the Triodion were changed in 1663, 1672, and again in 1777 in accordance with the new Synodal translation of the Bible. Karabinov, *Postnaia triod'*, 248–92.

[90] Evkhologii, siest' molitvoslov ili trebnik (Moscow: [vo tipografii], 1658); Almazov, *Tainaia ispovied'*, I, 534–7.

[91] Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Joris Geldhof, 'Trent and the Production of Liturgical Books in its Aftermath', Francois and Soen, eds., *Council of Trent*, 175–90; Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1991).

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manuscript and print alike, at least two master versions had existed side by side in Russia in 1650: the ones based on the 1639 version with the Ruthenian translation of the Greek supplement, and the ones based on the 1636 (without that supplement). Nikon kept the new supplement but cut the material that had followed it, rejecting the original expansive Russian variants altogether. The focus of the sacrament now became not the eliminated long penitential prayers, but new formulas of introduction and absolution which placed the centre of emphasis on the priest's authority and power to absolve rather than his telling the penitent that he is a fellow sinner. A comparison of the two introductions to the confession is illuminating:

> 1651 version (condensed from ten pages): 'And you, my child, do not be shamed of [speaking before] this human face [witnessing you], *for we are all sinners*; do not conceal within yourself a single sin you have committed from youth to this hour. Be not shamed of my face, but confess all to me, for the Lord God knows everything . . . *confess without shame, for I am a person like you, and am more sinful than all people*'.[92]
>
> 1658 (taking up less than a page): 'Behold, my child, Christ standeth here invisibly and receiveth thy confession: wherefore, be not ashamed, neither be afraid, and conceal thou nothing from me: but tell me, doubting not, all things which thou hast done: and so shalt thou have pardon from our Lord Jesus Christ. Lo, His holy image is before us: and I am but a witness, bearing testimony before him of all things which thou dost say to me. But if thou shalt conceal anything from me, thou shalt have the greater sin'.[93]

The difference is obvious. Even without the Mohylan formula of absolution, the priest is no longer 'a person like you, and more sinful than all people', but, as in contemporary Roman Catholic rubrics, the uniquely empowered representative of Jesus Christ. This appears also to be a step away from the idea expressed by John Climacus that the spiritual father was someone who was 'able and willing to labor with you in bearing the burden of your sins'.[94] Moreover, Nikon insisted that the old prayers could no longer be used *at all*. Even as other hierarchs and clerics agreed with the overall emphasis on confession, Nikon's rigidity over the use of the new *Trebnik* sparked protest and would lead to his downfall.[95] The 1662

[92] *Trebnik* (Moscow: [vo tipografii], 7160 [1651]), ll. 147ob–150. See also Natalia I. Sazonova, *Nekotorye tendentsii ispravleniia bogosluzhebnykh knig pri patriarkhe Nikone (na materialakh Trebnika)*, http://www.bogoslov.ru/es/text/351158.html.

[93] *Trebnik* (1658), RGADA, BMST/SPK 5651, 65.

[94] Claudia Rapp, 'Spiritual Guarantors at Penance, Baptism, and Ordination', in *A New History of Penance*, 138. See also Alexis Torrance, *Repentance in Late Antiquity: Eastern Asceticism and the Framing of the Christian Life ca. 400–650* CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 159–61.

[95] N. I. Sazonova, 'Liturgicheskaia reforma Patriarkha Nikona 1654–1666 gg: Antropologicheskii aspect (na nateriale Nikonovskogo ispravleniia Trebnika i Chasoslova)', *Vestnik RUDN, ser. Istoriia Rossii* 4 (2010), 62–74.

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Trebnik shortened the confession rite even further.[96] The 1671 *Trebnik* version added Mohyla's absolution formula, as did the 1677 and 1688 rubrics: those remained in all subsequent Church Slavonic versions of the *Trebnik* down to the present.[97] Thus, as in the Roman Catholic world earlier, the rite of confession in Russian Orthodoxy in the second half of the seventeenth century became streamlined and standardized, with a greater emphasis on the unique power of the priest to absolve.[98] From 1699 on, editions of the priests' service-book (*sluzhebnik*) printed in Russia also included a text called the *Uchitel'noe izviestie*, which enlarged upon Mohyla's *Trebnik* by describing pre-communion requirements for laity as well as for ordained clerics: confession, seven days' fasting and church attendance (which could be shortened to three days, or in extreme cases to one day), a detailed prayer rule including prayers after communion, and no eating after midnight the day before one communed. This text would become the basis of lay *govienie* requirements in the Russian empire.[99]

The Moscow Church Council of 1666–7 reflected these broad trends: an increased emphasis on confession specifically, and (as with Cardinal Carpegna's publication of Borromeo's *Avvertimenti* in 1700) the general need for discipline and standardizing various local practices in favour of those coming from the hierarchy and clergy.[100] Individuals were now more emphatically linked to their parish in their sacramental lives: they could no longer freely choose their father-confessor or belong to confessional 'families' independent of parish structures and held together by the authority of a single father-confessor like that of the Archpriest Avvakum, whose vivid accounts of confession influenced future generations of writers as well as his own penitents.[101] The 11th article of that Council read:

> Instruct your parishioners, men and women and their children, that they should go often to their father-confessors for confession, especially during the four fasts . . . If someone should go without confession for a whole year, saving for travel or other valid reasons, and the hour of death come upon him, do not bury such a one in church ground nor serve the funeral rites over him; for such a one, while alive, himself separated himself from the holy Church.[102]

Those who died without confession and communion now joined the ranks of unbaptized infants, suicides, and others who could not be buried in church

[96] See *Trebnik* (Moscow, 7197[i.e. 1683], p. 54ob).

[97] The rites of confession in *Trebnik* (Moscow, 7197 (i.e. 1683)) and *Trebnik* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1915), spanning the period covered in this book, are identical.

[98] Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 21–7.

[99] A. V. Petrovskii, 'Uchitel'noe izviestie pri slavianskom sluzhebnike', *KhCh* 4 (1911), 571–2.

[100] For the proceedings of the council, see *Dopolneniia* 5 (St Petersburg: v tip. Ed. Pratsa, 1853), 463, 469.

[101] Stefanovich, *Prikhod*, 249.

[102] Subbotin, ed., *Materialy dlia istorii raskola za pervoe vremia ego suchchestvovaniia*, t. II, 132–3.

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ground.[103] In refusing burial in church ground to the unshriven, as in using secular discipline where necessary, Russian Orthodox practice regarding confessional discipline again resembled that of its Western European neighbours.[104] Other Council reforms, too, resemble those of the Roman Catholic world after the Council of Trent. Not accepting a new spiritual child without getting a note from their previous priest, for example, reaffirmed earlier Russian practice that had not been strictly enforced—but also had its counterpart in the Counter-Reformation Roman Catholic world.[105] And, as in the Roman Catholic world, the Great Council of 1666–7 now instructed priests to keep written accounts not only of baptisms and marriages, but also of who went to confession and communion.[106] Thus in several essential ways focusing on sacramental confession and discipline, the Great Council of 1666 brought Russian practice closer to that of its Roman Catholic counterparts: the mid-seventeenth century in Russia, like the decades after the Reformation in Europe, was a time of perceived religious threat—and, as in Europe, one of the responses was to call the flock to confession more often.

The Council had other goals as well: to affirm Nikon's ritual and textual reforms with the support of the Eastern Patriarchs, to formally declare those rejecting Nikon's reforms—dubbed 'Old Believers'—schismatics, but also to condemn Nikon and choose a new Patriarch. Ironically, although the Council approved Nikon's confession-related changes, Nikon's confession-related offences featured prominently in his own deposition. The Council, for example, condemned Nikon for beating up and incarcerating his father-confessor in a cold cell, and also condemned his declaring that criminals should not be allowed confession before their execution (Patriarchs Paisios and Makarios cited several canons to the contrary, insisting that criminals needed to be both confessed and communed). Finally, citing precedents from Byzantine history, the Council also ruled that heretics and schismatics should be judged by civil, not religious, law. This decision would be important in dealing with Old Believers and in enforcing confession in the future.

1666–7 thus marks a turning point in the history of confession in Russia. As the Roman Catholic Church had just done, the Orthodox Church began an aggressive and systematic campaign to eradicate the last vestiges of the old rites and to get people to seek their salvation in the sacraments of confession and communion

[103] D. K. Zelenin, *Izbrannye Trudy: Ocherki russkoi mifologii: umershie neestestvennoi smert'iu i rusalki* (Moscow: 'Indrik', 1995), 63–9.

[104] Myers, *'Poor, Sinning, Folk'*, 30–1. The 1647 manuscript reproduced in the 1651 *Trebnik* also warned that Christians who died without confessing their sins to a priest could not be buried by a priest, nor could offerings be made in their name by relatives (ll. 66ob).

[105] Myers, *'Poor, Sinning Folk'*, 40.

[106] For such confessional records from Novgorod from the 1680s and 1690s, see RGIA, f. 834 (Rukopisi Sv. Sinoda), op. 2, dd. 1849–54 (Skazki i imennye ispoviednye rospisi); RGIA. f. 796, op. 1, dd. 11–15 (1693) and d. 16 (1697). For early eighteenth-century examples, see RGADA, f. 1391, op. 1, d. 1463 (Viedomost' o litsakh, ne byvshykh u ispoviedi), and RGADA, f. 1442, op. 1, d.15 (Novgorod archdiocese's reports on parishioners who did not go to confession).

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rather than in local shrines or relics.[107] And, as in 1664 England, religious assemblies that did not follow the forms of the established Church were declared illegal.[108]

Even before the labelling of Old Belief as a schism, then, Tsars and patriarchs had already begun attaching greater importance to the sacraments of confession and communion. The definition of Old Belief at the Council of 1666–7 as a schismatic complex of beliefs and actions gave confession and communion even greater importance. Besides the disciplinary, educational, and theological roles of confession, the rite took on an additional practical role. For those in the official Church, whether or not one participated in that sacrament was the handiest way of determining a possible Old Believer. Confession became more an examination of faith than of conscience.[109] For Old Believers, confession became more important for an additional reason: penance was one of the few sacraments they could still perform (after the supply of priests ordained before 1666 dried up, Old Believer confessions were heard without absolution).[110] Forms of religious behaviour that might have been suspect—living as a freelance hermit in a forest, for example—could now be resolved under one handy heading: did one go to confession in an approved church? As in Europe during the Reformation and among contemporary Pietists, confession became a litmus test of conforming to discipline, a shorthand for reliable versus unreliable behaviour.

Ruthenian Theology and Muscovite Discipline

The emphasis on confession soon received a new impetus. Just as the Great Council of 1666–7 was winding down, Muscovy signed the Truce of Andrusovo, ending the Thirteen Years' War with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for control of Ukraine. As a result of the treaty, Kiev with its celebrated Caves Monastery, printing presses, and Mohyla Academy now found itself in a larger Russia. Its Orthodox theologians were now in a curious position. In losing Nikon they had lost one of their chief supporters in the Russian Church. On the other hand, those of them who had been chafing under Polish pressure and the pressure to union with Rome felt genuinely grateful to Tsar Aleksei Mihailovich for

[107] See Michels, *At War with the Church*, 220. This rejection of the 1551 Stoglav led to a collapse of penitential discipline (E. V. Beliakova, 'Sud'ba sbornikov tserkovnykh kanonov na Rusi', *Istoricheskii vestnik* 5 (2000), 33–9. http://www.sedmitza.ru/text/443838.html). Compare to Susan C. Karant-Nunn, 'Liturgical Rites: The Medium, the Message, the Messenger, and the Misunderstanding', in Tracy and Ragnow, eds., *Religion and the Early Modern State*, 284–301.

[108] Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature*, 204.

[109] On confession as examination of faith further west, see Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[110] G. V. Markelov, 'Staroobriadcheskaia ispoved' dlia ikonopistsa', *TODRL* (St Petersburg, 2001), 745–53.

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bringing Orthodox Ruthenians protection, peace, and stability.[111] Last but not least, because of their years in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, they had observed and vicariously shared the Counter-Reformation of their Roman Catholic counterparts. As a result, they had independently produced not only new confessional rubrics, but also theological texts on the importance of confession, just at the point when Moscow needed and wanted them.

These Kievan texts provided a new theological basis for more frequent confession in the Russian empire. Earlier generations of Orthodox theologians had held that compunction, tears, fasting, prayer, charity, and forgiving others were enough to cleanse sin.[112] Many bishops, Muscovite and Ruthenian alike, unlike their Roman Catholic counterparts in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, continued to think so.[113] But by the middle of the seventeenth century, independently of trends in Moscow, some Kievan theologians began to emphasize the importance of confession as such, and of the unique importance of the priestly father-confessor. Although Ruthenian rubrics propounding this view, like Mohyla's *Trebnik*, already existed by the time of the 1666 Great Council, they were now joined by explicit, articulated theology. This theology of confession would be the chief contribution of the seventeenth-century Kievan writers to Russian practice.

Epifanii Slavinetskii is a transitional figure from the old to the new attitudes to confession. His 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand' goes on at length about sin and the harm it causes, urging sinners to repent for every sin. While another sermon, 'Let us repent for every sin of ours', hints at confession to a priest, its notion of repentance is still broad, and includes tears, good works, and charity as forms of expiation. Epifanii does suggest that one will find repentance only if one asks for it, and, effective though tears might be, they are no guarantee: both imply the necessity of confession. Similarly, Epifanii also tacitly emphasizes confession in noting that there is no sin that a priest cannot forgive: even Christians who bowed down before idols in times of persecution were allowed repentance. He seems to argue against contemporaries who held that 'God would forgive sin because God knows sincere repentance', using the example of Cain and Abel to insist that if one does not make public one's sin, the repentance will not count. Still, the tentative nature of these suggestions, the abundant references to St John Chrysostom and other Eastern fathers, the use of the word 'repentance' as opposed to 'confession', the absence of any description of what actually happens at confession—all these are still in keeping with earlier, more general exhortations to

[111] Zenon E. Kohut, 'Origins of the Unity Paradigm: Ukraine and the Construction of Russian National History (1620–1860)', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35(1) (Fall 2001), esp. 71–2.

[112] Frantsis Kont, '"Konchavshe pravilo, paki nachakh molitisia Khristu i Bogoroditse so slezami" (Slezy v russkoi dukhovnoi kul'ture)', in *Telo v russkoi kul'ture*, G. I. Kabakova and F. Kont, eds. (Moscow: NLO, 2005), 112–18.

[113] Margarita Korzo, *Obraz cheloveka v propovedi XVII veka* (Moscow: IFRAN, 1999). For a patristic emphasis on tears, see 'A Homily on Martyrs', in *John Chrysostom*, Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 77.

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repentance as a process rather than as something exclusively concentrated in confession and absolution.[114]

A clearer emphasis on confession, and clear borrowing from contemporary trends in Roman Catholicism, come with Archimandrite Ioanikii Haliatovskyi (1620–88) and Archimandrite Innokentii Gizel (ca 1600–83). Unlike earlier East Slavic Orthodox confession-related works, their texts were neither penitentials (questions the priest is meant to ask) nor *ponovleniia* (declarative confessions, or sample responses to the priest's questions, narrated in the first person and the foundation of the Old Believer 'skete rule').[115] They are theological guides extolling the benefits of regular sacramental confession. Haliatovskyi's 1659 *Kliuch razumenia* (*The Key to Understanding*) directly follows contemporary Roman Catholic practice, grouping sins into 'major' and 'lesser', and introducing the term 'mortal sin' (179) for the first time in East Slavic practice. If someone dies in a state of mortal sin 'without repentance, without confession, not regretting their sins', their soul goes straight to Hell. People who died having confessed their sins, but without having completed their penances (*pokuty*), have to go through *mytarstva (tolonia)*, or 'tollhouses'. (These last might seem to be a reflection of Roman Catholic teaching on purgatory, but also reflects such earlier popular Orthodox texts as the vision of Theodora.[116]) Where Epifanii had only tentatively and indirectly suggested the boons of sacramental confession, Haliatovskyi resembled his Counter-Reformation counterparts in explicitly emphasizing both the necessity of confession and the fulfilment of any assigned penances, drawing on Roman Catholic examples to make his points.[117] Contemporary Ukrainian church frescoes of the Dread Judgement reflected a similar concern, starting to depict 'bad' confessions, where a demon whispers to the penitent not to confess everything (Figure 1.1).[118]

On the other hand, Haliatovskyi also provides loopholes. In the same essay in which he argues for the importance of confession, he cites the example of a severed head soldiers find on the field of battle. The head addresses the soldiers with: 'I am a Christian who always venerated the Mother of God, but ended my life in this war without having confessed my sins. This is why the Mother of God has protected me

[114] Epifanii Slavinetskii, *Pokaitesia, priblizhisia bo tsarstvo nebesnoe*, and *Khlieb nash nasushchnyi dazhd' nam dnes*, GIM, Sin. 597, ff. 37–40v, 21–4v: the argument is that God knows sincere repentance, as Paul Bushkovitch notes in *Religion and Society*, 158. Epifanii goes further in *Ochistiem sebia ot vsiakiia skverny ploti i dukha* (ll. 68–71ob) and *Viemy zhe iako grieshnikov Bog ne slushaet* (ll. 72–5ob). I am grateful to Paul Bushkovitch for providing me with a transcription of this manuscript. See I. Rotar, 'Epifanii Slavinetskii: literaturnyi deiatel', XVII veka, *Kievskaia starina*, t. LXX, 1909, 6.

[115] See the manuscript skete rule in Vat.slav. 66.

[116] 'St. Theodora's Journey Through the Aerial Toll-Houses', in *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave*, compiled by Archimandrite Panteleimon (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1996 [1968]), 69–87.

[117] Ioannikii Haliatovskyi, *Kliuch razumenia s[via]shchennikom zakonnym i svetskim nalezhachyi* (Kyiv: druk. Kievo-Pecherskoi Lavry, 1659); reprinted in (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1985), 178, 433–6.

[118] Liliya Berezhnaya and John-Paul Himka, *The World to Come: Ukrainian Images of the Last Judgment* (Cambridge: HURI, 2014), 223.

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Figure 1.1 Bad confession. Ukrainian fresco of the Last Judgement, detail (courtesy of John-Paul Himka).

from the torments of Hell and has preserved my tongue—so that I could confess my sins and die like a Christian'. The stunned soldiers summon a priest to the head to hear the head's confession, and it dies immediately afterwards.[119]

In theory this story might serve to remind believers that compunction for sins was not enough: the Christian also had to confess those sins at confession. Certainly this is how Haliatovskyi sees it. If someone dies having confessed his mortal sins and repented of them, he goes to heaven; those who die in venial sin go to the purgatorial tollhouses (*mytarstva*). But this theme seems undercut by the story itself: after all, the confession has occurred after the head has been separated from the body; that is, after the warrior has already died. Devotion to Mary (like Bonconte's utterance of the word 'Maria!' at the end of Dante's *Purgatory*) trumps confession. In another account, a dead Christian going through his posthumous

[119] Haliatovs'kyi, *Kliuch*, 278, 374. Dostoyevsky would cite this story in *The Brothers Karamazov*, 42.

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'tollgates' promises to repent and confess and is freed from Hades.[120] Even as Haliatovskyi seeks to emphasize the necessity of sacramental confession, then, his suggestions that one can confess and repent *after* death—a dubious theological notion which contradicts the Orthodox liturgical texts for the Sunday of the Last Judgement—undercut the disciplinary goal of getting people to confess while they are still alive.[121]

An even stronger borrowing from Roman Catholicism was Innokentii Gizel's 1669 *Mir s Bogom chelovieku, ili pokaianie sviatoe* (*Peace with God for Man, or Holy Repentance*).[122] Unlike Haliatovskyi, Gizel actively tries to engage a Russian Orthodox audience as well as a Ruthenian one. Acknowledging that some readers, 'especially Russian ones', may find things in his book that are 'new and strange', he urges them to see that what he describes is not contrary to the dogmas of the Orthodox faith. Gizel's conscious decision to engage the Russian Orthodox and to explain Roman Catholicism in an Orthodox way was a crucial step in drawing Russians closer to the Roman Catholic ideas the Ukrainians had adopted. It may also have helped that Gizel dedicated his text to Tsar Aleksei Mihailovich and emphasized the Tsar's role as the protector and patron of the Kiev Caves Lavra.[123]

Gizel brought more Roman Catholic concepts into Orthodox theology. For the first time, notions like justification and merits, which may have been present in Orthodoxy before but not engaged with directly,[124] were now defined as they were in Catholicism, broken down into 'matter, form, and content'. Gizel followed Haliatovskyi in adopting the Roman Catholic notion of satisfaction (*dovletvorenie*), the expiation of wrongdoing in the form of a penance assigned by one's father-confessor. This Ruthenian embrace of satisfaction was something new for Orthodoxy, and all the more striking given that it was satisfaction (when reformers charged that satisfaction distracted penitents from relying on the merits of Christ to reliance on their own works) which had touched off the Reformation controversy in Europe. He used the Roman Catholic category of the 'abundant treasury of the merits of Christ and His saints' to discuss indulgences—another

[120] Haliatovs'kyi, *Kliuch*, 181.

[121] See, for example, the stikheron beginning with 'Obratisia, dushe okaiannaia', 'Nedielia miasopustnaia', in *Velikii Sbornik v trekh chastiakh. Chast Tretiia iz Triodi Postnoi* (Jordanville, NY: tip. Pr. Iova Pochaevskago, 1956), 55.

[122] Gizel' drew on contemporary Catholic handbooks of moral theology by Juan Azor, Hermann Busenbaum, and Mikolaj Mosicki. See Margarita Korzo, 'Vneshniaia traditsiia kak istochnik vdokhnoveniia. K voprosu ob avtorstve kievskikh i moskovskikh pravoslavnykh tekstov XVII v. Dva primera', *Studi Slavisti*ci VI (2009), 59–84; Margarita Korzo, 'Pravoslavnoe nravstvennoe bogoslovie XVII v. i ego spetsifika: "Mir s Bogom cheloveku" (Kiev, 1669)', *Eticheskaia mysl'* t. 18(2), 56–71; Margarita Korzo, '"Mir s Bogom choloviku" Inokentiia Gizelia v konteksti katolyts'koi moral'noi teologii kintsia XVI-pershoi polovyny XVII st.', *Inokentii Gizel'. Vybrani tvory u 3kh tt.,* Larisa Dovga, ed., v. 3 (Kyiv: 'Svichado', 2010), 195–262.

[123] All citations come from a facsimile of the 1669 edition, Innokentii (Gizel'), Archimandrite, Mir s bogom chelovieku ili pokaianie sviatoe, primiriaiushchee bogovi chelovieka ucheniem ot pisaniia sviatogo i ot uchitelei tserkovnykh (Kyiv-L'viv: Vyd. 'Svichado', 2009, t. 1, kn. 2), 21.

[124] For example, Church Slavonic translates Psalm 118:9–16, sung at Matins, as 'teach me thy *justifications*' ('Blagosloven esi, Gospodi, nauchi mia *opravdaniem* tvoim').

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potentially problematic notion.[125] Finally, Gizel declared that repentance concluded when the priest gave absolution after confession with the words 'I forgive and absolve you of your sins'—the formula just introduced by Mohyla. From Christ's words in John 20:22–3, 'Receive the Holy Spirit: if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained', he concluded that the absolving priest not only *declared* the sinner to be absolved by God of his sins, but 'he *effects this himself* insofar as God has given him that explicit mastery and power'.[126]

This borrowing was radical, and Russian clerics soon realized it. But Gizel was doing it for a reason. Through the prism of 'properly' preparing for confession, he wanted to move people away from assuming they could never attain virtuosic asceticism by offering them a functional guide to Christian behaviour in everyday life. His insistence on confession was a way of domesticating and instilling morality. In doing so, he collided between Roman Catholic categories and Orthodox practice.

Gizel argued, for example, that confession should come speedily after the sin has been committed, and that not much time should elapse between one confession and the next (27). This 'come early, come often' approach to confession marks a clear break with the seasonal, liturgical approach of annual Lenten confession—which, one might recall, was the *goal* his Muscovite counterparts were just beginning to strive for.[127] This might seem to mark a difference between a maximalist Ukrainian approach to confession resembling contemporary post-Reformation Roman Catholicism and a Muscovite one seeking to institutionalize and enforce an annual Lenten minimum. But even Gizel had to settle for what was realistically possible, and identified the four Church fasts as optimal times for confession and communion, with Great Lent as the absolute minimum (68). Thus, even as Gizel aspired to adapt contemporary Roman Catholic practice, he ultimately accepted the *govienie* approach of his Russian contemporaries: he might wish for frequent self-examination, but was willing to settle for the familiar linkage of confession to the fasting and liturgical cycles of the Orthodox Church.[128]

In other ways, too, Gizel produced a curious Roman Catholic-Orthodox hybrid. Mortal sins could be released only at confession; venial ones could be released through a 'correct daily' confession as part of a prayer rule, beating one's breast, reading the Our Father (which, as Gizel notes, contains the words 'and forgive us

[125] *Mir s Bogom*, 258–61. For an argument that Orthodox indulgences existed elsewhere, see Nikolaos Chrissidis, 'Edification Through the Memory of Sins: The Practical Uses of Eastern Orthodox Indulgences', *Russian History* 52(2–3) (2018), 181–92 and Nikolaos Chrissidis, 'Between Forgiveness and Indulgence'.

[126] This is one of the only instances where East Slavic Orthodox theology engaged the discussion that so exercised medieval Latin universities: whether the pronouncement of absolution at the conclusion of sacramental confession invoked or effected. *Mir s bogom*, 51.

[127] Nalle, 'Self-Correction and Social Change', 310.

[128] At the beginning of the sixteenth century, four times a year was also the pious ideal for Roman Catholics, not connected to *govienie* and fasting periods, but at Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, and All Saints. Myers, *'Poor, Sinning Folk'*, 34.

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our debts'), and the Jesus Prayer. Venial sins might also be forgiven by visiting holy places on pilgrimage (especially Gizel's own Kiev Caves Lavra), through being sprinkled with holy water or anointed with holy oil, by eating blessed bread (*prosphora*), by getting a bishop's blessing, or by charity.[129] Similarly, the priest should take into account not only the strength, health, and social rank of the penitent, but also whether he had travelled from afar for the sake of going to confession on a holy day at a holy place (again, 'such as the Caves Monastery'), with faith in receiving full absolution. Thus, this 'modern' guide to confession reinforces the traditional patterns of pilgrimage to a holy place as a 'get-out-of-jail-free' card. Even as Gizel sought to institute such new patterns as more frequent and more thorough confession, he also reinforced older ones.

Following contemporary tendencies to reduce penances to a more realistic length, Gizel provides a guide to reducing the penances specified in canon law.[130] One day of bread and water equals reading fifty psalms plus feeding one poor person for one day. If one cannot read the psalms, one can feed three poor people. If physically feeding the poor is not convenient, one can give each needy person the equivalent amount of money. He assigns different values to prostrations, wearing a hairshirt, and keeping vigil. Every possible sin, impulse, motive, and temptation is analysed from every possible angle.[131] With all this, however, Gizel remains rooted in earlier Orthodox notions: compunction, as that of Mary Magdalene, can absolve one of all one's sins at confession, as can tears. Moreover, he takes all his examples only from Orthodox and pre-schism examples. This may be the reason that his work, unlike Haliatovskyi's, would continue to circulate among the Orthodox East Slavs.[132] In 1685, at the *pannikhida* service marking a year after Gizel's death, another Ruthenian hierarch, Metropolitan Dimitrii of Rostov, who penned the first homilies linking confession to specific Lenten days soon after Gizel published *Mir s Bogom*, praised him fulsomely.[133]

[129] Specific prayers after communion and instructions for how to suitably spend the day after partaking of communion appear for the first time in the 1646 *Trebnik* of Mohyla, 319–23.

[130] For a gradual reduction of penances in Russian practices, see Korogodina, *Ispoved' v Rossii*, 90–101.

[131] The penitent: 'Before enumerating your sins, first tell the confessor how much time has gone by since your last confession, have you completely carried out the assigned penance, does your conscience bother you about anything about your last confession—did you forget any sins then, did you leave any out? Did you prepare for this confession? What is your rank—are you married, are you in trade, what is your business? Then relay your sins themselves, but not as if you were telling some kind of story, but blaming yourself'. 237.

[132] Margarita Korzo, 'Osvoenie katolicheskoi traditsii moskovskimi i kievskimi knizhnikami XVII veka: Innokentii Gizel' i Simeon Polotskii', in *Pravoslavie Ukrainy i Moskovskoi Rusi v XV—XVII vv: obshchee i razlichnoe*, M. V. Dmitriev, ed. (Moscow: 'Indrik', 2012), 290–301.

[133] St Dimitrii, Metropolitan of Rostov, 'Piramida ili stolp, vo blazhennoi pamiat prestavl'shagosia vysotsie k Bogu prevelebnago, ego milosti, gospodina otsa Innokentiia Gizelia', in *Sochineniia sviatago Dimitriia, Mitropolita Rostovskago*, ch. 3, izd. 7 (Moscow: v Sinodal'noi tipografii, 1848), 601–39. For Dimitrii's sermons on Lenten *govienie*, see *Tvoreniia sviatitelia Dimitriia Rostovskogo v trekh tomakh* t. 1 (Moscow, 2005), http://azbyka.ru/otechnik/?Dmitrij_Rostovskij/pouchenija-i-propovedi.

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Three of Gizel's suggestions affected Russian practice most directly. In case of emergency, one can confess through an interpreter to a priest who does not speak the same language. A penitent can also confess via a written confession read to the priest who is present, whether because she is too ashamed to utter the sins aloud (and can then hand over the list for the priest to read), or read it herself because she does not wish to forget a single sin. The first idea found application in multilingual areas like Kazan; the second eventually spread even further. Gizel's most important short-term legacy for Russian confession, however, proved to be his ambiguous attitude to the confession as a political tool. Gizel tells the father-confessor that anyone who confesses to having written or distributed writings filled with 'dishonor, ill-fame, lies, slander, or blasphemy against Kings, Bishops, Nobles, and other honorable authorities' must be reported to the bishop. If even one such sin has been committed, other sins cannot be absolved until the bishop is informed.[134] True, the priest is reporting to the bishop, not to a secular authority—but this still foreshadows the emphasis that Peter I would later place on confession as a means of rooting out sedition. Perhaps this association of sedition affected the 1670 excommunication of the Don Cossack rebel Stepan Razin, who was not allowed to confess before his execution.[135] Despite Gizel's instructions to report such 'slander or blasphemy' to bishops, however, he maintains the seal of the confession is absolute: one cannot break the seal in any circumstances, not to save a city, not to release anyone from a criminal sentence: even secular law, he notes, instructs the confessor who breaks the seal to have his tongue cut out and buried. But his conclusion stands. The traditional responsibility of informing one's bishop of anything tricky extends to sedition, even at the expense of the seal.[136] Nor was Gizel alone: some Russian priestly contemporaries were cavalier with the seal in other ways, occasionally reporting what they learned at confession if it helped their material interests.[137]

Two years later, in 1671, Gizel published a shorter, less abstract guide aimed specifically at those preparing to confess their sins.[138] This resembled earlier Russian guides to confession as it was relatively succinct and in question form, but, as in contemporary Roman Catholic penitentials and as opposed to earlier

[134] *Mir s Bogom*, 300.

[135] S. M. Kashtanov, 'Eshche raz o meste zakhoroneniia ostankov Stepana Razina', *Istoriia* t. 5, vyp. 8 (31) (2014), https://history.jes.su/s207987840000927-8-1.

[136] *Mir s Bogom*, 301. For a discussion of contemporary Greek penitentials in their political context, see Vasileios Tsakiris, *Die gedruckten griechischen Beichtbücher zur Zeit der Türkenherrschaft: ihr kirchenpolitischer Entstehungszusammenhang und ihre Quellen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009).

[137] See the 1666 case described in V. E. Borisov, 'Taina ispovedi, protsedura sudoproizvodstva i povsednevnaia zhizn' gosudarevykh masterovykh v otdel'no vziatom dele o semi rubliakh (1666 g.): publikatsiia i issledovanie', in *Sbornik statei i publikatsii posviashchennyi Andreiu Alekseevichu Bulychevu* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilische, 2019), 17–37.

[138] *Nauka o taine pokaianiia, t.e. o pravdivoi i sakramental'noi ispoviedi. Pridany k tomu i liekarstva na griekhi i vyvody o pol'zu chastoi ispoviedi* (Kiev: KPL, 1671). A facsimile has been published as part of *Inokentii Gizel': vybrani tvory u 3 tomakh*, t. 1 kn. 1 (Kyiv-L'viv, Vyd. 'Svichado', 2012).

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Russian ones, the questions are organized around the ten commandments and the seven deadly sins. One of the categories unfamiliar from earlier Muscovite penitentials but anticipating the forthcoming reforms of Peter the Great is the sin of not reporting someone *else's* sin: 'Did you not report the sin of someone else to his superior or to someone who could have restrained him from this sin? Or did you know someone to be guilty of something, but said nothing when he swore innocence under oath while interrogated by the authorities?'[139]

Overall, in adapting Roman Catholic theology to an Orthodox context, Gizel offered solutions to a problem contemporary Muscovites were struggling with: how to increase participation in confession.[140] Tsars had sought to improve Orthodox reception of confession via discipline and mandates. The holy Dimitrii (Tuptalo), Metropolitan of Rostov, tried to do so by linking confession to Lenten liturgy and using eulogies at the funerals of noblemen to stress how important it was to prepare for death by confessing sins in a timely fashion.[141] Gizel sought to do so via encouragement and Roman Catholic theology, but also through noticing a loophole—reporting sedition—that others would prise open. He provided both the carrot and the potential to carry a big stick.[142]

Although we have focused here on their theology, discipline, and political implications, Ruthenian theologians also produced texts showing that confession was important to them not primarily as an instrument of control over others. It was also something they practised in their own spiritual lives.[143] Adam Zernikav (1651–ca. 1693), a Königsberg-born convert to Orthodoxy from Lutheranism, wrote elaborate works on theology during his years in Chernihiv and Baturyn.[144] His autobiography, however, contains an account of confession that is plain and immediate, reminding us that theologians experienced the sacrament they theorized about:

> Passion Week before Easter was approaching and I, who had not gone to confession all year and having sinned greatly (unhappiest of all people!) confessed in the Baturyn monastery on April 5. At the counsel of my father-confessor, and

[139] *Inokentii Gizel'*, t. 1, kn. 1, 514. See Margarita Korzo, 'Pravoslavnye posobiia o podgotovke k ispovedi XVII v. i ikh istochniki: "Nauka o taine Sv. Pokaianiia" (Kiev, 1671)', *Vestnik PSTGU*, Ser. II: Istoriia: Istoriia Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi, vyp. 79, 9–21.

[140] See Ihor (Isichenko), Archbishop, 'Mir s Bogom chelovieku v konteksti bogoslov'ia pokaianya', in *Inokentii Gizel': vybrani tvory u 3 tomakh*, t. 3 (Kyiv-L'viv, Vyd. 'Svichado', 2012), 133–51.

[141] See his sermons for Okol'nichii Timofei Borisovich Iushkov in 1705 and Ioann Semenovich Griboiedov in 1706, in *Sochineniia sviatago Dimitriia, Mitropolita Rostovskago*, ch. 3, izd. 7 (Moscow: v Sinodal'noi tipografii, 1848), 561–78.

[142] See Giovanna Broggi Bercoff, 'Mir z Bogom choloviku iak systema moral'noi filosofii', in *Inokentii Gizel': vybrani tvory u 3 tomakh*, t. 3 (Kyiv-L'viv, Vyd. 'Svichado', 2012), 103–31.

[143] See 'Utieshenie sogrieshivshemu', in A. I. Sobolevskii, 'Perevodnaia literatura Moskovskoi Rusi XIV–XVII viekov: Bibliograficheskie materialy' (St Petersburg: tip. Imp. Akad. Nauk, 1903), 213.

[144] Edward Kasinec and J. Robert Wright, 'A Manuscript Copy of Adam Zernikaw's "De Processione" (Baturyn, 1682)', in *Ukraina: kul'tura spadshchina, natsional'na svidomist', derzhavnist'* 15 (2006–7), 353–62.

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> according to my own judgment, to become more firm in my revulsion to sin, I delayed communing of the Holy Mysteries till the forthcoming Peter's [Apostles'] fast [June 29]. May God give me the strength to flee sin and repent wholeheartedly.[145]

Communion was not a means of sustenance in his spiritual struggle, but something to be strived for and attained only through both confession and fulfilling subsequent penance. It was a goal, not daily bread—and confession was a way of reaching it.[146]

Visual Representations

The East Slavic seventeenth-century rethinking of confession also expressed itself in visual representations. As in Europe further west, most such depictions occurred in the new depictions of the seven sacraments. The title page of Mohyla's 1646 Kiev *Trebnik*, for example, contained a representation of a priest wearing a stole (*epitrakhilion*), sitting with his head on his hand which is resting on what appears to be an *analoi* lectern. The male penitent to his right is kneeling with his arms crossed across his chest. Depictions of the sacrament also appear in the sections of the *Trebnik* containing the confession rite (Figure 1.2). At top left, King David bows before the Prophet Nathan, with the words, 'David saith to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord my God," and Nathan saith, "The Lord hath taketh away thy sin; thou shalt not die"' (2 Samuel 12:13). (Interestingly, although the reference to Nathan appears in many contemporary Russian versions of the rite, and although representations of King David and Prophet Nathan appear in contemporary *Trebniks* printed in Lvov, the prayer invoking David and Nathan does not appear in the rite itself.[147]) On the right, a kneeling male penitent with his hands outstretched before a table containing a Gospel confesses to a sitting priest. On the lower left, Peter is striking his chest in penitence for

[145] Adam Zernikav, 'Obozrenie rukopisi, soderzhashchei v sebe avtobiografiiu ego', *Trudy kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii*, 1860, v. III, 189. For the importance of penance in Ruthenian monastic autobiographical texts, see Gary Marker, 'Iz glubiny molchaniia: v poiskakh konturov monasheskogo ia 'dolgoi' petrovskoi epokhi (1680–1720e), *Vera i lichnost' v meniaiushchemsia obshchestve: avtobiografika i pravoslavie v Rossii kontsa XVII-nachala XX veka*, ed. D. A. Sdvizhkov and Laurie Manchester (Moscow: NLO, 2019), 60–88.

[146] Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, 30–5.

[147] 'Chin tainy sviatago pokaianiia iazhe v ispoviedanii griekhov kaiushchagosia sovershaetsia', *Evkhologion albo molitvoslov ili Trebnik*, 347–58. For seventeenth-century Russian rites containing the Nathan and David prayer, see *Trebnik* (Moscow, 1625), l. 162; Almazov, *Tainaia* v. 3, 170–4, 185, 207; N. I. Sazonova, 'Staroobriadcheskii bogosluzhebnyi tekst', 190–201; Markelov, "Staroobriadcheskaia ispoved" dlia ikonopistsa', *TODRL* (St Petersburg, 2001), 745–53. For a discussion of Western influences on Ukrainian depictions of confession, see Agnieszka Gronek, 'Sakrament pokuty i jego obrazowanie w sztuce zachodnioruskiej w XVII–XVIII wieku. Przyczynek do badan nad okcydentalizadja i latynizacja kultury cerkiewnej', in *Krakowsko-Wilenskie Studia Slawistyczne* 5, 219–42.

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Figure 1.2 The *Trebnik* of Petro Mohyla.

having denied Christ, with the words 'Peter, repenting, wept bitterly' (Matthew 26:75, Luke 22:62). The large key lying at Peter's feet evokes both Christ's words in Matthew about the power of the keys and Peter's words in Acts 2:38 ('Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'). Note that Mohyla stresses that

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the power of the keys is not limited to Peter or the Bishop of Rome alone, but to all apostles, all bishops, and by extension all priests:

> Thou has given thy supreme Apostle Peter *and the other Apostles* the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, and by the grace given *to all of them*, that whatsoever they bound on earth will be bound in Heaven and whatsoever they loose will be loosed in Heaven: by Thine ineffable mercy Thou has vouchsafed the power given to them to us, who are poor and unworthy, to bind and loose Thy people who come to us.[148]

Thus, in a fluid clockwise motion, Peter (with the power of the keys and the establishment of the sacrament of confession, bottom left) is paired with the penitent confessing to a priest (top right), and David, having confessed successfully to Nathan in the earthly Jerusalem (top left), is paired with a man and woman, who have also presumably confessed successfully going up to the Heavenly Jerusalem (lower right). A 1681 Kiev *Trebnik* reproduces the illustration that appears the top right of Mohyla's, with the exception that it has a monk (not a priest) sitting on the right side of the image with a moustachioed male penitent with neatly trimmed short hair and an elegant cloak bowing with his head on a Gospel which is lying on a table between the two men. The caption at the bottom truncates texts from the service to the Prodigal Son in the Lenten Triodion: 'I have sinned to Thee, O Savior, like the Prodigal Son: Take me who is repenting, to Yourself, O Father, and forgive me'.[149] A *Trebnik* printed in Moscow in 1680 similarly has a kneeling male penitent, hands crossed across his chest, to the left of the father-confessor, with a table in between and a dove above them.[150] Finally, both the Trinity Church and the Church of the Dormition in the Kiev Caves Lavra have the words 'The Sacrament of Confession' in their iconostases above images of Nathan absolving David.[151]

Printed single sheets meant to be hung on a wall give more indications as to how both older and newer ideas of confession were disseminated in the seventeenth century. Although a woodcut entitled 'Repentance with confession before the image of the Saviour for every day' might imply that this was a daily confession of sins like those one encountered in a prayer rule, it was in fact a repentance for all the sins one committed 'every hour of every day', and 'for all the sins I did not say at my confession to a priest, whether concealed deliberately, forgotten, or

[148] 'Chin tainy sviatago pokaianiia', 355–6.

[149] For a contemporary issue of the Triodion, see *Triod' postnaia* (Kiev: izd. v velikoi chudtov. Lavrie, 1646).

[150] *Evkhologii, siest' est' molitvoslov ili Trebnik* (Moscow: n.p., August 3, 1680), 40. The *Trebnik* may be consulted online at http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/staropechatnye-knigi/1227. (Unlike the *Trebniks* produced in Kiev, it does not have the seven sacraments on the title page.)

[151] For a discussion of the dates and artists, see P. M. Zholtovs'kyi, *Maliunki Kyevo-Lavrs'koi ikonopysnoi maisterni. Al'bom-katalog* (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1982).

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omitted out of shame'.[152] Rather than encouraging one to be mindful of specific daily sins so as to be better prepared for one's next confession, this more likely encouraged people to throw themselves before God's mercy, hoping that their sins would be forgiven even if one did *not* say them at confession. Other penitential woodcuts, whether to Jesus Christ, St Catherine, St John the Baptist, or St John the Theologian, similarly acted as get-arounds rather than aids to confession: all bemoaned one's many sins, and all had sinners throw themselves on God's mercy, appealing to the purity of the heavenly intercessors depicted on the print. What these prints show is that people knew what they were supposed to do at confession—full and detailed confession with a resolve to turn one's life around—but did not always succeed, and so tried to make up for it through other forms of repentance, especially prayer to saints.[153]

These intercessory prints are a tacit answer to another print widely circulated from the seventeenth century onward: *The Great Mirror* (*Velikoe Zertsalo*). In this legend, a father-confessor sees in a vision his spiritual daughter who had died without confessing her worst sins (Figure 1.3). She now appears to him with flames coming out of her mouth ('for having kissed lasciviously') and out of her eyes ('for having gazed shamelessly'), with fiery arrows in her ears ('for having listened to demonic songs'), serpents gnawing at her breasts ('for allowing them to be caressed'), and hellish dogs chewing her fingers ('for having decorated them with rings'), sitting astride a flaming serpent ('for the sin of fornication I concealed from you at confession, Father'). The message is clear: concealing sins at confession is as bad as committing those sins.[154]

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, then, several strands relating to confession moved in parallel: new visual representations of the sacrament, an emphasis on confession as a tool of spiritual discipline and self-examination, and exposure of religious dissenters with confession as a test. Two Church councils from the 1680s show the potential tension in these strands. The Council of 1682, initiated by a letter from Tsar Fedor Alekseevich to Patriarch Ioakim, reaffirmed the impulse to use confession as a litmus test of Orthodoxy versus Old Belief.[155] Penitentials from the end of the seventeenth century include more questions designed to probe both Orthodoxy and political loyalty: the wives of government officials, for example, could be queried as to whether they had plotted with their

[152] See plate 39 in E. A. Mishina, *Russkaia graviura na dereve XVII–XVIII vv.* (St Petersburg, izd. ARS D. Bulanin, n.d. [between 1996 and 1999]).

[153] For the connection of prints to discipline, see Michael Scholz-Hänsel, 'Early Modern Discipline and the Visual Arts', in *Social Control in Europe 1500–1800*, Herman Roodenburg and Pieter Spierenburg, eds., v. I (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 113–31.

[154] Badly confessing sinners are also depicted in Hell. Korogodina, *Ispoved'*, 117.

[155] 'Kontsepty 15 predlozhenii uchinennykh ot tsaria Fedora Aleksieevicha patriarkhu Ioakimu i vsemu sviashchennomu soboru o ustroenii v Rossii o ispravlenii diel kasaiushchikhsia do tserkovnago vsiakago blagochiniia', in RGADA, f. 153, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 15, 15ob, 16, 24.

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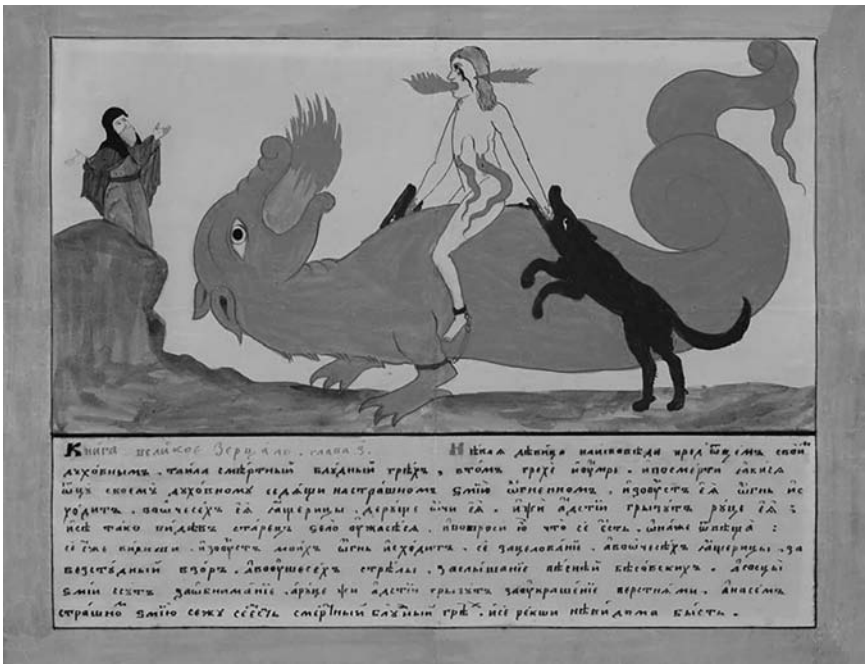

Figure 1.3 *Velikoe Zertsalo* (Kirillo-Belozerskii Museum).

husbands the deaths of their sovereigns.[156] But the 1680s and 1690s protests by the monks of Solovki, the Cossacks, and the musketeers hardened the position of both the Muscovite hierarchs and the regency government of Princess Sophia, making them more determined than ever to suppress both religious dissent and political subversion. In 1666, the Eastern hierarchs had already agreed that the state could and should go after religious dissenters. In 1682, the Council explicitly asked the Tsar for permission to send dissenters to civil courts, and to charge local civil administrators with the responsibility of identifying and locating dissenters so they could be pursued. A 1684 decree ordered police and parish priests alike to hunt down and interrogate parishioners who had been lax in going to confession.[157] Dissenters were to be sent to bishops and released once they provided written attestation to quit the schism and to go to confession. If they refused, they were then turned over to secular courts, where they met a variety of physical punishments.[158] The test for whether or not they accepted the official Church was confession.

[156] Korogodina, *Ispoved'*, 115–16; Almazov, 'Vopros zhenam vlastitel'skim', *Tainaia ispovied'*, t. 3, 173.
[157] *PSZ*, t. 2, No. 1102, 647–50.
[158] For a discussion of such punishments, see Nancy S. Kollman, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 134–56.

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This is not surprising. After all, like the Russian state, Old Believers themselves interpreted confession and communion as a sign of belonging to the official Church.[159] At their trials, dissenters testified that they refused to go to confession or communion once Nikon's new service books had been introduced.[160] Particularly fervent dissenters sought to keep others from the sacraments. At his trial, the schismatic monk Efrem Potemkin, for example, was charged that, because of him and his false teachings, 'many Christians were deprived of entering church and of prayer, and *of repentance for their sins in confession*, and of partaking of the body and blood of Christ'.[161]

Dissenters who wanted to be released had to prove their Orthodoxy, both by confessing to a priest and such traditional characteristic signs of repentance as tears.[162] But definitive proof of leaving schism for Orthodoxy was going to confession. In May 1684, for example, Matvei Krovkov, the *voevoda* of Yakutsk, inquired of Konstantin Shcherbatov, the *voevoda* of Enisei, about two Old Believer laymen and their priest, Aleksei: 'And now, do they submit to the catholic and apostolic Church, and do they not devise any schism, and do they confess to their father-confessor?' In the formal questioning of the schismatics, Priest Stepan Iakovlev of the cathedral church asked: 'Do they go to confession to their father-confessors, and will they commune of Christ's Holy Mysteries?'

When the laymen Sen'ka and Vas'ka declared that they had not and would not confess and commune, they were placed in irons and kept in jail. Priest Aleksei, more diplomatically, informed his interrogators that he was *not worthy* of communing of the Holy Mysteries, and thus would neither be going to confession to his spiritual father, nor communing of the holy mysteries. Once he was placed in irons he saw the matter differently, however. He submitted a petition declaring that the enemy had led him astray, that he had sinned before God and was guilty before the great Tsar, and that henceforth he would be going to confession to father-confessors and would partake of the holy mysteries, if God deemed him worthy; and would submit himself to church rules in every way. Krovkov had Fr. Aleksei sign his testimony, and instructed him, 'according to the rules of the holy apostles and the holy fathers to go to Church and to confession to his spiritual father'. This spiritual instruction and discipline of a priest by a secular *voevoda* bore spiritual fruits: 'He, Aleksii, has submitted to God's Church'.[163]

[159] N. Vinogradskii, *Tserkovnyi sobor v Moskve 1682 goda: opyt istoriko-kriticheskogo issledovaniia* (Smolensk, 1899), 54. See also supplement, 29–31, and http://kds.eparhia.ru/bibliot/istorserkvi/kartacev/oseripoisiicervi/tom2/streleckiybynt.

[160] Michels, *At War with the Church*, 157. See 'O sovrativshikhsia v raznykh miestakh v raskol'nicheskoe zabluzhdenie zhiteliakh, i o nevzyskivaemom s nikh za nebytie u ispoviedi shtraf', May 1, 1800, No. 461, PSPR, 561–2.

[161] *Dopolneniia* 5, 453–63.

[162] *Dopolneniia* 5, 451. For the theology of tears in Western confessional practice, see Wagner, *Cum aliquis*, 208–16.

[163] *Sobraniie*, in RGADA, f. OFR, ed. khr. 4175, #39, 125–6.

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This policy of using confession as a test of Orthodoxy, and of keeping track of who went and who did not, quickly took hold. When their sister Sophia was exercising effective power, a 1684 ukaz from the joint Tsars Ivan and Peter required the priests of Yakutsk to report who of the local residents 'of every rank, male and female, came every year to confession and who did not, and who stirred up trouble and schism'. This was one of the first requests for the confession records that would be known as *ispoviednye rospisi.* In response, the confessors of Spasskii monastery, hieromonks Evfiimii and Makarii, provided lists of their own regular penitents, but reported that they could say nothing about the many people who came to them for confession who were *not* their regular spiritual children. Both hieromonks added that the residents of the Yakutsk ostrog confessed to the married priests Stefan Fomin and Stefan Iakovlev, who provided their own lists—but noted that not all the Yakutsk residents went to them; some went to the hieromonks Makarii and Evfimii.[164]

Here, in skeletal form, is a problem with which consistories over the Russian empire would grapple with for centuries: laypeople could claim they were missing from their parish register (*rospis'*) because they had gone to confession to another priest. Like Roman Catholics preferring Franciscan mendicants for confession rather than their parish priests, Russians might choose to go to monasteries rather than to their parish priests, especially when they had something serious to confess. Church authorities first tried to stop the practice, banning monasteries from hearing the confessions of any outsiders except for local parish priests. Eventually they gave up, and settled for requiring any priests who confessed others' spiritual children to provide the penitents with a certification attesting to their confession, so that they could be entered properly in their home books.[165]

Evading these requirements was not difficult. People could bribe priests to say they had gone to confession when in fact they had not. Men could claim that they were away working.[166] Women could claim the best weekends in Lent happened to coincide with their menstrual cycles, rendering them 'unclean'. People could leave town during Lent, as did some residents of Tver.[167] Old Believers willing to confess so as to 'render Caesar's unto Caesar' but who drew the line at communing in a Nikonian church might claim they had committed mortal sins which called for many years of excommunication.[168] But to emphasize the possibility of successful evasion, as did Viktor Zhivov, is to miss the larger point.[169] Did these

[164] *Sobraniie*, in RGADA, f. OFR, ed. khr. 4175, #42, 129–30.

[165] See a 1779 case from Bielograd diocese: https://goskatalog.ru/portal/#/collections?id=22872246.

[166] Mikhail Nesterov, for example, claimed that he was away working in Kronstadt. *PSPRI*, t. 10, #3684 (May 13, 1741), 514.

[167] This was noted by Sil'vestr, Metropolitan of Tver in *PSPRI*, t. II, ch. 1 (1722), #139, 208.

[168] Antonii, Metropolitan of Tobolsk, complained in 1722 that schismatics claimed that they had committed the worst sexual sins so as to be excommunicated. PSPR, t. II, ch. 2 (1722), #917, 159.

[169] Viktor Zhivov, 'Handling Sin in Eighteenth-Century Russia', in *Representing Private Lives of the Enlightenment*, Andrew Kahn, ed. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010).

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attempts at control and persuasion *work*? Perhaps they corresponded enough to what Russians had been doing all along that they excited little reaction. The question remains: did Russians, in fact, start going to confession and communion on a basis regular enough to satisfy their clergy?

Some evidence suggests that some did. Laypeople referred to confession and communion in their petitions to the crown. On December 1, 1684, for example, the residents of Amga volost' (including Cossacks, peasants, and newly baptized Yakuts) petitioned Tsars Ioann and Peter to send them a priest. Although they had already built a chapel with their own labours, there were only so many rites and prayers they could do on their own. People died without proper Christian burial, mothers remained unchurched after giving birth, children remained without baptism—and everyone lived without repentance (that is, confession), because of the lack of a priest.[170] Of course, it is likely that the specific priest they requested, Boris Fedorov, himself put together the people's petition, and thus knew what language to use. Still, the point is that by 1684, confession was something that peasant settlers in Yakutia could plausibly emphasize as the strongest element in their petition. In another case, Natalia Armetinova complained to the patriarch's court that her son Kondrashko 'forgot the fear of God' as evidenced by his not going to church, not having a father-confessor, mingling with 'unbaptized foreigners', fornicating, and threatening to kill her. Although Kondrashko denied all the charges, the judge called him a 'church rebel' and 'his mother's vexer' and sentenced him to both confession and corporal punishment. The mother's strategy of including confession in her account of transgression, involving religious and moral misbehaviour, had worked.[171] Some people saw confession as a way to report something important so that it would be taken seriously. In 1662, for example, when Avdot'ia Baksheeva heard a voice coming from a Marian icon and kept it to herself, the Mother of God later rebuked her for *not* reporting the incident to her father-confessor.[172] Parishioners also began to complain to higher authorities that their spiritual fathers were not fulfilling their priestly responsibilities as confessors: they knew that not being available for confession and communion, particularly for last rites, was a grave offence, and that they could expect that priests would indeed be called in for questioning.[173]

Similarly, priests could use parishioners' not going to confession against them. Thus, in 1686, a priest from Ustiug complained to his bishop that a powerful parishioner, Avdiei Kariepin, regularly cursed him and beat him with a stick. But the priest sensed that he would have better results if he added another complaint:

[170] Sobraniie gosudarstvennykh gramot i dogovorov, Pt. IV, #94, December 1, 1684, 258–9.

[171] Marianna Muravyeva, 'Emotional Environments and Legal Spaces in Early Modern Russia', *Journal of Social History* 51(2) (December 1, 2017), 255–71.

[172] E. K. Romodanovskaia and A. T. Shashkov, 'Sibirskie videniia 1662 g. v kontekste antinikonovskoi bor'by', in *Sibir' i literatura: XVII vek* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 2002), 314–29.

[173] See the 1685 case against Priest Petr Evtikhiev in *Sobraniie*, f. OFR, ed. khr. 4175, no. 77, 216.

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Avdiei and his children did not go to confession or rejoice on Christ's Holy Resurrection. (Avdiei was indeed compelled to go to confession as a result.[174]) In 1692, priests complained to hierarchs that their flock lived without confession, and did not donate candles or incense or wine, either.[175] And, after detailing five years' worth of complaints about their drunken priest Nikita Ivanov in 1698, an Arkhangel'sk parish resorted to the most drastic means they could think of: if Father Nikita were not removed, they would refuse to go to him for confession.[176] Such evidence suggests that, whether because of previous practice or new attempts to enforce it, by the end of the seventeenth century annual Lenten confession was indeed seen as a generally acceptable minimum and marker of Orthodox Christianity in Muscovy, acknowledged both in government ukazes and in peasant petitions to the authorities. What was said at confession was acknowledged as potentially carrying an obligation to be reported further. Finally, the move to strengthen parish affiliation started to shift people away from grouping themselves in confessional 'families'—those confessing to the same priest because of affinity—to confessing to an assigned parish priest.

Conclusion

The end of the century showed which of the new trends would last. After the 1689 confrontation between Sophia and the seventeen-year-old Peter, Patriarch Ioakim called a new Council which condemned Kievan texts including Haliatovskyi's for their 'soul-rotting poison of Latin evil teaching and innovation'.[177] *Mir s Bogom* was dismissed, not unfairly, as 'being all translated from Latin books'.[178] In his 1690 testament, Ioakim called Tsars to be true to the holy Eastern Church and to defend it from all corruption, urging Russians to limit all contacts with the heterodox.[179] Significantly, however, he did not challenge the seventeenth-century changes to the rite of confession. Nikon's redaction of the Mohyla *Trebnik* with the 'I absolve you' formula remained the norm in the Russian Orthodox Church. So did the post-1699 *Uchitel'noe izviestie* addition to the service-book,

[174] Amfiteatrov, *Russkii pop*, 118–19.
[175] Stefanovich, *Prikhod*, 266.
[176] Amfiteatrov, *Russkii pop*, 178–80.
[177] Some monasteries, including the Spaso-Evfimiev Monastery in Suzdal, nonetheless kept copies of the condemned books. N. I. Kostomarov, 'Epifanii Slavinetskii, Simeon Polotskii i ikh preemniki', in *Russkaia istoriia v zhizneopisaniiakh ee glavneishikh deiatelei*, t. 2, 6th ed. (St Petersburg: tip M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1912).
[178] K. Tikhomirov, 'Opis' Suzdal'skogo Spaso Evfimieva monastyria v 1660 g'. *Vremennik imperatorskago Moskovskago obshchestva istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*, kn. 5 (Moscow: v universitetskoi tip., 1850), 50–1; Aleksandr Prozorovskii, *Sil'vestr Medvedev, ego zhizn' i deiatel'nost* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tip., 1896), 447–9.
[179] *Zhitie i zaveshchanie sviateishego patriarkha Ioakima* (St. Petersburg : tip. V. S. Balasheva, 1879), 119–38; A. P. Bogdanov, *Russkie patriarkhi (1589–1701)*, t. 2 (Moscow: Terra, 1999), 297–303.

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with its requirement of a week's fasting and church attendance before approaching confession and communion.

Ioakim's acceptance of the modern Ruthenian-inflected Russian confession showed its success. In its revised, post-Mohyla form, the sacrament of confession started to become a means of social discipline and control, and an indication of submissiveness to Church and state. In their approach to confession in the seventeenth century, Russian rulers and Ruthenian and Russian hierarchs worked along the same continuum as their European counterparts. Peasant petitions suggest that confession was also a part of lay piety: it may not have been an all-pervasive element, but it did now serve as a marker, a symbolic shorthand that implied fulfilment of other practices.

As regards confession, then, we see a steady progression beginning with the aims of Romanov rulers from Mikhail onwards and hierarchs beginning with Mikhail's father, Patriarch Filaret. Both hierarchs and Tsars shared the goal of disciplining and educating their population, and saw more diligent encouragement of at least annual confession as a means of attaining that end. Ruthenian clerics, who had read Counter-Reformation tracts encouraging more frequent confession and observed the beneficial effects of those policies in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, provided theological grounding for the ukazes of the Tsars. Hierarchs like Patriarch Ioakim were even more concerned about the Old Believer schism than were Tsars, and were not shy about appealing to the Tsars to root out dissent: as in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe, both rulers and bishops saw confession as a legitimate occasion to inquire about someone's Orthodoxy, and indeed determine someone's Orthodoxy on the basis of whether or not they showed up to the sacrament. When it came to encouraging confession among their Orthodox subjects, Tsars and hierarchs saw themselves as working for the same goals. Through the end of the seventeenth century, this process of using confession to discipline and educate the Christian population in the lands ruled from Moscow was a local variant of a broad European trend.[180] Under Peter I, confession would take on even more importance, under even more Ruthenian and foreign influence.

[180] Paul Bushkovitch, 'Peter and the Seventeenth Century,' in Jarmo Kotilaine and Marshall Poe, eds., *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, Jarmo Kotilaine and Marshall Poe, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 461–76.