Social Discipline among the Russian Orthodox Parish Clergy (17th - 18th Century)

Normative ideals, and the practice of parish life

La discipline sociale dans le clergé paroissial orthodoxe russe

(XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles) : idéaux normatifs et pratique de la vie paroissiale

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/10095>

DOI: 10.4000/monderusse.10095

ISSN: 1777-5388

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 July 2017

Number of pages: 303-340

ISBN: 978-2-7132-2697-7

ISSN: 1252-6576

Electronic reference

Alfons Brüning, "Social Discipline among the Russian Orthodox Parish Clergy (17th - 18th Century)", *Cahiers du monde russe* [Online], 58/3 | 2017, Online since 01 July 2019, connection on 19 January 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/10095> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/monderusse.10095>

ALFONS BRÜNING

SOCIAL DISCIPLINE AMONG THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PARISH CLERGY (17th - 18th CENTURY)

Normative ideals, and the practice of parish life¹

Parish life and parish priests belong to the classical subjects of Russian church history. So the issue is anything but new for research. We already have a threefold layer of highly instructive studies published in recent decades,² extensive chapters in classical compendiums of church history,³ and—last not least—an abundance of first-hand explorations in Russian journals since the late 19th century. The image of the parish priest of Russia's early modern period, which emerges from all these studies, is mostly a negative one: ignorant, often drunk, and hardly distinct from the peasants of his parish both financially and culturally. This very image was equally drawn by many foreign travelers in Russia during this period, and through their testimony ultimately made it also into widespread overviews of Russian history of our times.⁴

1. Research for this article has been made possible by a grant from Thyssen Foundation, Germany. I am particularly indebted to Aleksandr Lavrov, Paris, for his help and advice.

2. Gregory Freeze, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977); Erich Bryner, *Der geistliche Stand in Russland: sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Episkopat und Gemeindegeistlichkeit der russischen orthodoxen Kirche im 18. Jahrhundert* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985). More recent studies are Петр Стефанович, *Приход и приходское духовенство в России в XVI-XVII веках* [Petr Stefanovich, Parish and parish clergy in Russia in the 16th and 17th century] (M.: Indrik, 2002); Татьяна А. Бернштам, *Приходская жизнь русской деревни: очерки по церковной этнографии* [Tat'iana A. Bernshtam, Parish life of the Russian village. Sketches of church ethnography] (СПб.: Изд-во С.-Петербурга. ун-та 2007).

3. Among the most comprehensive examples is Igor Smolitsch, *Russische Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 428-526. For a consistent extensive overview of historiography, see Стефанович, *Приход*, 9-30.

4. Cf. Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 227.

However, such a stereotype is perhaps distorted and does not entail the complete story. It is the aim of this article to question the established image of the parish clergy on some points, at the very least to add some important nuances, and to do so through an appropriate application of the “social discipline” concept, which was initially developed with regard to Western Christianity in the early modern period. With this aim in mind, observations will focus especially on the institution of the “electoral principle” (*vybornoe nachalo*), the principle of the priest being elected by the parishioners, and its development in two particular regions, namely Ukraine and the Russian North.

At first sight, this seems not to be a promising enterprise. The Russian priest of early modern times, according to what is known so far, in few respects only is comparable to his Western—Roman Catholic or Protestant—counterparts. Both Catholic priests and Protestant pastors appeared as agents of—and were paid by—the larger church community they represented. Western clerics in the early modern period usually managed to achieve the status of local dignitaries. Even in rather remote village communities they were respected members of the local elite. Their standard of education, initially also a matter of complaint for church officials, subsequently grew throughout the 16th and 17th century. New or revised old ideals advanced and specified the churchmen’s spiritual and cultural profile⁵. The average Russian priest, in comparison to this, still in the early 19th century had a bad reputation: according to existing stereotypes, he was both poor and greedy for money, badly educated, often illiterate, of disputable moral character and life conduct, often an alcoholic, and in a word, he was hardly capable of fulfilling his ambitious spiritual task. Many such deficiencies apparently were mainly a result of the poor condition of his life and work. The Russian parish priest, up to the late 17th century at least, was first and foremost an integral part of the local parish, with church authorities only rarely interfering. Left alone by bishops and higher clergy, he was both financially and culturally dependent on the whim and will of the parishioners, himself a “clerical peasant” rather than an agent of salvation or a conveyor of spiritual and cultural values. Despite various reform initiatives few things had changed about this picture over the centuries. At least this is what a diagnosis as that included in the widely received account of the priest Fr. Ivan S. Belliustin on the eve of another reform period in the second half of the 19th century suggested.⁶

5. Cf. Luise Schorn-Schütte, “Priest, Preacher, Pastor: Research on Clerical Office in Early Modern Europe,” *Central European History*, 33, no. 1 (2000): 1-39; id., “The new clergies,” in R. Po-Chia Hsia, ed., *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 6, *Reform and Expansion 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 444-464; Marc Vernard, et. al., eds., *Die Geschichte des Christentums*, vol. 9 (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 263-280.

6. I.S. Belliustin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia*, transl. and introd. by Gregory L. Freeze (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

Applying “social discipline” to early Modern Russia: Methodological remarks

If these most different pictures in East and West are accurate, what is it that might explain such differences? Western historiography has connected the advancement of spiritual forming, and the establishment of new norms and improvements in behavior and lifestyle with the theoretical concepts of “social discipline” and “confessionalization.” Accordingly, no later than the middle of the 17th century, both secular and religious authorities on a large scale established new canons for behavior and discipline, alongside with the formulation of new ideals for “a good Christian” and a “citizen.” The establishment of such new canons initiated a process which in the long run led to ordered societal conditions, a stricter persecution of crime, and a growing refinement in culture and social manners. Religion played a central part in this process. Changes in religiosity, more than other things, promoted the actual establishment of new modes of ritual practice, discipline and behavior. One of the “inventors” of the confessionalization paradigm, Wolfgang Reinhard, in a programmatic article linked the “social discipline” concept and its success with the religious need for certainty: confessional churches propagated a path to salvation which led through virtue, obedience and sacramental participation. For the average Christian, the wish to be saved in the long run worked much more in favor of the adoption of such patterns of discipline than just authoritarian policies and social coercion.⁷

Compared with Western Christianity of this period, Russia appears to deliver only negative impressions. The question of a fruitful application of the concept of “social discipline” to Russian church history has already been asked from time to time, and the answers given so far sound skeptical, to say the least. Systematic overviews end up with the conclusion that hardly any of the above-mentioned effects could be observed in the Russian case, either among nobles or among townspeople, or—relevant for our context—within the lower clergy. There is perhaps but one exception: similar to some religious minority groups in the West, the Old Believer communities in the long run do betray some patterns that at least strongly remind of “social discipline” developments in the West.⁸

However, the application of a Western concept to a presumably different, at any rate non-Western, context⁹ is always a challenge, and there might have been some

7. Wolfgang Reinhard, “Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des Konfessionellen Zeitalters,” *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 10 (1986): 276.

8. Lars Behrisch, “Social Discipline in Early Modern Russia. Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries,” in Heinz Schilling and Lars Behrisch, eds., *Institutionen, Instrumente und Akteure sozialer Kontrolle und Disziplinierung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1999), 325-257.

9. It is pure methodological reasons first and foremost which force us here to presume a non-Western context for Russian Christianity as a hypothesis, at least until the opposite is proven. To operate with this hypothesis would not imply, and is certainly not intended as any ideological statement within the old debate about Russia’s distinctiveness from the West.

hasty conclusions. Since its creation, the very concept of “social discipline” has itself experienced quite a number of corrections and specifications. Probably the most important among them concern the sources, both in a direct and indirect sense. The release of regulations, canons, laws, church orders and catechisms in large numbers, all of which can be observed since the second half of the 17th century in many Western European territories, is one thing. The quantitative growth of normative sources, however, tells rather little about which out of this new mass of prescriptions and orders was actually followed by the addressees. Somewhat the other way round, an accompanying growth of visitation protocols, of acts of criminal courts and the like in fact illustrates only the problematic cases and conflicts, but allows almost no conclusion about long-term developments. For example, did criminality grow in comparison with the situation a century before, or were certain crimes and offences just persecuted more strictly, and therefore better documented? This is the distortion of an exclusive top-down perspective. All these sources were related to the official side of public authorities. The addition of a bottom-up perspective revealed different and often not linear developments. The initiated processes in fact did bring about new patterns of both religious and secular culture, yet the ways taken and the results achieved often differed significantly from the initiators’ guiding ideas. Sometimes new norms were followed only as far as they concurred with specific interests of the subjects, and insofar as they would have made easier—or even possible—such different things like economic growth, the resolution of conflicts or the strengthening of social status. What resulted was a quite complex system of interactions, with outcomes often rather different from those once predicted or wished for by the authorities. This holds true for both the sphere of state and society and for that of the churches.

The experience of the just described difference between, as it were, a normative input and its products in practice led to a certain change in the perspective on what sources tell: purely normative sources tell much about the ideals, but little about their actual implementation. More importantly, on the factual side conflicts are usually documented much better than everyday banalities. But much of importance for long time processes happened right on this bottom layer. It is this rather unspectacular acceptance of norms, however, which, if documented at all, would mirror the humble but steady progress of social discipline. A second factor of more specific relevance for the sphere of religion were the modes of social discipline and social control that apparently were most effective within religious minorities (like e.g. Baptists or Scottish Presbyterians). Here a situation of repression from outside combined with self-consciousness inside the community of representing a kind of “chosen people” in order to promote an elsewhere unusual observation of discipline with regard to both rite and inter-human relations.¹⁰

Just as the Old Believers in this perspective might betray an unexpected similarity with Western developments, in a more general sense the blind spots and

10. For a summary of both debates and literature, see Lars Behrisch, s.v. “Sozialdisziplinierung,” *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, vol. 12 (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2010), col. 220-229.

interpretative gaps just identified in the original “social discipline” concept perhaps offer further, hitherto unused possibilities for its application to the Russian clergy as well. The historiography of the late 19th century, including the many articles and source publications to which we are still used to refer, generally developed under the impression of the need for reform. Quite naturally, this might have led to an overemphasis on the bad things in the then present situation, and at the same time might have given a nostalgic air to institutions of the past. The parish and the priests with their peculiarities in the course of these debates became either subjects of romantic, later especially Slavophile idealization, or were treated as a relic of a semi-pagan past characterized by still insufficient Christianization that had to be overcome. This overtone of critique and reform runs through many of the numerous late nineteenth-century studies about the issue. That would not mean that all these early studies lose their value. But it might be that in their source base and their conclusions these studies often step into similar traps of distorted perception as did the early “social discipline” investigations and debates in the West: deficiencies are quantitatively overrated, whereas a stream of unnoticed banality, of every day development, unspectacular enough not to produce an amount of sources equal to the abundance generated by the many conflicts and problems, might have escaped the attention of a reform period, where only very bad or very good news was relevant news.

At any rate, already in the 19th century not everyone was as skeptic about the cultural level of the priests and the success of previous reforms, as for example Fr. Belliustin and his audience. According to the late nineteenth-century textbook of Aleksandr P. Dobroklonskii, the measures taken since the late 17th century eventually did prove fruitful, and led to a subsequent increase of both the intellectual and moral level and of the social status of the average clergyman.¹¹ Fr. Belliustin himself, by the way, was a widely respected personage in the eyes of all his parishioners, and in that he was not just an exception to confirm the rule, but seems to have represented a better part out of the large group of priests. In A.V. Kamkin’s instructive stories about religious life in the Russian North we find quoted several examples of priests enjoying both dignitary status and high authority among the parishioners. Without their consent no marriages were celebrated, and even the beer for the feast was not brewed. Their efforts in reminding members of the flock of an appropriate behavior during the liturgy as much as outside the church building were not met with anger, but with respect and even expressive gratitude.¹² In addition, during the nineteenth-century reform movement peasants with their precarious

11. Александр Доброклонский, *Руководство по истории Русской церкви* [Aleksandr Dobroklonskii, Textbook on the history of the Russian Church](originally published in 4 vols, Рязань-Москва, 1889-1893; reprint М.: Издательство Крутицкого подворья Общество любителей церковной истории, 2009), 565.

12. Александр Камкин, *Православная церковь на Севере России. Очерки истории до 1917 года* [Aleksandr Kamkin, The Orthodox Church in the north of Russia. Sketches of its history up to 1917] (Вологда: Вологодский Государственный Педагогический Институт, 1992), 145f.

social and economic conditions often experienced the explicit solidarity of the priests, and it was the parish clergy who defended the institution of the peasant community (and parish) against bureaucratic and centralizing tendencies inherent in the reform.¹³ It seems important to state in this context that especially the famous “electoral principle (*vybornoe nachalo*)” as a basic expression of parish autonomy during this period of reform became, on occasion, either an object of romantic projections (in line with Aleksei Khomiakov’s *sobornost’* principle) or a critically viewed relic of the past, connected with shortcomings and negative effects on spiritual life that had to be overcome.¹⁴ Historiography of this period reflects this wavering between idealization and critique, whereas the parish and the role of the priest in society remained widely discussed issues up to the end of Tsarist Russia. Curiously enough, many of the parish priests themselves took an active and competent part in such discussions—something one would probably not have expected if the stereotype of the illiterate and drunkard and merely “clerical peasant” had been completely accurate. Obviously the solidarity of the pastors with their flock already was of a more sophisticated nature by this time, and it is an interesting question to ponder where such advancements originated from.¹⁵

Therefore, on second look perhaps some nuances need to be added to the established picture. Against this background, as I want to suggest in this article, a slow but steady process of improvement of both the ideal and the real life of the parish clergy, their qualifications, behavior and reputation can be identified beyond the surface of still existing problems, deficiencies and shortcomings. This is what might become evident by a look at the developments of parishes and priests through the lens of the “social discipline” theory, the latter taken in its current, often revised understanding. Sources consulted and quoted in the following pages mostly cover the period between the early 17th and the late 18th century. Several benchmarks on this long path can be mentioned, but in any single case, the question would be,

13. Julia Oswalt, *Kirchliche Gemeinde und Bauernbefreiung: Soziales Reformdenken in der Orthodoxen Gemeindegeistlichkeit Russlands in der Ära Alexanders II.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975); see also the review of Oswalt’s book by Gregory Freeze, *Slavic Review*, 36, 2 (1977): 297-298.

14. A systematic investigation of 19th century historiography on parishes and priests in this respect apparently still needs to be done. Much information concerning reform debates can yet be taken from Gregory Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in the 19th century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). See also Smolitsch, *Geschichte der russischen Kirche*, 517-519. In Ukraine, the debates partly took a different direction when several authors betrayed a clear tendency to view the autonomous parish and the electoral principle as part of a “national Christian” heritage; cf. Валерій Ластовський, *Історія православної церкви в Україні наприкінці XVII – у XVIII ст.: Історіографічні аспекти* [Valeryi Lastov’skyi, *History of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine at the end of 17th and in the 18th century: Historiographical aspects*] (Київ: Лорос, 2006), 82-89.

15. Further debates concerning both the role of the parish and of priests in society at the turn of the 19th century are reflected thoroughly in Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), especially 12-53; Martin Schulze Wessel, *Revolution und religiöser Dissens. Der römisch-katholische und der russisch-orthodoxe Klerus als Träger religiösen Wandels in den böhmischen Ländern und in Russland 1848-1922* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).

whether they actually mean a change of paradigms, and not just a reinforcement of movements already on their way. As we shall see, there are more arguments in favor of the latter interpretation. For our context this would mean that a certain striving for reform already becomes manifest, among others, in the famous circle of the “Zealots of Piety” in the 1640s, whereas the effect of the assessments of the council of 1666-1667, in which much of this initially disparate reform movement eventually culminates, showed their effect on parish level some years later. A reform period outlined this way, at any rate, has been hinted at, but at the same time rarely been seen, or been systematically investigated as a coherent reform period so far.¹⁶ As a rather intermediate step, Peter’s church reforms and the famous “Spiritual Regulation” have been the subject of various thorough studies,¹⁷ but so far have hardly been seen in the context of a wider movement, basic features of which apparently developed rather independently from the tsar’s own rigid and stratifying impulses. Perhaps the same is true for the next reform steps taken under Catherine the Great after 1764: they took up old problems, and applied solutions long discussed before, but it is difficult to assess to what extent they brought about a real change. As several sources from the late 18th and even the early 19th century suggest, many things remained the same, in both a positive and a negative sense.¹⁸ This implies that there is also no definite end to the reform period in the sense that “before” and “after” could be clearly distinguished. It has been said that a regulation of the Holy Synod in 1797, which obliged the bishops to give favor to an obedient and educated priest at their own choice in case of conflict, in fact meant the end of the “electoral principle.” As a matter of fact, this regulation in no single phrase addresses the actual abolishment of this principle, although it did mean another step in enlarging the prerogatives of church authorities.¹⁹ Priests continued to be assessed through election after this date, and often so without further conflicts.

A second point hitherto often neglected is that major impulses in this reform period came from confrontation and adaptation processes: from the struggle with the Old Believer’s separatism on the one hand, and from the incorporation of the metropolitanate of Kiev and Left Bank Ukraine, finally accomplished in 1686, on the other. All this contributed to the establishment of a partly new and more ambitious theoretical ideal of the parish priest and his vocation, which yet took up as many old ideas as it integrated new influences. This particular point will be

16. Several authors (e.g. Стефанович, *Приход*, 297-312) hint at the existence of such a reform movement, but without a more profound analysis.

17. Still central are James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (London: Macmillan 1971); Павел Верховской, *Учреждение Духовной Коллегии и Духовный Регламент* [Pavel Verkhovskoi, The establishment of the spiritual college and the spiritual regulation], 2 vols. (Ростов на Дону: Гузман, 1916).

18. For a summarizing description of Catherine’s reforms concerning the Orthodox Church cf. Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), 111-122.

19. *ПСЗ (Полное Собрание Законов Российской Империи – Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire)*, vol. 24, no. 17.958 (1830), 606-608.

highlighted below. Not all of the reform impulses and attempted improvements introduced in this period remained merely on paper. The question that will be treated in this article's final section is which of the revised and new ideals actually became effective, and which conditions shaped the scope and extent of their implementation. It was, as can be anticipated here, mostly a matter of interaction between authorities and lower circles.

Finally, the major part of the sources explored for this article stem from either the Russian North, the eparchies of Vologda and Velikii Ustiug, and from the Ukrainian region, mainly the Kievan and Pereiaslav region. This choice was made with a focus on the "electoral principle", and it was a conscious one for several reasons. Roughly speaking, in these regions the formal relation between the priest and the parish for most of the period in question can be considered closer and more direct than in others, starting from the direct election of the priest by the parishioners. As we will see, this institution was vividly defended by the communities throughout the named period—something which might actually be regarded as rather an obstacle to "social discipline" from above—but nonetheless underwent changes in many respects. Despite a number of differences in detail, in this regard the communities of mostly free peasants (*tiaglye liudi* in the North) concurred with the Cossack parishes on Ukrainian territory during the 17th and early 18th century, even after the influence of the Cossack elite (*starshyna*) under the tsar's regime began to grow.²⁰ The development of this famous "electoral principle," as will be argued, with all its implications can be seen as an important indicator for changes in the relation between church authority, parish and priest, and the self-understanding of the latter. The choice does not mean a conscious neglect of differences also existing between the two regions, or of further sketches which another analysis of other Russian regions would be able to add. Thus, our focus includes a certain methodological simplification, which yet seems legitimate, for the time being, for the sake of clarity.

20. Concerning the Ukrainian territories, observations made in this article in more than one respect intersect with the contribution of Laurent Tatarenko to the present volume. The focus there is more on the Western and Central Ukrainian territories, especially those which after the Peace Treaty of 1685 remained under Polish-Lithuanian jurisdiction, and which are in some respect better documented mainly due to Uniate document repositories and corresponding research. On the other hand, it is especially the role played by the Cossack *starshyna* (see Tatarenko) that also needs to be taken into account for the eparchies of Kiev and Pereiaslav, especially since the later decades of the 17th century. As we shall see, the role of *starshyna* patrons over Orthodox parishes, first, did not directly affect the continuing validity of the electoral principle there, secondly these patrons sometimes rather collaborated with the clergy in the realization of certain reform steps (also due to social interconnections between clergy and nobility, cf. also Tatarenko, and thirdly in case of tensions concerning parish self-administration could be—and actually sometimes were—ignored by the higher clerics and bishops. For the Eastern dioceses of the Kievan metropolitanate, different from Poland-Lithuania, especially after the 1680s one would hardly find many examples for a cooperation of the higher clergy with a local landlord against the parish, whereas the opposite seems to have happened more often. The incorporation of the Kievan metropolitanate into Muscovy and the patriarchate of Moscow also in this respect strengthened the church hierarchy at the expense of the local nobility and the hetmanate, with which they had often been at odds in the period before, see Serhii Plokhyy, *Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Apart from such general observations, certainly the role of the local nobility would yet still require more detailed research. See also fn. 119 below.

It is clear that periodizations are always arbitrary to some extent, and also the decision to focus on two regions, for the time being, can be contested. To be sure, both are preliminary assessments, also for practical reasons. They might yet help, as is the author's hope, to deliver appropriate starting points for a new look, for what in Russian is called "an effort at posing the question (*k postanovke voprosu*)."

The parish and the elected priest in the 16th and 17th century: Opening a closed cosmos?

Traditionally, the relationship between the parish and its priest started with the latter's election by the parishioners. Where this "electoral principle" originated from, is still unclear to some extent. Already in the 16th century, the institution of priests being appointed on the base of parish elections seems to have existed for quite a long time. The Stoglav Council of 1555 treated the election of priests as already something traditional and widely established, and confirmed the tradition once again—restricting its comments to mere admonishments to both priests and bishops to take their responsibilities seriously.²¹ Canonical roots of the institution apparently go back to Byzantium and its legacy. This hypothesis receives some endorsement through the fact that other areas of the "Orthodox world" like Romania and Bulgaria knew similar institutions.²²

Corresponding with the presumption of Late Antiquity roots of the institution, there are some traces also in Western Christianity, which seem to have disappeared later, although not completely so. Still in the Middle Ages there were several regions of Western Europe, especially parts of Germany and Italy, which knew the institution for long, although in a multitude of variations.²³ By the 17th century, however, the institution of the priests' election had largely disappeared, with only few exceptions, like parishes in Southern Italy and Sicily.²⁴ At the same time, it seems to have disappeared from reality earlier than from the memory of the laymen. Curiously, the first among the famous "12 articles" compiled during peasants' revolts accompanying the early Reformation in Southern Germany in 1525 demands that the priest be elected by the parishioners.²⁵

21. Jack E. Kollmann, "The Stoglav Council and Parish Priests," *Russian History*, 7, no. 7 (1980): 65-91, here 74-78.

22. Kollmann, "Stoglav," 75, provides some indications of the Byzantine roots of the priests' election. See also Matei Cazacu, "Moines savants et popes ignorants dans le monde orthodoxe post-byzantin," in Dominique Iogna-Prat and Gilles Veinstein, eds., *Histoires des hommes de Dieu dans l'islam et le christianisme* (P. : Flammarion, 2003), 152-154, quoting examples from eighteenth-century Bulgaria and from Moldavia out of 1829.

23. Dietrich Kurz, *Pfarrerwahlen im Mittelalter. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gemeinde und des Niederkirchenwesens* (Cologne-Graz: Böhlau, 1966).

24. Cf. *Die Geschichte des Christentums*, vol. 9, 272.

25. Cf. <http://www.uni-muenster.de/FNZ-Online/politstrukturen/reformation/quellen/bauer.htm> [last access October 17, 2017].

Similar to the Western Middle Ages, also in Russia the right to elect a priest was derived from the funding and erection of the church building. Who gave the means, or himself erected the building, automatically claimed the right to name the priest. This could be either the parishioners in a collective endeavor, or some single person who subsequently would offer their service to the surrounding parishes—in case the latter would agree to have them as priests (what they usually did) and the bishop would ordain the elected one.²⁶ As we shall see, the right to elect a priest would also be defended mainly on this base. In case this founder was not a landlord or higher nobleman, but the peasants themselves—as it was often the case in colonized areas like the northern region of Muscovite Russia, or the “wild fields” (called *dzi ke pola* in Poland-Lithuania) of the steppe region of Left Bank Ukraine—it was also the community itself which insisted on this right.

Once a suitable candidate was found, and appointed through the parish, both sides concluded a contract (*izliub*) in which the necessary agreements were fixed. In a juridical sense these agreements were purely mutual contracts; involvement of further parties, including church officials, was neither intended nor considered useful.²⁷ This remained so for decades and centuries to come: although the concluding parties apparently were aware of some extraordinary aspects of a priest's appointment, the contract largely was similar by nature to that with other service providers, artisans, traders and the like. The most important elements of such agreements, next to the wishful behavior and characteristics of the priest, concerned economic issues. Priests did not receive any salary from the church, so their and their family's keep and living were completely dependent on means granted by the parish. The usual form was a piece of land or the harvest of it, next to a salary to be paid in either money or natural goods (*ruga*).²⁸ As a consequence, the priest also in practical terms shared the life of his flock. In addition to the regular income, and often as a necessary means to provide a sufficient living, the priest could claim emoluments (*treby*) for rites he had to perform next to the regular

26. РИБ (Русская Историческая Библиотека – Russian Historical Library), 14, no. CLVII, 389-390 (before 1666/1667); no. CLXV, 401 (1649/1650), cf. Стефанович, *Приход*, 31-108; Александр Папков, *Древнерусский приход: Краткий очерк церковно-приходской жизни в Восточной России до XVIII в. и в Западной России до XVII в.* [Aleksandr Papkov, *The Old Russian Parish. Short sketch of church and parish life in Eastern Russia up to the 18th century, and in Western Russia up to the 17th century*] (Сергиев Посад, 1897), 6; Серафим Юшков, *Очерки из истории приходской жизни на Севере России в XV-XVII вв.* [Serafim Iushkov, *Sketches from parish life in the North of Russia in the 15th-17th centuries*] (СПб.: Типография М.А. Алексадрова, 1913), 8-11.

27. This point is particularly emphasized by Юшков, *Очерки из истории приходской жизни*, 30.

28. For the 16th century cf. Kollmann, “Stoglav,” 78-87. For the sake of brevity we again slightly simplify the description here. In fact there were many deviations from this basic stereotype, providing priests for example with (part of) the income of a windmill, watermill, or a salina, and payment with a variety of natural goods—including vodka—while others earned additional money as craftsmen, see Василий Верюжский, “Северорусское приходское духовенство в конце XVII века [Vasilii Veriuzhskii, *The North Russian clergy at the end of the 17th century*],” *Христианское чтение* [Christian readings], no. 8 (1906): 290. Generally on the question of material supply, see Стефанович, *Приход*, 109-168.

liturgy, like baptism, marriage, funeral services, blessings or particular prayers (*molebny*, services of entreaty). The actual amount of such fees was a problematic issue, as it could form a means of pressure in the hands of either the priests or the parishioners and therefore easily become a source of conflict. Their type and scope were therefore carefully fixed in the contracts.

Services and specific tasks of the parish priest were often considered to be well known, and therefore not always explicitly repeated in these contracts. This was different in a second type of sources: on their basis, the parish compiled another document (usually called *donoshenie* [petition] in Muscovy, *presenta* in the Ukrainian case), that was sent to inform the local bishop. He had to confirm the decision of the parish and the appointment—and to ordain the new priest, in case this had not happened before. These recommendation letters to the bishop usually contain more explicit information about the qualities (literacy, moral qualities etc.) expected from a priest than the *izliuby* [contracts]. In turn, central (church) archives in general have preserved more of these recommendation letters than of the actual *izliuby*, which remained in the parishes—with the consequence that their documentation is more scattered. Although the need for formal ordination in theory offered some possibilities for the bishop to influence the choice of the parishioners and the qualities of the candidate, in earlier times the blessing seems to have been a rather formal act that was rarely refused.²⁹ Parishioners, in turn, were eager to present the candidate of their choice in a positive light. It was here that they expressed their ideal of a priest (to which the elected corresponded): the priest and his family were supposed to lead a good and well-ordered life, and in particular he had to be no drunkard, no womanizer, and of course no criminal and not quarrelsome or greedy. He should not negotiate the once fixed amount of taxes or fees with the parishioners. He should be dressed properly, preferably in black. He had to be familiar with the rites of the church, and should be literate enough to perform them on the basis of existing books.³⁰ It remains unclear what the function of a priest by this time precisely looked like. According to accounts that are more skeptical the priest in this time was merely a kind of provider of ritual services, not supposed to either interfere in matters of the autonomous community or to bother the parishioners with any superfluous wisdom.³¹ On the other hand, as the stereotypical formulas of letters of appointment for priest betray, spiritual advice, and of course “the power to bind, and to loose” (through confession) in theory had always been a part of the

29. Up to the middle of the 17th century the documents issued by the bishops for the appointment of a priest, within their stereotypical formulas, do not include any reference to the qualities of the candidate recommended by the parish; see e.g. *АП (Акты Юридические – Juridical Acts)* (СПб., 1838), no. 385/1 (1534), II (1601), III (1637), 404.

30. Cf. the corresponding summary by Камкин, *Православная церковь на Севере России*, 143ff.

31. According to Юшков, *Очерки*, 42, priests in the North were appointed with the stereotypical formula “so that our church would not remain without chants” (“*службы Божии без пения не стояло бы*,” “*церкви без пения не держати*”). Only after the reforms of the early 18th century the priests would have acquainted more of the position of an actual pastor, including catechetical tasks.

priest's task.³² Knowledge at least about the rites and prayers and their performance, occasionally with some basic theoretical background beyond actual theology, certainly belonged to the priests' traditional profile.³³ In a later phase, stereotypical formulas in these *izliuby* hint at the priest as both a teacher and a mediator of divine grace.³⁴ Accounts which refer to the priest also as an instructor of children and teacher of the knowledge necessary for salvation appear rather early in the reform period since the second half of the 17th century, and they probably take up, and expand older elements.

The question, who actually among the parishioners took part in the election, and how the procedure ran, allows for a variety of answers. Parishes in the Russian North reserved a very influential position within the parish to the elder (*starosta*), who himself was elected by the parishioners, but then attracted a major part of further responsibilities. So in more than a few cases it was actually he who took the final decision about the new priest, and even issued the corresponding document for the bishop, although he had it provided with the signature of other members of the community.³⁵ In turn, in some cases, it was just the priest himself to whom the parishioners entrusted also the dignity and tasks of the elder.³⁶ In other regions, in particular in the Ukrainian dioceses the procedure appears to have been more egalitarian. Some of the more skeptical nineteenth-century historians even draw a rather chaotic picture about the very event of the election. They describe it as partly a local feast day with drinks and folk amusements, partly as a fairly tough contest where competing candidates did what they could to offer the better bribe and to discredit their opponents in order to convince the public and get the job. Little from the ceremonies seems to have changed over time, as they are still reported for the late 18th century.³⁷ Such depictions might be exaggerated, but perhaps contain

32. These formulas in English translation sounded as follows: "... so that he reads the liturgy in the holy church of God, and whenever someone comes to him of his spiritual children, he may judge upon them according to the Holy Apostles and the Holy Fathers, and have the power to bind or loose (*вязати и пещати*)..." see *АИ*, no. 385/I, 404; later examples also contain the regulation, that in cases of a problem difficult to handle the priest was obliged to consult the bishop, as in *ibid.*, 385/II, 405.

33. For a discussion of priests' education and profile in the Stoglav cf. Kollmann, "Stoglav," 66-69.

34. The parishioners of the Preobrazhenskii prikhod, Votchinskaia volost' in a document dated January 1, 1682, elected their priest "to be of service and to make see sense his spiritual children and to teach them the fear of God and to set us, sinful and ignorant people, on the path of truth" ("*быти послушливу и детей духовных к себе на дух призывати и страху Божию поучати, на истинный путь нас, грешных темных людей наставляти*"); see *Описание свитков, находящихся в Вологодском Епархиальном Древнехранилище* [Description of testimonies preserved in the Diocesan Archive of Vologda] (вып. 1-11, Вологда, 1899-1910), here 5, 45. An example out of the Ukrainian region with similar formulas is in *Киевская Старина* [Kievan Old Tradition], no. 1 (1898): 11 (1713).

35. Cf. e.g. *РИБ*, 12, no. CLXIII, 711f; generally on the position of the *starosta*, see Стефанович, *Приход*, 239.

36. *РИБ*, 12, no. VII, 29; nos. XI-XII, 50-51; see also Юшков, *Очерки*, 38.

37. Н. Шпачинский, "Выбор приходского духовенства в Малороссии в половине XVIII века [N.Shpachinskii, The election of the parish clergy in Little Russia in the middle

more than a grain of truth in light of the measures deemed necessary by eighteenth-century bishops.

Not only in economic, but also in social and cultural terms the newly appointed priest was supposed to more or less completely integrate into the life of the church community. His general knowledge about church rites and liturgy, wherever it came from, was only a starting point, as he often had to familiarize himself with a row of peculiar local customs, feasts and ceremonies which the parishioners knew for a long time and would hardly abandon. There are various reports concerning cases in the Russian North where the new priests first had to face some introduction by “a certain Mariia Alekseeva” into the peculiarities of how several things used to be handled in his new home and working place.³⁸ To keep the balance between the parishioners’ expectations and canonical regulations must have required both tact and the ability to compromise. Peculiar manners also referred to feast days and certain ceremonies like processions with locally venerated icons, or with those in private possession of the parishioners—ceremonies, which the priest could hardly refuse to execute without risking serious argument.³⁹ Insofar as local feast days were also social events, the priest was strongly expected to participate not only in the religious ceremonies, but also in the accompanying social events, including drinking, dances, games and the like—often much to the dismay of the bishops.⁴⁰ Furthermore, local customs and popular religious views, apart from the usual liturgical ceremonies, more often than not included magical ideas and rites which pure canon law would have called (and documents from the Holy Synod after 1721 actually did call) superstitious. In more than single cases priests silently consented to such practices, either because they shared the same ideas, or out of solidarity and forced compromise with their flock—a phenomenon which would last far into the 18th century.⁴¹ Finally, perhaps the most obvious evidence of priests’ solidarity

of the 18th century],” *Киевские Епархиальные Ведомости* [Kievian Diocesan Announcements], 46 (1907): 617-621, 641-645, 689-694, 737-743, here 619; Знаменский, *Приходское духовенство*, 196-198.

38. Cf. Камкин, *Православная церковь на Севере России*, 30.

39. Cf. Карп Докучаев-Басков, “Церковно-приходская жизнь в городе Каргополе в XVI-XIX веках [Karp Dokuchaev-Baskov, Church and parish life in the city of Kargopol, 16th to 19th century],” *ЧОИДР (Чтения в Императорском Обществе Истории и Древностей Российских – Lectures at the Imperial Society of History and Russian Antiquities)* 1912, no. 1, 8, 15f.

40. Bishop Gelasii of Velikii Ustiug therefore in 1683 released a decree which prohibited at least the feasts, meals, drinking events and brawls often connected with the church building, and the gatherings of the parish around the *trapeza* (a place usually situated inside the church building itself). Whether there was any effect of the decree is unclear, see *РИБ*, 12, no. CXXXVIII, 567; *ibid.*, no. CXXXVIII (1679); Юшков, *Очерки*, 33.

41. Some of such customs are reported still in the “Spiritual Regulation,” cf. *ПСЗ*, VI, 3718, 329; Елена Смилянская, *Православный пастырь и его суеверная паства (к изучению народной религии в России первой трети XVIII в.)* [Elena Smilianskaia, The Orthodox pastor and his superstitious flock (investigating popular religion in Russia in the first third of the 18th century)], in Марина Киселева, ed., *Человек между Царством и Империей* [Marina Kiseleva, Man between Tsardom and Empire] (M.: 2003), 407-415; Robert O. Crummey, “Ecclesiastical Elites and Popular Belief and Practice in Seventeenth-Century Russia,” in

with the parishioners is delivered by accounts of the former joining revolts against church and state authorities with either social or religious background. This did not necessarily have to acquire massive levels, as it was known from the notorious Stenka Razin revolt in the late 17th century; it was often restricted to singular events, but enough for the priests to be punished just as the peasants were.⁴²

Despite all formal insistence on the part of parishes on their right to elect the priest themselves, at least during the 17th century there appeared a tendency to make a priests' position virtually hereditary: more and more often the post was just passed to the son or at least a son-in-law once it became vacant due to age or weakening health condition of the former holder. Basically, access to lower clerical positions and eventually priesthood was open to all; an ordinary peasant could be elected as a priest (he usually became first a lower clergyman and sexton [*d'iachok*]). The factual hereditary status occurred subsequently and perhaps more slowly than earlier presumed. In fact, the priests in the North at least up to the end of the 17th century more and more often were sons or sons-in-law of either local priests, or priests from another parish nearby.⁴³ Many, but not all of the priests originated from a priests' family.⁴⁴ In Ukraine, too, the position of a priest was basically open to all ranks, but also during the 17th century seems to have been passed over more regularly to sons, sons-in-law and relatives of priests.⁴⁵ For example, already in 1620 a priest from the Holy Pentecost Church in Vladimir-Volyn's'kyi left a note to the local court, that in case his sexton would marry his daughter, he would in turn endeavor to have the latter consecrated as deacon of his church, and in due time pass his "hereditary" right [to the post of the priest] to his then son-in-law. Curiously, this again is a purely legal act before a secular court, without any further church official involved.⁴⁶ The apparent contradiction of this process towards hereditary status with the libertarian elements of the electoral principle is probably best to be resolved on the base of a coincidence of interests between the two parties involved. A key point is the priests' qualification, the main or only source of which were other priests, by way of both example and instruction—probably comparable, in some

James D. Tracy and Marguerite Ragnow, eds., *Religion and the Early Modern State: View from China, Russia and the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 52-79.

42. For an example of a priest taking part in a locally limited peasants' raid, see *АИОРП* (Архив Юго-Западной России – Archive of South-Western Russia), part 1, vol. 6, no. LVIII, 202-206.

43. *Описание свитков*, 1, 37-38; 1, 41; 1, 43; 3, 79; still in 1726 we have the petition of a peasant to the Holy Synod which confirmed his election as a deacon, *ПСНП* (Полное Собрание Постановлений и Распоряжений по ведомству Православного Исповедания Российской Империи – Complete collection of decisions and dispositions on behalf of the Orthodox confession or the Russian Empire), V, no. 1783.

44. *Описание свитков*, 1, 45; 3, 87; 2, 89; 3, 91; 3, 91-92: Two out of seven candidates for priesthood are sons of priests. One additional is the son of the priest of another parish; two are brothers, still another two nephews. Only one appears not to come from a priests' family.

45. Cf. generally the initial chapter in Sophia Senyk, "Becoming a Priest, The Appointment and Ordination of Priests in the Orthodox Church in Ukraine in the Eighteenth Century," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 69 (2003): 125.

46. Cf. *АИОРП*, part 8, vol. 3, 566-568.

way, to dynasties of craftsmen or tradesmen. It was here where provisional priests acquired most of their knowledge about texts, prayers and ceremonies as usually required. In turn, priests displayed their interest to provide their children with a stable life supply for their future, whereas the parishioners elected their favorite just because in case of a cleric's son they could be sure that the latter was one of their own, and had not only the general competences his position would require, but was also sufficiently familiar with local specifics, and would not provoke unnecessary conflicts. In other words, the tendency of priests' positions to become hereditary before the 18th century in practice can be regarded as another indication for priests being an integral part of local church communities.

There is yet another side of the coin: the influence of the central church authorities, especially the bishops, was never completely absent, and in certain aspects, apparently already in the 16th century the priest exceeded the average social level and status of the ordinary parishioner. Allusions to the profile of the priest as also a teacher of the souls indicate a dimension that would go beyond the role of a mere local service provider for rites by a "clerical peasant," dependent in all respects of their life on the whim and will of the parishioners. The priests' role, according to an already better level of education than had been suggested, and at least in a number of cases, had its peculiar elements. First, insofar as they were the only more or less literate persons within the community, priests on occasion also acted as notaries, and compiled official documents for the peasants like petitions (*chelobitiia*) or testaments.⁴⁷ Furthermore, we have testimonies throughout the 17th century already that they did know and practically apply regulations of canon law, and imparted some basic patterns of a Christian lifestyle to their parishioners. In a petition from 1647 a peasant from the Siamsk *volost'* asked the bishop of Vologda to allow the burial of his son, who "out of sin went mad, and slipped into the river and the water and drowned." The local priest had refused the funeral, obviously in observation of canon law that forbids the burial of a suicidal person.⁴⁸ It is true that priests sometimes met furious protest when they tried to discipline local parishes too rigidly, and harshly attacked long existing customs like local feasts and ceremonies as "superstitious." Some in fact were openly threatened, beaten and driven away.⁴⁹ Yet, the question is to what extent such cases were typical. Relevant accounts as they are well known from the biographies of certain members of the "Zealots of Piety" circle, like Avvakum or Ivan Neronov who repeatedly experienced such treatment, certainly have also to be attributed to the uncompromising and ruthless conduct of

47. Kollmann, "Stoglav," 68, with numerous references for the 15th and 16th centuries; Камкин, *Православная церковь на Севере России*, 126, refers to a *Судебник* from 1589, which had the regulation that the priest had to destroy a testament in case the person who dictated it would unexpectedly recover.

48. *Описание свитков*, 9, no. 17 (1647); a similar case is *ibid.* no. 21 (1648).

49. An example from ca. 1652 is given by С. Веселовский, "Челобитье заказного старосты дьякона Артемия с жалобой на крестьян Устюжского уезда [Petition of the elder deacon Artemii with complaint about the peasants of the district of Ustug]," *ЧОИДР*, 1907, 1, IV, 31-33.

these true “zealots.”⁵⁰ In a similar vein, as Dan Kaiser has recently shown, church regulations concerning marriage already in the 17th century were observed to a higher extent than earlier presumed: Priests often refused to marry a couple when canonical regulations (like those pertaining to degrees of relationship) formed a hindrance. Ceremonies of marriage were not performed on those days on which church law did not allow them, like on certain feasts, or during fasting periods.⁵¹ Things, by the way, were not principally different in this respect in the Ukrainian South West.⁵²

Furthermore, if Gregory Freeze is right, at least in some of the northern parishes there were also schools, some of them even equipped with a library.⁵³ The father of the later well-known archpriest Avvakum, Petr (whom Avvakum himself introduces as a drunkard) seems to have had a collection of books, which next to the *psaltir* contributed to the early education of his son.⁵⁴ We still do not know the extent to which there existed an actual network of schools. Nineteenth-century historians with a more positive attitude towards earlier parish life in Russia sometimes go so far as to assume that a parish school in the Russian North in the 17th century was a usual phenomenon,⁵⁵ but that has not been verified so far. As for Ukraine, the well-known enthusiastic account of the Syrian archdeacon and traveler Paul of Aleppo is an uncertain starting point. By 1655 he wrote that “they all, with very few exceptions, and even the major part of their women and girls can read and write, know the church’s order and chants; the parish priests teach the orphans and do not let them roam on the streets as vagabonds.” Exaggerations are likely here.⁵⁶ Several decades earlier, at least, around 1620, the writings of Bishop Meletii Smotryc’kyi give a much more critical impression:

There used to be riches in our Ruthenian nation; there are even now in the Muscovite nation. The Lord God, however, did not allow schools to be raised either here among us, nor there in Muscovy. And wherever anything is

50. *Житие протопопа Аввакума им самим написанное* [Life of the archpriest Avvakum, described by himself] (M. – Augsburg: Im Werden Verlag, 2003), 9; Н. Субботин, ed., *Материалы для истории раскола* [Sources concerning the history of the *raskol*], vol. 1 (M., 1878), 246-250.

51. Daniel H. Kaiser, “‘Whose Wife Will She Be at the Resurrection?’ Marriage and Remarriage in Early Modern Russia,” *Slavic Review*, 62, 2 (2003): 302-323.

52. When in 1619 the Ruthenian prince Iurii Chartoryis’kyi wanted to dissolve his marriage with the daughter of the petty nobleman Konstantin Kolpytovs’kyi, he had to have the parish priest abducted by his soldiers. As is presumed by the plaintiff (Kolpytovs’kyi), the priest would otherwise have testified for their Christian marriage and opposed a divorce; see *АИОЗР*, part 8, vol. 3, no. CXXXVI, 542-566.

53. Cf. Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 150.

54. Wolfgang Heller, *Die Moskauer Eiferer für die Frömmigkeit zwischen Staat und Kirche, 1642-1652* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 29.

55. Папков, *Древнерусский приход*, 30.

56. Михайло Грушевський, *Історія України-Русі* [Mikhailo Hrushevs’kyi, History of Ukraine-Rus’] vol. 9, 2 (Львів, 1905, reprint Київ: Наукова Думка, 1997), 977, uncritically quotes Paul of Aleppo as a witness for Ukrainian cultural supremacy over backward Muscovy.

undertaken it smokes but does not burn. The children who go to them receive only this benefit that they grow up from calves into oxen.⁵⁷

It has been presumed that an earlier well-developed network of parish schools in the Ukrainian regions declined in the 17th century, whereas the schools of the Orthodox brotherhoods (like those in Kiev, Vilnius and later Kiev) to some extent took their place.⁵⁸ The famous Kievan Academy, founded by Metropolitan Peter Mohyla in 1633, was primarily an institution of higher learning for an intellectual elite, accessible to both monks and noblemen, and its effect on grassroots education of the lower clergy was at least no direct one. The distinction between a basic knowledge necessary for salvation, and theological erudition was important for its significance. Furthermore, in the first decades of the Cossack wars at least up to 1669 the Kievan academy due to the troubles of the war was virtually inactive.⁵⁹ Generally, the question of parish schools before the 18th century in both regions under examination here remains open to some extent, but there are indications of at least a certain educational network, on whatever level.

In general, already previous to a reform period that in a way started in mid-seventeenth century we have a mixture of parish autonomy in both economic and cultural sense, and priests who already stuck out of the otherwise closed cosmos of a local parish, and who established a link with the church and its laws as a whole. Efforts to improve church life by measures of “social discipline”, as they intensified after the middle of the seventeenth century, therefore, did not start from zero.

The normative side of reforms 1666/7 – 1722: New structures and new ideals

The 1666/1667 council is predominantly known as the first pan-orthodox council on Russian soil, and famous for its decisions concerning both the defrocking of Patriarch Nikon, and, slightly paradoxically, for the confirmation of his earlier

57. Quotation after David A. Frick, “Meletii Smotryc’kyi and the Ruthenian Question in the Early Seventeenth Century,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, VIII, 3-4 (1984): 367.

58. Domet Oljančyn, “Aus dem Kultur- und Geistesleben der Ukraine. II. Schule und Bildung,” *Kyrios*, 2, (1937): 38-69, 143-157; Sophia Senyk, “Schools for Priests: Orthodox Education in Eighteenth Century Ukraine,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 70 (2004): 289-312. Still a major point of reference is Константин Харлампович, *Западнорусские православные школы XVI-XVII ст.* [Konstantin Kharlampovich, *Western Russian Orthodox schools in the 16th-18th century*] (Казань, 1898), esp. 185-236 (parish school system before 1700), 277-376 (brotherhood schools).

59. Cf. Alfons Brüning, “On Jesuit schools, Scholasticism and the Kyivan Academy – some remarks on the historical and ideological background of its founding,” *Київська Академія* [The Kievan Academy], no. 4 (2007): 5-19. Still in 1739, only a minority of the students of the Academy were sons of priests, at least theoretically destined to follow their fathers; cf. Senyk, “Schools for Priests,” 292.

reforms.⁶⁰ It therefore already happened clearly in the shadow of the Old Believers' revolts, and mostly out of this reason—to counter “heresy”—also issued a row of further decisions to counter existing problems at the local level, including those of priests and parishes.⁶¹

Its decisions, however, even in the long run probably would have proven as fruitless as earlier attempts, had they not been accompanied by a set of administrative reforms, and had they not been embedded into a larger movement, that also included a reformulation of the ideal of a priest. On the administrative side, the council itself significantly broadened the number of episcopal sees, from 14 to finally 34. In the Russian North, these decisions resulted in the foundation of two further dioceses next to the already existing ones of Novgorod and Vologda: Earlier plans of the 1666/1667 synod, repeated and reinforced in 1681, eventually materialized in the establishment of the bishoprics of Velikii Ustiug and Kholmogory a year later.⁶² Left Bank Ukraine already since the Andrusovo agreement of 1667 had become a part of Muscovy, but only four years after the establishment of the new episcopal sees in the North, in 1686, the metropolitanate of Kiev was finally subordinated to the patriarchate of Moscow. The additional diocese of Pereiaslav was founded in 1701, initially as a branch (*koadiutorstvo*) of the Kievan metropolitanate. In 1733, it became an autonomous eparchy, retaining however its ties with Kiev.⁶³ Generally, the expansion of the network of eparchies was accompanied by a restructuring of the inner administrative structure. As a consequence, in many of the eparchies throughout the empire the consistory (*dukhovnaia konsistoriia*) appeared as the central institution of the administration, with a governing organ (*prisutstvie*) and a chancellery as the two main bodies. Regional representatives, the provosts (*protopopy*) looked after the execution of the Holy Synod's and the bishop's decisions and could also be sent as episcopal envoys to investigate an existing conflict.⁶⁴

60. For a contextualization, including the systematic subdivision of themes over the four sessions in 1666 and early 1667 see Wolfram v. Scheliha, *Russland und die orthodoxe Universalikirche in der Patriarchatsperiode 1589-1721* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 294-311; Ольга Чумичева, s.v. “Большой Московский Собор 1666-1667 гг. [Ol'ga Chumicheva, The Great Moscow Synod of 1666-1667],” *Православная Энциклопедия* [Orthodox Encyclopedia], vol. 5 (М.: Издательство Православная Энциклопедия, 2009), 679-684.

61. Debra Coulter, “The Muscovite Widowed Clergy and the Russian Church Reforms of 1666-1667,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 80, 3 (2002): 459-478; id., “Church Reform and the ‘White Clergy’ in Seventeenth-Century Russia,” in Marshall Poe and Jarmo Kotilaine, eds., *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and social change in seventeenth-century Russia* (London: Routledge, 2003), 291-316.

62. РИБ, 12, “Предисловие,” 1; И. Покровский, *Русские епархии в XVI-XIX вв., их открытие, состав и пределы: Опыт церковно-исторического, статистического и географического исследования* [I. Pokrovskii, Russian eparchies in the 16th to 19th century, their founding, compilation and boundaries], vol. 1 (Казань, 1897), 365-372; Smolitsch, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 368-371; Камкин, *Православная церковь на Севере России*, 94, 97.

63. Покровский, *Русские епархии*, 498-500.

64. В. Цыпин, s.v. “Духовная консистория [V. Tsy-pin, The clerical consistory],” *Православная Энциклопедия*, vol. 16 (М.: 2007), 392-394; Бернштам, *Приходская жизнь русской деревни*, 67. Whereas the consistories in the Russian regions appeared from the 1720s onwards, at least a preliminary form seems to have existed in the Kiev eparchy already since

Perhaps more important than the mere foundation of the new sees, a new type of bishops entered the scene—educated, more radical in their will to reform, and at the same time more ruthless than before in the choice of means to both eradicate heresy and subjugate an hitherto resilient flock. Recent research has been able to confirm earlier indications of the emergence of this new type, already spread throughout historical sources and classical literature. It is this new generation which should be considered as the agency at the top of a possible framework of “social discipline.” Against the background of a series of uprisings which had earned the 17th century the name of a “century of revolt (*buntashnyi vek*)”, many of them considered justified even rude methods, including physical violence, in order to bring back stability into the mutinous provinces. In some cases, their actions extended the limit towards arbitrary brutality, and attracted even the criticism of their own fellows in the synod and at other episcopal sees.⁶⁵ That the new claim among the bishops for authority and submission, or at least its (the claim’s) exaggerations, evoked some discomfort in the long run might be the reason, why still the “Spiritual Regulation” reminded the bishops of some humility, “in order to counter their cruel reputation, that they would not be led on others arms, when they are healthy, and their subordinates would not bow down to earth before them.”⁶⁶ Even if guided by ideals rather than fallen to the mere temptation of power, the bishops generally acted energetically to strengthen the bond and authority of the church also in the face of their lower clergymen and the priests. A good example was Afanasii, the first bishop named for the diocese of Kholmogory after 1682.⁶⁷

Concerning the ideals that determined his activity, Afanasii also stood for a second trend which would prove equally influential in the decades to come. His unusual erudition was, among others, connected with his relation to the Ruthenian scholar Epifanii Slavinets’kyi.⁶⁸ Bishops with Ruthenian (Ukrainian) origin since the late seventeenth century would dominate the higher ranks of the Russian church

around 1700; a proper functioning, however, also here, as in other cases can be stated only after around the middle of the 18th century, see Оксана Прокоп’юк, ““Присутствие” Київської духовної Консисторії: кількість і склад консистористів, розклад роботи [Oksana Prokop’iuk, The governing organ of the Kievan clerical consistory: Number and composition of its members, division of tasks],” *Соціум – Альманах соціальної історії* [Socium – an almanac of social history], no. 5 (2005): 71-93, here 71.

65. Georg Michels, “Ruling Without Mercy: Seventeenth-Century Russian Bishops and Their Officials,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 4, 3 (2003): 515-542; see also Smolitsch, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, 389-409; 480f.; Бернштам, *Приходская жизнь русской деревни*, 77-83.

66. *ПСЗ*, VI, no. 3718, 325.

67. Georg Michels, “Rescuing the Orthodox: The Church Policies of Archbishop Afanasii of Kholmogory, 1682-1702,” in Robert M. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, (Ithaca, NY – London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 19-37; В.М. Верюжский, *Афанасий, архиепископ Холмогорский. Его жизнь и труды в связи с историей Холмогорской епархии* [V.M. Veriuzhskii, Afanasii, archbishop of Kholmogory, his life and his works in connection with the history of the eparchy of Kholmogory] (СПб.: Типография И.В. Леотьева, 1908).

68. Michels, “The Church Policies of Afanasii,” 21.

up to the middle of the eighteenth century.⁶⁹ The final incorporation of Left Bank Ukraine, however, only strengthened and perpetuated an influence that already existed for some time. Again, this Ukrainian dominance within the higher clergy at the turn of the eighteenth century is a fact already well established. However, Ukrainian influence proved instrumental also in formulating a new ideal for bishop and priest. As for the former, Igor Smolitsch has described the type of bishops now taking rule of the church as that of the “learned monk”: Formally members of monasteries and trained at the academies, they gathered only short experience with monastic life, and started their ecclesiastical career on the basis of a rather high education, and an hitherto unusual familiarity with literature and canon law in particular. In addition to the theoretical forming, they sometimes accumulated some administrative experience as archimandrites or rectors of schools, but acquired comparatively little sensitivity for actual pastoral matters.⁷⁰

In both the Russian North and the Ukrainian provinces, the 1680s, as a first phase of stability after decades of turmoil, apparently offered the possibilities for an urgently needed restoration of church life. What in Muscovy had been labeled as a “century of revolt,” Ukrainian historiography has called *ruina*, a term alluding to an equally tumultuous and devastating period of Cossack rebellion within the larger framework of Russo-Polish wars. When these latter ended with the conclusion of the “eternal peace” of 1685, the hope for stability among the Ukrainian clergy made the need for reform be felt just as urgently as in the North of Muscovy. And as it would turn out, the competition with the Uniate Church in more than one respect was comparable to the Old Believers’ threat in the North. As has recently been shown by Barbara Skinner, in subsequent decades the competition with the Uniate Church on all sides slowly but surely developed into a matter of both inner reform and ideological mobilization, which in many respects can be described along the lines of Western “confessionalization.” The famous “Polish tolerance” of earlier centuries, also of some relevance on the Ukrainian territory, now gave way to confessional segregation along the line of the Dnepr River, which simultaneously marked the state border between Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania.⁷¹ The term “schismatics” (*raskol’niki*) in the southwest could as easily be applied to the Uniates as to the Old Believers.

What might seem paradoxical at the surface is that the growing estrangement and confrontation of the branches of the Eastern rite—at first on Ukrainian territory—went along with a good portion of mutual inspiration. As it would turn out, also with regard to priesthood and its ideals the Kievan reformers in fact took a lot from the Counterreformation and Uniate examples. A local church council

69. Bryner, *Der geistliche Stand*, 25f, 30. See also Smolitsch, *Geschichte der russischen Kirche*, 389-392; Константин Харлампович, *Малороссийское влияние на великорусскую церковную жизнь* [Konstantin Kharlampovich, *The Little Russian influence on Great Russian church life*] (Казань: Типография М.А. Голубева, 1914), 505-550.

70. Smolitsch, *Geschichte*, 392-398; Bryner, *Der geistliche Stand*, 51-66, 66-70.

71. Barbara Skinner, *The Western Front of the Eastern Church* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 2009).

gathered in the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev in 1691, and released a number of specifications concerning the role and behavior of an ideal priest.⁷² Many of the regulations did not come as a surprise, as they merely addressed problems known for long. Such problems concerned ordinary crimes like murder and injury, but also illegal marriages performed by priests, adultery, and such things as “pagan customs,” magical rites and the like, all of which should be worked against by the priests.⁷³ Taking up earlier attempts, the bishops decided, that an intermediary institution, called the provosts, had to be accepted as supervising spiritual fathers, and their authority respected.⁷⁴ More specific, and at the same time displaying sketches of a reconsidered ideal, is the emphasis the synod put on the priest’s role not only as a teacher, but as a spiritual father who calls his flock to confession, offers the sacraments and performs the liturgy. In order to be able to fulfill this role properly, any priest now was supposed to possess, and be familiar with, the content of mainly two books. These were the famous great Sacramentary Book (*trebnik*) compiled under the guidance of Peter Mohyla and edited in 1646 in Kiev,⁷⁵ and an edition of Innokentii Gizel’'s work entitled “Peace of Man with God” (*Mir z Bogom cheloveka*).⁷⁶

To put it roughly, the ideal image of a priest proposed here shifts from that of a well-trained “ritual craftsman” to that of a sophisticated mediator between God and men through sacraments and instruction. Sure, the image of a priest as a teacher of the necessary things to know and instructor for the rites to be observed for salvation to some extent belongs to the traditional design. But the intellectuals of the reform period connected with the name of Metropolitan Peter Mohyla (in charge 1633-1646) had slightly shifted the accent from rite to knowledge, however still with the sense that the rites should be appropriately explained, if necessary, but not interpreted, augmented, let alone changed or replaced. There had to be some understanding, ideally among both priests and laymen, in order to apply rites correctly. In Mohyla’s *Orthodox Confession*, in fact a book closely resembling a catechism and released in 1640, the teaching of the uneducated is expressly mentioned as a work of mercy, performed for the sake of salvation of the flock.⁷⁷ In 1646, Mohyla’s foreword to the new edition of the just mentioned Sacramentary Book depicts the hierarch and the priest primarily as a teacher—accordingly, this was what after 1691 every priest was supposed to learn about his role. What the book also contained

72. “Київський Собор 1691 г. [The Kievan Synod of 1691],” *Київські Епархіальні ве́домости* [Kievan Diocesan News] 1865, no. 8, otd. 2, 313-329.

73. *Ibid.*, 314-317.

74. *Ibid.*, 318.

75. *Evchologion albo Trebnyk Petra Mohyly* [“Euchologion” or Sacramentary Book of Peter Mohyla] (Kyiv: 1646: reproduction ed. by Oleksa Horbach, Rome – Munich 1988).

76. “Київський Собор 1691 г.,” 311-313.

77. *Confessio Orthodoxa*, part I, no. 91. Cf. Antoine Malvy, Marcel Viller, eds., *La Confession Orthodoxe de Pierre Moghila, Métropolitte de Kiev (1633-1646). Texte Latin inédit, publié avec introduction et notes critiques* (Orientalia Christiana, vol. X, P., 1927), 53.

was a thorough explanation of the content and meaning of every sacrament and rite, often with use of a terminology closely resembling the Roman Catholic one of the period.⁷⁸ Notably, and more precisely, the priest was a teacher not directly of mind and reason, but of the soul—the knowledge he was supposed to convey was the knowledge indispensable for every human soul for salvation, next to an introduction into the sacraments and prayers like “Our father,” “Hail Mary,” the Creed and the like.

If some Roman Catholic influence already on the works of the Mohylan period had to be discussed,⁷⁹ this was still true for Innokentii Gizel’'s work—the second work recommended to every priest. The use of such sources was yet again a productive adaptation, beyond pure copying. As a result, in his “Peace of man with God,” the pedagogical and the sacramental function of the priest follows older images of the Orthodox tradition, but both the pedagogical tasks and the understanding of sacraments are specified with reference to Roman Catholic, next to patristic sources.⁸⁰ Gizel’ therefore presented an image of the priest as agent of the church and mediator between God and humans, mainly a teacher of souls, offering the sacraments to those in need and admonishing the flock to a regular attendance of both confession and Holy Communion. These two sacraments in particular are expressly presented as the indispensable gates into God’s kingdom for man to pass. The priest in his role as confessor is described therefore as both “judge and physician.” To complete the picture, the book, which is in the form of a confession manual (also in this sense following Roman Catholic examples), names the well known sins the priest should avoid: he should offer the sacraments without reservation to all who need them, and should refrain from commercial activities, misuse of church properties, and the proclamation of false miracles, but he also should refrain from drinking and dancing.⁸¹

Almost all of the patterns out of which the ideal image of the priest is composed in the Great *Trebnik*, in Gizel’'s work and the decisions of the 1691 synod have made it into the “Spiritual Regulation” compiled thirty years later by Feofan Prokopovich—himself another representative of the Kievan “learned monks” and

78. Cf. *Trebnik Petra Mohyly* (as in fn. 75), introduction 47-51.

79. These Catholic influences, which were much emphasized in earlier literature, experience a reconsideration for some time now. Cf., out of an abundance of literature, esp. Francis J. Thomson, “Peter Mogila’s ecclesiastical reforms and the Ukrainian contribution to Russian culture. A critique of Georges Florovsky’s theory of the ‘Pseudomorphosis of Orthodoxy’,” *Slavica Gandensia*, 20 (1993): 67-119.

80. An exhaustive analysis of Catholic and other sources for Gizel’'s work is Margarita Корзо, “‘Мир з Богом чоловіку’ Інокентія Гізеля у контексті католицької моральної теології кінця XVI – першої половини XVII ст., [Margarita Korzo, Inokentii Gizel’'s “Peace of man with God” in the context of Catholic moral theology of the late 16th and first half of the 17th century],” in *Інокентій Гізелъ. Вибрані твори у 3-х томах* [Inokentii Gizel’. Selected Works in 3 volumes], vol. III, part II (статті) (Київ/Львів: Свічадо, 2010), 195-262.

81. *Гізелъ. Вибрані твори*, vol. I, part I, 303-306, 338-467; see also Корзо, “‘Мир з Богом чоловіку’ Інокентія Гізеля,” 247-249.

bishops.⁸² More precisely the ideal image is specified in the “supplement (*pribavlenie*),” which became effective in May 1722.⁸³ Corresponding passages directly affect the relation between bishop, priest and parish as prefigured through the “electoral principle,” mostly by emphasizing the duties and responsibilities of the former two. They confirm the institution of the election of priests through the parish, but at the same time formulate a number of preconditions (which now had to be fixed in the document submitted to the bishop for ordination [*presenta, donosheniie*]): All participants in the election had to testify, that the candidate lived an orderly life, and would neither be a womanizer nor a drunkard or a squabbler or be involved in brawls. Furthermore, he had to content himself with the *ruga* granted to him. The minimum age required for ordination as a priest was 30 years of age.⁸⁴ Just like in Gizel’s work, he was supposed to be “a judge and a physician” alike. His main tasks consisted in taking confession from the parishioners: to admonish the obstinate, but console the repentant and assure them of God’s grace.⁸⁵

In contrast to such high expectations, confidence in the actual potential of the lower clergy to realize this ideal for the moment was still very low, and various accompanying measures were therefore initiated. “As such things cannot be expected from the uneducated clergy...” the “supplement” recommended the compilation of a collection of simple sentences which should be handed out to the priests in order to be learned and repeated.⁸⁶ Already the text of the “Spiritual Regulation” itself had suggested the founding of schools especially for the clergy in every eparchy, where priests should be taught not only to read, but also to understand what they read, and be able to apply the rites properly, including the appropriate assessment of punishments (*epitimiia*). For the moment, and as long as the establishment of a centralized school system was still a plan, bishops were supposed to engage competent teachers at their residence in order to deliver a basic training to the candidates sent to them, and to examine them thoroughly. Trained priests at any rate had to be preferred for ordination by the bishops—the regulations even assessed a punishment for bishops who would not observe this prescription.⁸⁷ The practice of a basic training and episcopal examination seems to have been applied in the Kievan diocese already by the 1640s—at least if we believe Metropolitan Peter Mohyla’s own account.⁸⁸ In the

82. The Spiritual Regulation is in *ПСЗ*, VI, no. 3718.

83. *ПСЗ*, VI, no. 4022; cf. Верховской, *Учреждение Духовной Коллегии*, vol. 1, 195.

84. *ПСЗ*, VI, 4022, 699. The assessment of a minimal age of 25 years for deacons, and 30 years for priests goes back to the 14th canon of the Trullo synod in 691. The synod of 1666/1667 had repeated the requirement; consequently, already during the 17th century bishops became subsequently more insisting on this age as a precondition for ordination, although for the time being with limited success. Cf. Coulter, “White Clergy,” 295–296.

85. *ПСЗ*, VI, 4022, 700.

86. *Ibid.*

87. *Ibid.*, 3718, 324.

88. The stereotype of the ignorant priests of the “Greek religion” (*religia grecka*) was a commonplace in Catholic (and later Uniate) polemic writings about the Orthodox, cf. Tatarenko, fn. 43. An Orthodox reaction under the title *Lithos, albo kamień...* [Lithos, or stone...], published in 1646

northern eparchy of Kholmogory, Bishop Afanasii after 1682 examined also many priests already in charge and obliged some to attend additional instruction in his residence. In 1699, he sent three younger clerics to Moscow for further education, who returned in 1700.⁸⁹ The Kievan Synod of 1691 similarly complained about the often low level of education, handing over the task of training to the provosts. These latter had to be installed as an intermediate institution between bishop and lower clergy and were also supposed to serve as spiritual fathers, and in particular provide that the priests send their sons to the schools of the brotherhoods. Necessary education already here was defined as a precondition for ordination, because “no blind can guide another blind.”⁹⁰

All these regulations can still be regarded as endorsements of existing rules within the Orthodox Church and tradition. Several other regulations which describe more precisely both the role and the appearance of the priest probably need to be traced back to other sources. Priests for example were obliged to dress appropriately and properly—in a black robe and a cap—and they were reminded “not to lay down on the street for sleep.”⁹¹ In the seventeenth century, the Russian Church knew some loose regulations for the outward appearance and the dress of priests, but they were neither homogenous, nor widely observed.⁹² Still the proceedings of the 1691 synod in Kiev contain no allusion to a priest’s clothes. Much more explicit in this respect were the recommendations issued by the (by then still Orthodox) Bishop Iosif Shumlians’kyi of L’viv in his *Metryka*, published in the early 1670s. (Shumlians’kyi already by this time sympathized with the Uniate Church, and would eventually convert in 1700.) His ideas about how a priest should behave and look like contained an elaborate dress code, with a black robe, a cross and a black headgear. Whereas already the outward look was supposed to distinguish the priest from the average parishioner, he was further strictly advised not to socialize with people below his rank. Against the background of still prevailing customs, this was a new kind of prescription that in fact could lead to some disharmony, as also in the Ukrainian region it apparently belonged to the traditional expectation of the parishioners to have in their priest a village fellow also on occasion of festive events.⁹³

under the name of Peter Mohyla, responds to the accusations of the Uniate Kassian Sakovych concerning a lack of qualification among Orthodox parish priests, in the sense that candidates were either sent home without blessing, or sent for further instruction for at least half a year to a monastery or a school—of which Sakovych could easily convince himself in Kiev. Cf. *АІОЗР*, part 1, vol. 9, 161-163. Curiously, the Kievan Academy is not expressively mentioned here.

89. Василий Верюжский, “Северорусское приходское духовенство в конце XVII в. [Vasilii Veriuzhskii, The North Russian clergy at the end of the 17th century],” *Христианское Чтение* [Christian Readings] no. 7 (1906): 79-98; no. 8: 285-301; no. 9: 425-441, here 81, 285.

90. “Киевский Собор 1691 г.,” 318.

91. *ПСЗ*, VI, no. 4022, 707.

92. Cf. Бернштам, *Приходская жизнь*, 72, 119.

93. Cf. Piotr Wawrzyniuk, *Confessional Civilising in Ukraine. The Bishop Iosif Shumliansky and the Introduction of Reforms in the Diocese of Lviv 1668-1708* (Södertörn: Södertörn Högskola Dissertations, 2005), 70-73; 137-140.

Equally extraordinary—also in terms of its presumable origin—is the regulation that priests should not demand any fees or taxes for offering the sacraments.⁹⁴ It corresponds with the more spiritual ideal now promoted, but was in fact rather remote from reality, as these *treby* traditionally formed an important part of the priests' generally humble income. Misuse, as exploitation of either the priest or the parishioners, was a phenomenon often deplored.⁹⁵ Gizel's manual still somewhat delicately had admonished the priests not to deny any of the sacraments to those in need, but did not mention the *treby* explicitly.⁹⁶ Different from this, the rules for priests written down by the Uniate bishop of Polotsk, Iosafat Kuntsevych, by 1620 contained an explicit paragraph with the assessment that priests should not demand any contribution from the believers in return for the sacraments, but content themselves with what the latter would offer voluntarily—or, in case of urgency, even refrain from any demands at all.⁹⁷ The Uniate Synod of Zamość in 1720 in its general attempt to order church life according to mainly Roman Catholic models repeated this recommendation of the *subsidium charitativum*, the voluntary gift, as the only legitimate source of income for priests. Curiously the formulations used in the "Spiritual Regulation" a year later very closely resembled the Zamość text, even down to the level of identical formulations.⁹⁸

Furthermore priests were reminded of their duty to keep a parish register, where all relevant events, in particular baptism, marriage and death of parish members had to be carefully noted. Again this duty in itself was not entirely new—corresponding regulations existed in the 17th century both in Muscovy and in the Ukrainian regions. Yet they were rarely observed to the full expectation of the bishops.⁹⁹ The need of a careful keeping of such registers, which had actually been also a means of control of both quantity and quality of parishioners and their religious life, had been re-emphasized also in a phase previous to the eventual release of the "Spiritual Regulation": Two commandments from the tsar out of 1716 and 1718 contained still new aspects. Not only had the actual status of the parishioner to be noted. Peter's *ukazy* likewise introduced regular confession (at least once a year) and attendance of church services as an obligation. Priests were

94. *HC3*, VI, 4022, pt. 21, 706. In contrast, the "supplements" insist that the recommendation letter to the bishop should also contain precise data about the land or other basic funds (*ruga*) for the priest.

95. 17th century polemics in Ukraine contain repeated evidence; see, for example. *AIO3P*, I, 9, 49, 161-164.

96. *Гізель, Мир з Богом чоловіку*, 303.

97. See "Die Regeln des Hl. Josaphat für seine Priester," *Der christliche Osten*, XVI (1961): 27-30, 50-61, 91, here 50f. [no author, German transl.].

98. For the regulations of the Zamość synod, see Julian Pelesz, *Geschichte der Union der Ruthenischen Kirche mit Rom*, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1878), 441.

99. For Muscovy, see Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 31. The Ukrainian Uniate polemicist Kassian Sakovych in 1644 criticized, that priests often did not note marriages in the registers, as they were supposed to do. Cf. *AIO3P*, part 1, vol. 9, 51.

now supposed to thoroughly document the observation of such prescriptions.¹⁰⁰ From the state's perspective, such observation of prescriptions could be, and actually was seen as a testimony of loyalty. On the other hand, it seems that the church itself laid a stronger accent on the spiritual aspect. The first suggestion of a systematic documentation also of confession and church attendance of parishioners probably goes back to Metropolitan Kornilii of Novgorod, who—initially on his own initiative—started to demand from his subject priests that they give him thorough accounts about the frequency of both confession and service attendance of the parishioners. The initiative was subsequently taken up by both Patriarch Adrian and Tsar Peter I in 1697. An order of the Holy Synod of 1722 eventually repeated again the duty for every parishioner to attend confession and the Eucharist at least once a year, starting from the age of 7 years.¹⁰¹ Facing also the Old Believers' schism, the regulation combined both spiritual care, including a strong disciplining impulse, with the requirement of demonstrating loyalty to both church and state. Sometimes, but in fact rather sporadically was there an inherent conflict, when priests had to act both as pastors and agents of the state. Basically, and in accordance with church tradition, a priest was strictly forbidden to deliver any information about the sins confessed to him.¹⁰² Peter himself had insisted on only one exception: statements expressing open disloyalty or even the readiness for resistance and uprising had to be passed to the authorities immediately, when they were made during confession.¹⁰³

After all, beyond the institutional changes Peter's church reform brought about, the same reform also partly introduced and partly strengthened a certain ideal image of the priest, yet with ambiguous implications for the future. A priest now more than before was considered a "judge and physician" of the human soul, performer of the Holy Sacraments, and a teacher of the uneducated. He therefore was supposed to dispose of some indispensable knowledge. On the other hand—perhaps something important to emphasize—the profile did not require him to be an actual scholar or sophisticated theologian. The important distinction between knowledge necessary for salvation and theological speculation, which had been inherited among others from Kiev, remained intact. Still the "Spiritual Regulation" contains extensive passages about the false pride and damaging effect of empty and uninspired

100. ПСЗ, V, 2991 (1716); 3169 (1718).

101. Cf. В'ячеслав Мордвінцев, "Сповідальні книги [Viacheslav Mordvintsev, Confession registers]," *Київська старовина* [Kievan Old Tradition], no. 3 (1995): 84.

102. ПСЗ, VI, 4022, 700.

103. This regulation has often been hinted at as an outstanding illustration of the church finally becoming a mere state agency through Peter's reforms; see Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, 241. Seen in its context, however, the paragraph seems less shocking, as the seal of confession remained largely in force. Church officials evidently felt some discomfort with such specifications. The redactors of the "supplement" to the "Spiritual Regulation" eventually tried to cautiously defend such exception, which by all evidence had been initiated by Peter himself, and only in the final phase had been introduced into the manuscript; see ПСЗ, VI, 4022, 701. See also ПСЗ, VI, 4012, and Верховской, *Учреждение Духовной Коллегии*, vol. 2, 85.

scholarship.¹⁰⁴ The ideal propagated now nonetheless also drew a delicate borderline between the priest and his parish. Although with less emphasis on a life “apart from this world” (as in the case of seventeenth-century Roman Catholicism) this ideal put a strong accent on a lifestyle of exemplary quality that would also not merge beyond necessity with worldly affairs. Included was the priest’s own income: Commercial activity was forbidden, and taxes for the performance of sacraments had to be paid voluntarily by the flock, not demanded. Some of the tasks as the keeping of church registers and, of course, the state’s new demand to denounce the intention for uprising or major offenses implied an element of control that in theory was apt to increase the distance between the lay parishioners and the priests. Furthermore, when the new regulations insisted on distinguishable clothing, and at the same time disapproved of the priests’ former socializing customs on the occasion of public and private feasts, this also might have contributed to a growing gap between laymen and the “white” clergy. All this, however, concerns the ideal type. It is another question, which of these new ideals would turn out realistic, and which of the new regulations actually worked. And if so, did a clearer “professional” profile increase the prestige of the priest in his parish, or just alienate him from their community?

Did it Work?

As an answer to this question, an investigation of existing testimonies provides an ambiguous picture. Just as could be expected from the theoretical perspective of the “social discipline” concept, what actually occurred were developments, which could be best described as results of a certain interaction between the authorities and the parishes. As a matter of fact, priests in the long run were more and more in danger of becoming a separate estate situated between the front lines,¹⁰⁵ but—and this apparently is an important nuance—with the option to either choose between the two sides, or to do justice to both of them.

In some respects, the requirements from above were actually not that new, but met halfway with the traditional expectations of the lay parishioners. Some moral standards, which would allow both a good performance of rites and the avoidance of conflicts still in the eighteenth century, just as before, and in the usual forms were mentioned in the *presenta/donosheniia* offered to the bishop in case of an election. As we have seen, it was precisely these requirements which the “Spiritual Regulation” took up and made compulsory for these recommendation letters once again. Even in cases when parishioners seemed to betray a kind of in-advance obedience to new episcopal coercion, the description of the character remained the same. Parishioners in the Kholmogory district in 1683 asked their bishop to replace the current priest, who proved incapable of a proper execution of his tasks. The candidate of

104. *IIC3*, VI, 3718, 331.

105. This appears also as the main conclusion in Freeze, *The Russian Levites*.

their choice, now recommended to Bishop Afanasii, was still described as “a good person, literate, of an orderly life and no drunkard.”¹⁰⁶

A certain level of literacy and basic education was a qualification expected also by parishioners, but of various degrees. Sometimes, but not always, the priest was named a teacher. A rural parish priest in the village of Postovoitovka in the Chernigov region in 1713 was appointed by the parishioners “because he is humble and competent in the performance in church matters [...] so that [the parishioners] would have him as teacher and pastor of human souls, and the church of God would not be for long deprived of service.”¹⁰⁷ The *presenta* sent to the bishop also shortly after the release of the “Spiritual Regulation” did not necessarily sound different. For example, in 1732 the villagers of Chernukh in the Kievan eparchy asked for the appointment of Vasilii Andreevskii, stating that “we know this Andreevich since his childhood years as a steady person in his actions, [and] in addition he is experienced in science and the reading of books, and just like his grandfather and father he has devoted much effort to the restoration of this new church building after the fire.”¹⁰⁸ Certainly, in the end the standards of education set in the reform period had increased, but also these new standards were not necessarily contrary to the parishioners’ interests. The expanded standards meant rather an endorsement than the introduction of something entirely new. Curiously, the norms now existing could be, and actually were used by parishioners in cases of conflict with their priest: Petitions to the bishop asking for the removal of a priest disliked by a parish often referred to moral deficiencies along the well-known guidelines, like drunkenness or the provocation of conflicts, but also to illiteracy and inadequate ritual performances. Although sometimes the accusations turned out to be unfounded, the very way of argumentation can possibly be taken as a testimony for a certain agreement between the two parties.¹⁰⁹

In some cases the petitions to bishops concerning the appointment of a new priest directly reflect a certain acceptance of new standards: This for example is the case, when a priest is recommended, among others, as having reached the age of

106. Cf. Верюжский, *Северорусское духовенство*, 85. Similar formulations were used a few years later, when parishioners asked the bishop to appoint the son of their former priest in place of his elderly father—which was granted: *РИБ*, 12, no. ССXXIV (1691): 1031-1033.

107. “... бо он покорный и способный в отправе церковной, [...] жебы мели себе за учителя и пастыря душ людских, жебы церковь божественная не была на долгий час во отправе замедленна,” *Киевская Старина*, 1898, no. 1, 11.

108. “... знаючи оного Андреевича сдетска лет в поступках статечна, а к тому и наука добре чтению книг изучена, а к тому же як деда его, так и отца по много старания от пожери до сей новой церкви подостало.” ЦДІАК (Центральний Державний Історичний Архів міста Києва – Central State Historical Archive Kiev) f. 127, op. 1020, no. 45, 13-13r. Earlier documents of the file contain indications that Andreevskii had spent some time “в латинских школах” [at Latin schools]. – *ibid.* 20; see further f. 127, op. 1020, nos. 292, 296 (1739), no. 361 (1740) etc.

109. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 1020, no 2195 (1752); examples from other regions are provided by Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 159, 162-164.

30 years, which is an explicit reference to church canons recently endorsed.¹¹⁰ A bit ambiguous are remarks to be found in several contracts (*izliuby*) of the Ukrainian regions, which contain a self-obligation of the priest not to touch or misuse property which belongs to the church where he serves, but is not at his disposal.¹¹¹ Such misuse had once been named also among the possible sins a priest could commit in the catalogue of Gizel's "Peace of Man with God,"¹¹² but the more plausible interpretation probably is that Gizel himself had addressed a problem that in fact did occur already by his time, and had not disappeared since. It was therefore reflected also on the parish level—the concurrence of interests is obvious, a direct link however needs still to be proven.

The core of parish autonomy, namely the right to elect their priests, had been formally confirmed in every reform synod since the sixteenth century, including the "Spiritual Regulation" and would never be formally abolished.¹¹³ Here the authorities evidently were forced to compromise. The formal confirmation was most probably made just out of prudence, as any attempts to touch this old prerogative threatened to end up with ferocious resistance. The two regions in particular, on which our considerations focus, demonstrate a steady persistence of the "electoral principle" even in spite of the open antipathies of several bishops towards it. Also the specific institution of the election of the *starosta* in the North remained untouched for the time being. In 1726 the bishop of Velikii Ustiug wrote to the Holy Synod that "... in my eparchy the members of a parish since ancient times in the cathedral and parish churches [...] elect their elders for the improvement of church institutions (*k vsiakomu tserkovnomu ispravleniiu*) and for [the administration] of income and expenses."¹¹⁴ Still throughout the eighteenth century at least, practice would teach even the more ambitious bishops of the new type about the resilience of this institution. When already in the 1690s Metropolitan Varlaam Jasyn's'kyi of Kiev ignored the local customs of the clergy's election, and tried to impose upon some parishes a candidate of his own choice instead, the vigorous protest of the parishioners which reached as far as Moscow, eventually led to another official confirmation of the electoral principle in 1699 by none other than Patriarch Adrian himself.¹¹⁵ Argument between a bishop and a parish about the appointment of a

110. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 1020, no. 2405, 1, fol. 10; probably of importance is the fact, that the age of the priest is now mentioned at all in the *presenta*, e.g. f. 127, op. 1020, no. 2403, fol. 37v. (both out of 1754).

111. А. Полницкий, "Избрание прихожанами священника [A. Polnitskii, Election of the priest by the parishioners]," *Киевская Старина*, 1895, no. 11, pt. 2, 53 (referring to a contract from 1743).

112. Гізель, *Мир з Богом чоловіку*, loc.cit., 305.

113. For a summary and some further references see already Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 156-162. As indicated above (cf. fn. 19) even the amendment of 1797 did not include a formal abolishment of the "electoral principle."

114. Cf. ПСЗ, V, no. 1723 (1726).

115. "Грамота патриарха Адриана киевскому митрополиту Варлааму Ясинскому (По жалобе киевского войта и мещан на незаконные некоторые распоряжения митрополита) [Document of patriarch Adrian to metropolitan Varlaam Jasinskii (In connection with a

priest is then a phenomenon documented also for the entire following century. The reason named for the rejection of a priest sent by the bishop still in the years after the release of the “Spiritual Regulation” is the conventional one: The building of the church creates the right to assess the priest. In 1735 members of a Cossack parish in Sloutinsk in the Kiev region openly preferred a priest chosen by themselves to the one sent by Bishop Rafail Zahorovs’kyi. “We do not know you,” they let the other priest know, and sent him back to the bishop, stating further that “the bishop has not provided us with our church, so he won’t provide us with a priest.”¹¹⁶ Cases like these did not disappear in the following decades. Metropolitan Arsenii Mogilians’kyi of Kiev still in 1768 reported to the synod, that parishioners and the landowner had chased away with yelling and armed violence the priest he had assessed for them instead of the one elected by the parish.¹¹⁷ Bishop Arsenii Matseevich of Rostov in the middle of the eighteenth century, much to his anger, several times had to go through the same experience. Even in Moscow itself, where the distance to parish churches formed no hindrance to the exertion of episcopal authority, the “electoral principle” remained in force.¹¹⁸ To complete the picture, it should yet be mentioned that in some cases of controversy between parish and local landlord the church authorities supported the choice of a parish for a certain priest, in cases when the candidate was found worthy and only the landlord opposed a regular election. These cases might testify, next to mere pragmatism, also for a certain amount of conviction among higher clerics concerning the righteousness of the “electoral principle.” At any rate, on the basis of mutual agreement about the requirements of good priesthood, parishioners could also regard their bishop as an ally in case of conflict with noblemen and property owners.¹¹⁹ Opposite to this, and despite the “electoral principle” formally remaining intact, bishops up to the end of the eighteenth century were often reminded of their duty to keep an alert eye on the loyalty of the parish priests and, in case of doubt to remove them from office.¹²⁰ Such decrees also testify for the solidarity priests still often displayed, in case of conflict, with the interests of their parishioners, rather than with higher authorities.

However, whereas direct confrontation often resulted in the bishops’ forced succumbing, the more inventive among them created a couple of alternative

complaint of the Kievan governor and townspeople concerning unlawful dispositions of the metropolitan)],” *Киевская Старина*, 1885, no. 9, 140.

116. “Нам де архиерей не ставил церкви, то и попа не поставит,” IP НБУВ (Інститут рукопису Національної бібліотеки України ім. В.І. Вернадського – Institute of Manuscripts at the National Vernadskii Library of Ukraine, f. 232, no. 56, fol. 1. (1734).

117. Знаменский, *Приходское духовенство*, 65; Шпачинский, “Выбор приходского духовенства,” 739; *Киевская Старина* 53, 1896, no. 4, 2.

118. Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 157.

119. Cf. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 1020, no. 64 (1733). A similar case is *ibid.*, f. 127, op. 1020, no. 47 (1732). It needs to be investigated, whether such cases can be seen as part of a more general agenda of a subsequent abolishment of the Cossack *starshyna*’s autonomy after 1709.

120. Notably, still the above-mentioned regulation of 1797 (cf. fn. 19, 113) which leaves the “electoral principle” formally untouched, mainly addressed the problem of a priest joining his flock in case of protest against local or central government.

measures to safeguard their influence, or at least to correct possible wrong turns. As seen before, confirmation of the “electoral principle” had always been accompanied by expressions reminding of the necessary qualities of a candidate. The very procedure of appointing a priest, up to the bishop’s final blessing, in the course of previous reforms had subsequently become more differentiated, and more formalized. Already in the second half of the seventeenth century Russian documents of appointment for priests also indicated a previous examination of the candidate by the bishop, and reference to the testimony of an additional spiritual father, most often a monk. In case of misbehavior (like drunkenness, quarrel or unauthorized leaving of the church he was appointed to) priests were threatened with immediate defrocking.¹²¹ After 1700, the elected candidate had to pass the prescribed exam before the consistory at the episcopal see, where his abilities in reading, writing, but also singing and the performance of liturgy and rites, and finally his familiarity with dogmatic basics were examined. Only when the results of such an examination proved sufficient, did he receive the bishop’s blessing and a certificate that would confirm his appointment. In the opposite case, he might have been subjected to additional teachings and training. Furthermore, the procedure also comprised an oath of loyalty to the tsar and an official denunciation of the Old Believer’s heresy.¹²² The entire procedure centralized and formalized episcopal consent to the appointment of a priest, even if the latter would not be the one of the bishop’s own choice. The formalization also extended towards the form of the recommendation documents an elected priest had to carry with him. Bishop Rafail Zahorovs’kyi of Kiev in the early 1730s repeatedly sent priests back whose letters contained errors or were fake.¹²³ Later he issued a decree with formal prescriptions about how the *presenta* should look like.¹²⁴ It should yet be mentioned that this formalization took some time to become truly effective. At least from the early eighteenth century there are still several cases documented, where a priest was appointed after only a short examination of his documents by the provost, and without further exams.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the growing formalization, including the juridical procedure, sometimes seems to have led to the effect that a priest, once he was installed in a parish,

121. AI, no. 385/IV (1645, Kazan’), 405; no. 385/V (1667, Novgorod), 406; no. 385/VI (1697, M.). References to external testimony and personal exam, alongside with explicit allusion to possible misbehavior and its consequences are absent in older documents.

122. ЦДІАК f. 127, op. 1020, nos. 2403-2406 (1754). For basic patterns of the procedure see already Smolitsch, *Geschichte*, 473-477. Specifications after the “Spiritual Regulation” provided severe punishment for “self-appointed priests” (*священники самозванцы*), cf. ПСНП, V, 1921. Priests even after having received their blessing could still be removed if they were appointed without the prescribed exams (ПСНП, V, 1781). In general, see Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 156-162. For the Ukrainian region, see the detailed description of Senyk, “Becoming a Priest,” 125-151.

123. IP НБУВ, f. 232, no. 41 (1733); ЦДІАК f. 127, op. 1020, no. 626.

124. АДІКА (Акты и Документы, относящиеся к Истории Киевской Академии – Acts and Documents concerning the History of the Kievan Academy), otd. II (1721-1795), vol. 1, part 1 (Kiev 1904), no. 7, 76.

125. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 1024, no. 45 (1734).

only with serious difficulties could be removed, as long as his misbehavior was not sufficiently proved, or remained beneath a certain level. That was true even in spite of the parishioner's wishes to get rid of a misbehaving and quarrelsome priest. Proven drunkenness and brawling in extreme cases was enough to defrock a priest.¹²⁶ In more delicate and complex cases, and especially if a priest refused to answer to the consistory's investigators and hindered the investigations, still in the 1740s it turned out to be rather complicated to remove him from office. Functionaries of the consistory usually tried to settle the problem otherwise.¹²⁷

Another possible means to get a grip on the priest's appointment was to supervise, and possibly influence the election procedure. Bishops either sent their provost to supervise the (according to some accounts often rather chaotic) election procedure, or they asked for the election of not only one, but two or three candidates, among whom they could make the final choice themselves.¹²⁸ Rafail Zahorovs'kyi of Kiev in 1739 issued a corresponding decree, on the strength of a synodal prescript, after having confirmed the "electoral principle" itself more than once in the years before.¹²⁹ Knowledge of the actual social mechanisms, coalitions and hierarchies at force during the election offered further possibilities. Especially in the northern regions, where the election procedure was often not purely egalitarian, the bishops in order to keep some control over the elections also tried to increase their influence on important members of the parish, and looked for cooperation with landlords, educated dignitaries and patrons (*vkladchiki*).¹³⁰ Through such means the "electoral principle," as a stronghold of parish autonomy, might have experienced some moderation in the course of the time, but nonetheless it never disappeared, as a continuing row of contracts throughout the eighteenth and even the early

126. IP НБУВ, f. 232, no. 37 (1732).

127. Complaints of parishioners against priest Matfei Bialovs'kyi in 1741 achieve no results, as the accused repeatedly refuses to respond to the investigators, cf. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 1024, no. 273. A particular case, also noticed by 19th century historians (cf. Шпачинский, "Выбор приходского духовенства," 644), is the one of priest Pavel Lobko from the Podil'skyi district in lower Kiev. Between 1741 and 1753 there were at least 5 charges against him at the consistory, but all cases were solved by consensus and reconciliation, without removing him from office. Even his temporary removal on the pretext of an unauthorized journey in 1753 was later revoked. Cf. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 138, no. 51 (1743); op. 141, no. 54 (1741); op. 144, no. 147 (1749); op. 144, no. 30 (1749); op. 144, no. 74 (1749/50); op. 146, no. 16 (1751); op. 146, no. 44 (1753).

128. Шпачинский, "Выбор приходского духовенства," 689-694, 737-743. Cf. АДИКА, otd. II, vol. 1, part 1, no. 3, 69 (about priests or provosts being present during the election).

129. Cf. Александр Лебедев, *Рукописи церковно-археологического музея Императорской киевской духовной академии* [Aleksandr Lebedev, Manuscripts of the ecclesiastical-archeological museum at the Imperial Kievan Spiritual Academy], vol. 1 (Saratov, 1916), no. 605, doc. 144, 318, 414, 436, 237f; see also Senyk, "Becoming a priest," 139.

130. Стефанович, *Приход*, 309 mistakenly presumes that Afanasii of Kholmorogy had eliminated the "electoral principle" in the North. According to more thorough studies, Afanasii's reforms never even tried to abolish the elections, but rather looked for a way to influence them in the sense he wished, cf. Michels, *At War with the Church*, 170; id., "The Church policies," 35. For the general trend of seeking political alliance with the "better parishioners" in the 18th century cf. Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 161; Бернштам, *Приходская жизнь*, 69.

nineteenth century illustrates. Notably, these documents retained their character as mutual contracts, where involvement of church authorities was neither wished for, nor required, and therefore testify for strong elements of parish autonomy still existing. They were still preserved in the depositories of local secular courts, with usually no copy sent to the consistory, which instead had to receive only the recommendation.¹³¹ Therefore, if historians like Igor Smolitsch claimed that since the early nineteenth century the certificate of education had replaced the “electoral principle”¹³² this should be regarded as a mistake—also because education was still existing in a variety of forms and levels.

For the time being, the regulations up to those of the “Spiritual Regulation” meant a step towards centralization of church education, rather than an immediate improvement. The old parish schools subsequently disappeared in the eighteenth century, although it remains unclear to what extent.¹³³ On the other hand, the erection of seminaries for a more sophisticated training of the lower clergy, as also projected in the 1721 reform, would last much longer, and achieve more sustainable results only after the middle of the 18th century. Bishop Varlaam Vanatovič of Kiev in 1722 still limited himself to the admonition of priests to instruct their children in writing.¹³⁴ His successors constantly had to repeat their calls to the clergy to send their children to the Academy in Kiev.¹³⁵ Even in this famous institution in the second third of the eighteenth century sons of priests were a minority.¹³⁶ Seminaries were erected in several cities also around this time, but often had to pass several decades of struggle for material survival until a more stable functioning. Only after 1750 a seminary was to be found in every diocesan city.¹³⁷ Another question is, however, what role these institutions played in the actual education of the clergy on large scale. Few of the aspiring priests stayed for more than the first year of introductory courses. In turn, certificates that were given by the academy to those who went on to search for a priests’ appointment included no further data about the actual level of education received here, and could be issued even after attendance of

131. Contracts (*излюбы*) from the Ukrainian region published in the journal *Киевская Старина* date from the early 18th century up to 1843, cf. Марина Палієнко, ‘Киевская Старина’: Систематичний покажчик змісту журналу [Marina Palienko, “Kievskaiia Starina”: Systematic index of the journal’s content] (Kiev: Tempora, 2005), nos. 1285, 1303, 1429, 1603, 1801, 2041, 2184, 2198. See also the documentation in *Православное Обозрение* [Orthodox Panorama], no. 9 (1863): 91-94 (concerning statements of Bishop Evgenii of Kiev out of 1827).

132. Smolitsch, *Geschichte*, 430.

133. Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 155.

134. *АДНКА*, otd. II, vol. 1, part 1, no. 2 (1722).

135. *Ibid.*, no. 5 (1733); no. 6 (1733); no. 16 (1739); no. 17 (1741).

136. Senyk, “Schools for Priests,” 309.

137. Freeze, Introduction to Belliustin (as in fn. 5), 20; *id.*, *The Russian Levites*, 78-106; for the Ukrainian case Senyk, “Schools for Priests”; an illustrative example concerning the eparchy of Pereiaslav is given by П. Левицкий, “Прошлое переяславского духовного училища [P. Levitskii, The past of the Periaslavl’ seminary],” *Киевская Старина*, 8, vol. 24 (1889): 438-444.

only the lower classes.¹³⁸ In 1761 a decree in the Pereiaslav eparchy prohibited the apparently more than exceptional practice that apprentices of the seminary would be appointed as priests before finishing their education there.¹³⁹ As we have seen, the requirements to be a priest even in theory were still relatively humble—he had to be a teacher of the souls, but actual scholarly knowledge was not always considered necessary or even helpful. Illustrative is the statement of no less a person than the prefect of the Kievan Academy in this period, in 1743. He reacted to the complaints of one of the professors about the lacking theological fundament among many believers, saying that “there are many in Christianity not able to proceed very far with reading the Creed, but they are baptized, and this is the fundament.”¹⁴⁰ Still for long into the eighteenth century, priests were often reluctant to send their children or provisional successors for education to the episcopal institutions, and preferred the “traditional” way of schooling—sometimes for the simple reason that they could not afford the fees to be paid for more formal education.¹⁴¹ So they relied upon existing alternatives, as it seems to be likely, according to some accounts, that the old fashioned network of parish schools and deacons still continued to exist in some regions.¹⁴² According to a nineteenth-century report, in some regions of Ukraine still in late 18th century many apprentices who lacked the money for formal education were trained in chanting and reading by a deacon widely reputed for his upbringing of “generations of priests.”¹⁴³ The practice seems to have been tolerated more often than not. Despite all efforts and all formal restrictions meanwhile existing, it seems as if many candidates elected by a parish still passed the bishop’s exam without extensive lessons. Written testimony of one of the bishop’s provosts about the qualities of the candidate often proved sufficient. At any rate, in case the bishop’s examination provided the necessary results, little attention was paid to the question where the qualification actually came from.¹⁴⁴ Even those among the clergy, who had spent some time at a school or seminary, often in fact had left

138. АДІКА, отд. II, vol. 1, part 1, no. 63, 308-314 (1743-1747).

139. ЦДІАК, f. 990, no. 331 (1761).

140. “...и въ нас де въ Християнстві многіи суть, которіи ‘Вірую во единого Бога’ не уміють гораздо прочесть, да крещеніи жъ, и се фундаментъ”, АДІКА, отд. II, vol. 1, part 1, no. 61, 304.

141. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 1020, no. 2154 (1752-54), 1-1r contains the application of a priest to be appointed to a parish (or asks for being elected), connected with the complaint that out of pure poverty he was not even able to send his son to the academy. Apparently, this argument, which also demonstrates some familiarity with the authorities’ wishes, was more convincing than just a general lack of income.

142. See also the introduction of Федор Титов [Fedor Titov] to АДІКА, отд. II, vol. 1, part 1, no. 9, 62-66.

143. Cf. “Украинская деревня второй четверти нынешнего столетия [The Ukrainian village in the second quarter of the current century],” *Киевская Старина*, no. 3 (1882): 473-475.

144. Still in 1754 the entire appointment procedure of a certain Stefan Andreev of the village Gruni in the Kievan eparchy contains no hint of a systematic school education, but several certificates. Cf. ЦДІАК, f. 127, op. 1020, no. 2405 (fol. 1-17). See also Бернштам, *Приходская жизнь*, 72.

it after the introductory level. That would mean that they had been instructed in fluent reading and writing, had been familiarized with basic knowledge in Latin, Church Slavonic, and perhaps Greek, had learned by heart a couple of basic texts like the catechism, and had perhaps gone through a first introduction into grammar (*grammatica*), but had certainly not reached the level of theological speculation or systematic training in rhetoric. In other words, in the best case—and even this meant that they had completed the first two years of the curriculum at the academy—that would provide a solid base for the work as a priest, maybe some homiletic abilities, but not the starting point for intellectual ambitions.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, parishioners might have found little reason to expel a candidate who displayed a good ability to do the job, but distrusted candidates with obvious intellectual ambitions and an attitude of moral superiority. A certain gap between the ordinary priests and the scholars (*nauchnye*) perhaps existed still for quite a while.

Some minor regulations of the reform period, in opposition to this, proved relatively successful—although again not always completely according to the will of church officials. The great prayer book published in Kiev in 1646, Peter Mohyla's "Great Trebnik," strongly recommended during the Kievan synod in 1691 for every priest, indeed was widespread in several Ukrainian regions still in the early nineteenth century. Priests here apparently even preferred it to the Moscow books, and continued to use it even after this was officially prohibited in 1839.¹⁴⁶ In the Moscow patriarchate this was seen with a mixture of dislike and generosity, as the Kievan books had always been suspected of Catholic or Uniate leanings, and were therefore not introduced into the entire territory of the Russian Church.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, the formal requirement of regular attendance of both confession and communion seems to have been observed more closely already in the early phase of the reform period in late 17th century. In 1679, still a couple of years before the establishment of the new eparchy of Velikii Ustiug, a priest from the Ustiug region even requested his bishop to help discipline a member of his parish, who together

145. For the teaching system and curriculum at the Kievan Academy, see Arkadij Sydorenko, *The Kievan Academy in the Seventeenth Century* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1977), 112-134; Макарий (Булгаков), *История Киевской Духовной Академии* [Makarii (Bulgakov), *History of the Kievan Spiritual Academy*] (СПб.: Типография Жернакова, 1843), 53-79; Виктор Аскоченский, *Киев с древнейшим его училищем Академиею* [Viktor Askochenskii, *Kiev with its oldest learning institution, the Academy*] (Киев: Университетская типография, 1856), vol. 1, 133-149. During the eighteenth century, few changes seem to have been made especially in the introductory classes. Actual changes affected higher learning. The learning of German and Hebrew was introduced into the curriculum in 1738. Mid 18th century saw the introduction of the German Christian Wolff's philosophical system as a basis for the higher classes, in order to update the "scholastic" heritage from the Adacemy's first phase. According to several testimonies from outside observers, these changes did not prevent a certain decline of the intellectual level of the academy long before 1800. Cf. Liudmila Charipova, *Latin Books and the Eastern Orthodox Clerical Elite in Kiev, 1632-1780* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 57.

146. "Украинская деревня второй четверти нынешнего столетия," 58.

147. Cf. the entry s.v. "Требник Петра Могилы [Peter Mogila's Sacramentary Book]," *Энциклопедический словарь Брокгауза и Ефрона* [Encyclopedic dictionary Brockhaus-Efron], t. XXXIIIa, 747.

with his entire family already for years had not confessed and received the sacraments as prescribed. Interestingly, the petition was also signed by a number of other parishioners.¹⁴⁸ Also in the following years, from the North of Russia we have a growing number of accounts of priests to their bishop concerning service attendance of parishioners.¹⁴⁹ The force of episcopal coercion is especially felt in written apologies from peasants explaining their failure to attend liturgy, due for example to labor obligations and long distance.¹⁵⁰ In the long run, and different from what had been presumed¹⁵¹, the use and keeping of registers in the parish became a sort of every day's business, where not only changes in status (like marriage), but also—just as prescribed—the frequency of confession and communion were carefully noted.¹⁵² This sometimes helped in cases of conflict, when priests denied a regular funeral to those who had died without extreme unction, as long as it had not been proved that the deceased had received communion regularly in the years before.¹⁵³

Opposite to this, the plan to make the taxes collected by priests for the performance of sacraments voluntary was a complete failure—such idealistic ideas had obviously underestimated the role played by such incomes for the simple life supply of the priests. Just as the “electoral principle” never completely lost its significance, an elected candidate also in the 18th and even in the early 19th century made a contract with his parish, a major part of which remained the assessment of the taxes (*treby*). Such taxes remained indispensable for the income of many priests. Annoyed aphorisms like that of the famous Dmitrii Rostovskii, who complained about priests not seeking Christ for Christ's sake, but just an income¹⁵⁴ in this context also bear a note of the aforementioned episcopal arrogance, founded as they might have been. Another indication of the failure is the continuous existence of arguments between parishioners and priests about such emoluments. It should yet be noted, that parishioners now saw the possibility to turn to the bishop in case the taxes once fixed were exceeded—probably well aware about the authorities' position in this context.¹⁵⁵ On the same ground, the bishop also became the institution to turn to in case of conflicts between priests on the issue, for example when parishioners attended ceremonies outside their own parishes and paid also the taxes

148. *РИБ*, 12, no. CLXII, 708-712.

149. *РИБ*, 12, no. CCX (1690), 983-985.

150. *РИБ*, 12, no. CCV (1690), 977. (Velikii Ustiug).

151. Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*, 246.

152. As an example see the register of the Pereiaslav eparchy, ЦДИАК, f. 990, op. 2, no. 42. Positive entries about confession consist in a laconic “was there” (“был”), whilst negative have an explanation, e.g. “because of young age” (“за малолетством”) for children. Further examples are f. 127, op. 1020, no. 135 (1735), f. 990, no. 126, no. 144-151.

153. ЦДИАК, f. 127, op. 143, no. 1 (1749).

154. “Поискал Иисуса не для Иисуса, а для хлеба куса ...,” here after: Камкин, *Православная церковь*, 125.

155. ЦДИАК, f. 990, op. 1, no. 304 (1759): Case of a parishioner who could not marry because of the fees assessed by the priest. Further cases are ЦДИАК, f. 127, op. 1020, no. 21a, 484 (1741); *ibid.*, op. 133, no. 21 (1737); f. 990, no. 852 (1755); IP НБУВ, f. 232, no. 268 (1745).

elsewhere.¹⁵⁶ Bishop Rafail Zahorovs'kyi of Kiev in the 1730s once more specified the already existing regulations of the "Spiritual Regulation", including the prescription that priests should content themselves with the *ruga* once assessed, and demand no fees for sacraments—obviously without serious effects.¹⁵⁷ Another reform step taken by the Commission on Church Estates and confirmed by Catherine II in 1765, which sought to end disputes by proposing a schedule of fixed rates, prohibiting any fee at all for confession and communion, did not change the picture significantly. "Voluntary" fees were still allowed, and the fixed taxes proved much too low.¹⁵⁸ Existing *izliuby* in the course of time contain more extensive passages concerning their assessment of taxes, and more frequently had expressive phrases concerning the self-obligation of a priest to content himself with the noted sum—otherwise he would lose the parish.¹⁵⁹ Curiously, next to emoluments to be paid in money some of the contracts still contain passages concerning natural goods, mostly grain.¹⁶⁰

Conclusions

After all, in the worst case priests through all these reforms might in fact have become members of a closed estate, alien to both the parishioners and the remote bishop. In the better case, however, the priest was still someone wished and wanted by the parish and acting in solidarity with them, but also enjoying social dignity and higher status, sometimes backed by education and the bishop's authority. For the time being, our observations might hint at least at the necessity to add some nuances to the established picture of priests being either "clerical peasants" or parts of a separate estate isolated both from their flock and from higher layers of society. If there were more positive cases, this was also due to a combination of social discipline with its direct and indirect effects and the persisting autonomy of the parish. The Russian parish over the centuries retained quite some elements of its autonomy—in particular the right to elect the priest and to conclude contracts with him on purely mutual basis—and it did so also because this autonomy in the eyes of the official church, or at least of some of its representatives, was something not only difficult to abolish, but worth to be conserved. On the other hand, the process

156. РИБ, 12, no. ССXXXIX (1694), 1118f.

157. И. Павловский, "Прошловековая мера к определению следств содержания приходского духовенства [I. Pavlovskii, Last century's measures to assess the means for life supply of the parish clergy]," *Полтавская Епархиальные Ведомости* [Poltava Diocesan News], no. 3 (1877): 102-105.

158. ПСЗ, 17 (1830), no. 12.378, 117; cf. Freeze, *The Russian Levites*, 165-168.

159. Полницкий, "Избрание прихожанами священника," 53.

160. В.Г., "Договор священника с прихожанами сто лет назад [V.G., A contract of a priest with the parishioners a hundred years ago]," *Киевская Старина*, no. 11 (1893): 325; "Договор прихожан с избранным ими священником [A contract of parishioners with their elected priest]," *Киевская Старина*, no. 2, part 2 (1904): 52 (1793).

of “social discipline,” as historians have named it afterwards, beyond the surface of persisting problems and conflicts, was perhaps not completely fruitless, partly because the patterns of “social discipline” in more than one respect concurred with the expectations of parishioners. Persisting prerogatives of these parishioners, which culminated in the “electoral principle,” paradoxically, added their important sketches to this development. Both the ideal formulated in the reform period, and the reality of interaction between parishes, priests and higher authorities created some space for the profile of the humble parish priest, which preserved some main patterns over the centuries, but improved others through mechanisms of “social discipline.” After all, this profile combined both certain distinctiveness from the average parishioner and “professional” prestige with solidarity and responsibility. This priest, then, was a personality physically and mentally far away from the world of the monasteries and the “black clergy,” characterized not by theological erudition in the first place, but by a mixture of solid pastoral abilities and solidarity with his sheep—sometimes in cooperation with, sometimes even in open opposition to higher authorities. The role parish priests themselves would eventually play in the reform period after 1860 perhaps originates from here.¹⁶¹

To be sure, this is still an ideal type, allowing for lots of deviations to the better and the worse. The evidence reported in this article might allow claiming that such an ideal type at least needs to be added to existing stereotypes, but more research needs to be done in order to fully confirm its reality.

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161. See fn. 14 and 15 above.