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**CONFESSION SACRAMENT IN THE ORTHODOX RITUALITY  
AS A FACTOR IN THE UKRAINIAN MENTALITY FORMATION  
IN THE 17th – 19th CENTURIES**

*Abstract. The purpose of the research is to elucidate the history of confession sacrament introduction into the socio-cultural space of the Orthodox Ukrainian population and its influence on the national mentality formation of the Ukrainians in the 17th – 19th centuries based on the materials of*

canonical and literary literature, directives, statutory acts, and information and publications. **Research Methodology.** The historical and analytical, discursive, and interdisciplinary focus of the research is determined by an extensive methodological toolkit, which is used in accordance with the research fields of individual religious and historical disciplines, using, first of all, the methods of deconstruction and critical analysis of sources. **Scientific Novelty.** The issue of a religious factor influence in general and in the context of the confession sacrament in particular on the formation of mass and individual forms of national self-identification of the Ukrainian population remains poorly studied. **Conclusions.** The installation of the procedure for introducing the holy sacraments of confession and communion into church rituals took place from the middle of the 2nd century to the 7th century, when Christian canons were established. There were three forms of the confessional rite: the confession of a Christian alone with God, a collective confession at a general prayer meeting of believers in the temple, the confession before a monk or other holy person. Over time, public confession was replaced by a private appeal of a believer to Christ through the mediation of a priest. Initially, the anonymity of a confessor was emphasized, but gradually the requirement of mandatory identification of a person and his social status was introduced. In the confessional preface, a priest listed warnings about avoiding sinful behaviour, and separately emphasized the fulfillment of God's instructions in various life situations. A believer could communicate with the Almighty independently through a prayer-appeal. A priest addressed God with the aim of forgiving a believer's sins reading a specific prayer from the "Trebynk" prayer book of 1646 by P. Mohyla. Violators of confession were prosecuted according to the norms of spiritual and civil law. A Christian who had not undergone the rite of confession could not testify under oath in court in either civil or criminal cases. The confessional rite acquired special significance in the lives of convicted and dying people. Through subtle psychic impulses, religious self-identification was affirmed, and distinctive features of individual and mass forms of the national mentality of the Ukrainians were formed.

**Key words:** Orthodox Church, repentance, holy sacrament, priest, confession, religious rite, national mentality.

## СПОВІДАЛЬНЕ ТАЇНСТВО ПРАВОСЛАВНОЇ ОБРЯДОВОСТІ ЯК ЧИННИК ФОРМУВАННЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ МЕНТАЛЬНОСТІ XVII – XIX ст.

**Анотація. Мета.** У статті за матеріалами канонічної, художньої літератури, директивно-розпорядчих, статутних актів та інформаційно-публікаторських видань розкривається історія впровадження священнодії сповіді в соціокультурний простір православного українського населення та її впливовість на формування національної ментальності українства XVII – XIX ст. **Методологія дослідження.** Історико-аналітична, дискусійна та міждисциплінарна спрямованість розвідки зумовлена розлогим методологічним інструментарієм, який задіяний відповідно до дослідницьких полів окремих релігієзнавчих та історичних дисциплін із залученням насамперед методик деконструкції та критичного аналізу джерел. **Наукова новизна дослідження.** Недостатньо вивченою залишається проблема впливу релігійного чинника загалом та в його контексті священнодійства сповіді зокрема на формування масової та індивідуальної форм національної самоідентифікації українського населення. **Результати дослідження.** Інсталяція процедури впровадження святих таїнств сповіді та причастя в церковну обрядовість відбувалася з середини II ст. до VII ст., коли утверджувалися християнські канони. Існувало три форми сповідального обряду: сповідання християнина наодинці з Богом, через колективну сповідь на загальних молитовних зборах вірних у храмі, перед ченцем або іншою святою людиною. Із часом публічна сповідь замінювалася особливим зверненням вірника до Христа через посередництво священника. Спочатку наголошувалося на анонімності сповідальника, однак поступово було запроваджено вимогу обов'язкової ідентифікації особи та її

соціального статусу. У сповідальній передмові ієреї перелічував застереження щодо уникнення гріховної поведінки, окремо наголошував на виконанні божих настанов у різних життєвих ситуаціях. Сповідальник міг спілкуватися з Всевишнім самостійно через молитву-звернення. Священник звертався до Бога з метою прощення гріхів вірянину через визначену молитовну промову “Требника” П. Могили 1646 р. Порушників сповіді переслідували відповідно до норм духовного та цивільного законодавства. Християнин, який не проходив сповідальний обряд, не міг свідчити під присягою у суді як у цивільних, так і кримінальних справах. Особливе значення сповідальний обряд набував у житті осіб, що були засуджені чи помирили. Через малопомітні психічні імпульси відбувалося утвердження релігійної самоідентифікації, формування особливих рис індивідуальної та масової форм національної ментальності українства.

**Ключові слова:** православна церква, покаяння, святе таїнство, священник, сповідь, релігійний обряд, національна ментальність.

**Problem Statement.** Orthodox rituality was formed over many centuries and was designed to discipline, educate, organize, and integrate believers into the socio-cultural space of Ukrainian society. Confession was considered a little-studied and to some extent mystical ritual by which a person revealed his or her most secret thoughts, experiences, and actions to the Almighty, communicating with God alone or through earthly intermediaries – priests. The sacrament of confession encouraged Christians to greater piety, morality, self-control of their behaviour, analysis of it in accordance with God’s righteous instructions, and self-repentance for the sins committed. In the Biblical verses we find calls for piety: “Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded!” (James 4, 8) (Bibliia; Onatskyi, 1965, pp. 1823–1824).

**The purpose** of the article is to elucidate the history of the confession sacrament introduction into the worldview practice of the Orthodox Ukrainian people of the 17th – 19th centuries and its influence on the national mentality formation of the Ukrainian people.

In the context of the interdisciplinary and discursive fields of the study, the focus is on a long-term process of establishing the sacred sacrament of confession of Orthodox religiosity as a separate significant component in the national identity formation of the Ukrainians.

Among the study objectives, the following ones should be singled out: to outline the concept “confession” and its quintessence in the spiritual life of a Christian; to identify the main historical milestones of the practical implementation of the confessional sacrament in the life of Orthodox Ukrainian communities; to analyse the canonical literature that affirmed confession and communion as holy sacraments of church ritual; to clarify the historical progression regarding the issue of anonymity and recognition of a sinner by a priest; to point out the behavioural warnings that were sounded in a priest’s confessional preface to believers; to emphasize God’s instructions regarding the behavioural strategies of a Christian; to give an example of a confessional speech to a sinner; to describe the norms of confessional duties of a priest and a believer, as defined by Christian doctrine and civil law; to demonstrate certain restrictions on the church rite of confession and the punishment of Christian-penitents; to reveal the special significance of the sacrament in the lives of convicted and dying people; to highlight distinctive character traits of the Ukrainians as a component of the national mentality, which were established as a result of religious self-identification.

**Review of Recent Researches.** The outlined research issue in the context of a religious factor influences on the formation of mass and individual forms of national self-identification

of the Ukrainian population over many centuries should be considered understudied. In their studies, the authors mostly focused on the confessional Orthodox rite. The monograph by Oleg Dushin is distinguished by its thoroughness (Dushin, 2005), which reveals the history of the sacred act's origin. The religious and conceptual apparatus is presented in detail by materials from the Religious Dictionary edited by Anatoliy Kolodny and B. Lobovyk (Kolodny, & Lobovyk, 1996).

On certain issues of medieval culture and the understanding of confession in the lives of ordinary people, the study by Aron Gurevich is noted (Gurevich, 2007); the motivating psychological aspects of people's conversion to confession were studied based on the research by Viktor Moskalets (Moskalets, 2004); a psychoanalytic research on the issues of confession is presented by Archimandrite of the University of Essex Chrysostomos Grigorii Timpas (Khryzostom Hryhorii Timpas); the formation of the confessional process in Polish society is outlined in the research by Cezary Kuklo (Kuklo, 2009); the leading role of the Cossacks in the advancement of ethnic consciousness and the formation of individual character traits of the Ukrainians in the second half of the 16th – mid-17th centuries is noted in the scientific research by Vitaliy Shcherbak (Shcherbak, 2020); certain aspects of the deathbed confession and funeral rite of the Ukrainians of the 18th century are explained in the research by Oksana Romanova (Romanova, 2007). The focus is on the research by Ya. Taras and V. Yaremchuk, which is dedicated to the study of the archaeologist-priest Yuriy Shumovsky (1908 – 2003), who, based on ethnographic and theological research, analysed the meaning of calendar rituals through the prism of a combination of rational experience and religious magical beliefs with the annual liturgical cycle of the Orthodox Church (Taras, & Yaremchuk, 2023).

**The source base of the research** is based on the canonical literature, primarily the Bible, the Nomocanon of 1620, and the “Trebnik” prayer book by Petro Mohyla of 1646, as well as the artistic literary monument of the early Baroque poetry of the monk Klimenty Zinoviye of the late 17th – the beginning of the 18th centuries. The governmental and administrative direction of written sources is represented by acts of directive and administrative content – synodal and senate decrees, Codes of Laws of 1832, 1857, 1900 and documents of a statutory nature – Instructions to the priestly elders of December 26, 1697, the Regulations or Statute of the Spiritual College of January 25, 1721 and the May 1722 Appendix to it, the Statute of Spiritual Consistories of March 27, 1841. The materials of the publications of the second half of the 19th century are used in the discussion of the outlined issue: the printed organ of the Poltava Orthodox Eparchy – “Poltava Eparchy News”.

**Research Results.** According to Christian tradition, the concept of confession was understood as a holy sacrament in which a priest or bishop, on behalf of Christ, forgave a believer of his sins, but on condition that he recognized himself as a sinner and sincerely repented for his actions. Repentance became an integral part of confession and a gift of reconciliation between a man and God, and confession was considered a spiritual journey, similar in spirit and content to a pilgrimage (Khryzostom Hryhorii Timpas).

The priesthood was based on Christ's words to the apostles: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18, 18), and also: “Accept the Holy Spirit! Whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven; and whose sins you retain, they will be retained” (Ivan 20, 22–23). The Epistle of the Apostle James says: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. For a fervent prayer of a righteous man has much power!” (James 5, 16) (Bibliia; Onatskyi, 1965, pp. 1823–1824). Confession was considered the best means

of protection against the evil one and his servants. Through repentance, sin died, through confession it was driven out of the house, and penance buried it in the grave (Gurevich, 2007, pp. 390–391; Kolodny, & Lobovyk, 1996, p. 80).

The installation of the confession sacrament procedure has had a long history, which depended on the dynamics of internal church changes, the genesis of social institutions of medieval society. The formation of the sacrament fell on the period of the establishment of Christian canonical standards in the mid-2nd – 7th centuries. Initially, the monotheistic form was considered to be “confession before God”, but a common early church practice of confession and repentance was general prayer gatherings of parishioners in the church. Over time, public confessions were recognized as inconvenient. Instead, the custom of private confession became widespread. The confession sacrament was performed before communion, because it was believed that sincere confession cleansed from sins and made one worthy of receiving the body and blood of the Lord. In the 3rd century, a tradition of confession before a monk or holy person arose among Christians of the West and the East. Thus, three forms of the confessional process developed: directly by a Christian before God, before prayer gatherings of believers in a church, and before a monk or other holy person (Dushin, 2005, pp. 37–38; Onatskyi, 1965, pp. 1823–1824). At the same time, confession became a means of spiritual and healing therapy to people (Borodenko, & Fazan, 2023, pp. 16–32).

The universal obligation to introduce parish confessions in Polish lands was initiated by the Decree of Cardinal Bernard Maciejowski in 1607 (Kuklo, 2009, p. 72). A special mystical act, by which a believer opened his soul to God, was given much attention in the Ukrainian Nomocanons. In particular, the Kyiv Nomocanon of 1620 stated that a priest should not ask the name of a sinner: “for this is like the betrayal of Judas”. A priest, on the contrary, must influence a confessor so that he does not name the names of sinners, because “otherwise there would be slander and condemnation”. For disclosing the secret of confession by a confessor, a punishment was imposed – a ban on serving God for three years. Metropolitan Dmytro Tuptalo taught that a priest who revealed the secrets of confession betrayed “Christ himself, who is in the one who repents” (Onatskyi, 1965, pp. 1823–1824).

However, with the “Trebnik” prayer book of 1646, spiritual regulations, synodal and senate decrees of the 17th – 19th centuries, the interpretation of the personal unrecognizableness of a sinner changed. Priests began to be required to make denunciations. A priest was required to report to spiritual and civil administrative institutions about crimes which had already been committed or illegal acts that could have been committed by a confessor or other people, and were heard during confession. A chief focus was on conspirators who threatened the security of royal people, deserters, undocumented people, etc. Family relations and sexual passions of spouses were also under control, which were strictly regulated (Borodenko, & Sitarchuk, 2021, pp. 42–55). According to the requirements of the “Trebnik” prayer book, a priest had to ask a confessor his name and social affiliation (Onatskyi, 1965, pp. 1823–1824; Mohyla, 1996, p. 364). Thus, the anonymity of a sinner was eliminated.

General principles of the confessional procedure were defined in the above-mentioned church book, which for the first time unified the ritual system of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine (Dzyuba). The sacrament was performed alone with a sinner and represented a kind of judicial process. The sacrament was intended to awaken the sense of conscience, the recognition of one’s sins, and the repentance of a believing husband, his wife, and their children during the four holy fasts, especially during the Easter fast. Confession tested a human conscience through repentance, remembering one’s sins with great humility, heartfelt

emotion, recognition of one's faults, and faith in God's mercy. All this entailed control, monitoring one's actions, and reporting to the Almighty for one's deeds. Confession required a parishioner to analyse and evaluate his activities, turned his spiritual gaze into his own moral world, and through this entire procedure, educated a sinner's duty to observe Christian ethical norms of behaviour (Gurevich, 2007, p. 390; Dushin, 2005, pp. 16–17; Mohyla, 1996, pp. 361–367).

In the preface to the confession, the priest warned people: be faithful to God, do not believe in superstitions, whispering, pouring wax, with which creation, air, water, rain, bad weather, i.e. everything that was and is beneficial, was cursed; do not be false; do not sin by working on Sundays and other annual holidays; do not miss the divine church service and do not immerse yourself in worldly thoughts during it; do not waste your day in lordship, jokes and games, but on the contrary in pious and merciful deeds; let your relatives not sin, and do not act harshly with your blood relatives; help the needy; do not commit fornication, sodomy, homosexuality and all kinds of carnal impurity; do not steal, do not rob; do not break; pay taxes; return found things; do not insult your subjects or impose excessive taxes; do not bear false witness against your neighbour, especially your wives, children, and hired labourers; do not take away plots of land. Failure to observe these Christian moral rules could lead to disastrous consequences. In the example of the biblical explanation of the vice of greed, we encounter the warning: "Then lust, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is accomplished, gives birth to death" (James, 1, 15) (Bibliia; Onatskyi, 1965, pp. 1823–1824).

A parishioner had to follow other divine instructions: not to miss church liturgies, especially on holidays and Sundays; observe four fasts each year and separately on Wednesdays and Fridays; have his own priest for confession; to confess four times a year, and most of all during Lent; not to read heretical books and other blasphemous literature; not to have such mortal sins as pride, envy, gluttony, anger, laziness in the service of God; to respect another person; to possess such virtues as humility, generosity, purity, tenderness, moderation, patience and fervent piety; feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, bathe the dirty in the bathhouse, welcome the guest into your home, bury the dead; correct the backslider, teach the ignorant, advise the talkative, forgive the wrongs of the guilty (Mohyla, 1996, p. 820–824). The Holy Scriptures warned: "Therefore, to him who knows how to do good and does not do it, it is a sin for him!" (James, 4, 17) (Bibliia; Onatskyi, 1965, pp. 1823–1824).

In the "Trebnik" prayer book there was also presented the verbal form of the priest's prayer speech in forgiving a sinner: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, by the grace and generosity of His love for humanity, will forgive that child who has his sins. A worthy priest, by the authority given to him, forgives all the sins of (the name of the sinner) in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen".

However, in the verses of the monk Klimenty Zinoviev, a prayer of a sinner to God with a slightly different meaning is found: "God, for this I ask your forgiveness: give me special grace for this message. Is there anyone in this world equal to me in sins: am I the only sinner and evil-doer... For you can also guide me on the right path: and cleanse me of all spiritual filth. And do not let me go, Oh, Lord, until the end: for even then there is no end to my sins. And do not send me yet the death that is in sins: since I have yet to wipe the heads of my enemies. Oh, God, I trust in your mercy: I entrust my soul and sinful body to you... but I despise sins when I have them in me" (Klimenty Zinoviev, 1971, p. 35). Therefore, people did not always have the opportunity and desire to repent and ask for forgiveness of sins

through earthly spiritual mediators, and the common practice remained the individual appeal of a believer to God. It is obvious that a monk is patriotic, because even in a sinner's prayerful appeal to the Almighty, the poet drew attention to the righteous cause of the Ukrainians in the fight against external enemies. It is not for nothing that the European community of the second half of the 16th – mid-17th centuries called the Ukrainians the "Cossack nation" with a special political consciousness, mentality, system of values, and a characteristic psychotype (Shcherbak, 2020, pp. 9–23).

The basic provisions of the confession sacrament and the procedure for conducting it were presented in the "Trebnik" prayer book, subsequent synodal and senate acts, starting from 1716, the relevant articles of the Regulations or Statute of the Spiritual College of January 25, 1721 and the May 1722 Appendix to it, the Statute of Spiritual Consistories of March 27, 1841 (PSZRI, 1830b, p. 196; PSZRI, 1830c, p. 341; PSZRI, 1842, p. 221), Code of Laws of 1832, 1857, 1900 (Svod zakonov, 1832, pp. 412–413; Svod zakonov, 1857, p. 7; Svod zakonov, 1900, p. 23), as well as in additional instructions, practical advice, and explanations to priests from religious institutions regarding adjustments to the conduct of church ceremonies. For example, in the second half of the 19th century, practical guidelines were distributed on shortening the confessional procedure, primarily due to the increase in the number of parishioners within one Orthodox community. Such notes were declared in the information and publishing publications of the Orthodox Church (Prakticheskiye zametki, 1873a, pp. 69–72; Prakticheskiye zametki, 1873b, pp. 89–93).

According to the requirements of the "Charter" of 1721 and the Appendix of 1722, as well as the Resolution of the Synod of April 12, 1722, every Christian was required to partake of the Holy Eucharist once a year, as this signified gratitude to God for salvation. At the same time, during confession a priest should not be overly arrogant or harsh towards a confessor, but, on the contrary, should be able to calm him down with all kinds of gentleness. If a believer distanced from Holy Communion, he demonstrated that he was not in the body of Christ, apostasy from the church. Parishioners were to monitor and report those who had not received Communion for a year, some for two, and some never.

If a person did not confess for a year, he was punished with a fine. The second time – with a double fine, and the third time he was subject to civil punishment, depending on the severity of a person's guilt. Apostates were encouraged to confess under oath. During the confession, they were questioned about the following questions: were they sons of the church, did they curse schismatics? In the absence of sworn promises, the person was recognized as a heretic (PSZRI, 1830c, pp. 341, 652, 700).

The Code of Laws of 1857 included a section "On the Prevention and Cessation of Deviations from Confession and Holy Communion", which is aimed at ensuring that Christians comply with the rules of the Orthodox Church regarding the sacrament of confession. Canonical and civil procedural norms defined the confessional behaviour of the Orthodox population. According to the requirements, a parishioner had to confess and receive communion according to the Christian rite at least once a year, during Lent or at another time; children of both sexes were to be brought to confession annually, starting from the age of seven. In accordance with the requirements of civil laws, parents who did not bring their children of confessional age to church for confession were punished with a special admonition from the spiritual and local civil leadership of the community (Svod zakonov, 1857, p. 7).

A priest was tasked with emphasizing to the faithful the importance of fulfilling their duty to confess. Civil and military leadership was also involved in monitoring people's attendance

at the holy sacraments of confession and communion, supervising and controlling those accountable to them. The parish priests recorded the presence and absence of parishioners in specially prepared confessional records in a specific form within the time limits established by the Spiritual Statute. The parish priests indicated the reasons for the absence of parishioners at confession with various notes in the church registers (Borodenko, & Tuchynskyi, 2023a, pp. 31–38; Borodenko, & Tuchynskyi, 2023b, pp. 98–107).

A separate task of the priests was to notify the Spiritual Consistory and Spiritual Boards about absent people. The Eparchy bishop kept a watchful eye on those believers who, despite a priest's persuasion, had not performed the church rites of confession and communion for two or three years. His Eminence, through the parish priest, other trusted clergy, or independently, had to convince and motivate a sinner to return to fulfilling the Christian duty of confession and, in accordance with church rules, impose penance on a violator of Christian moral norms of behaviour.

By appropriate decision, the Christian offender could be punished with public penance in the parish church or monastery. Those who did not correct themselves, did not repent, and did not fulfill their Christian duty were reported to the civil authorities with the aim of further holding people accountable (Svod zakonov, 1857, p. 7). In particular, in accordance with the requirements of civil law, people of the Orthodox faith who avoided confession and communion out of negligence were punished by means of church punishments in accordance with the decisions and orders of the spiritual diocesan leadership. However, violators could not be suspended from their official duties for a long time, and peasants from their jobs and homes (Svod zakonov, 1900, p. 23).

The participation of believers in the confession sacrament also affected court proceedings. According to the requirements of civil law, people who had not been to confession and the Eucharist could not testify under oath in court in both civil and criminal cases. Those accused of crimes were necessarily asked about their attendance at the confessional ceremony.

Special treatment was given to convicts regarding the sacrament. According to the Instructions to the Priestly Elders of December 26, 1697, and the Senate Decree of January 17, 1765, for the purpose of repentance and cleansing the conscience of each well-drainer, a priest had to bring him to confession once a year, but if he wished, he could also confess during the other three fasts. This was especially true for sick prisoners. According to church rules, a clergyman must confess a sick person alone. A priest was required to perform the rites of confession and communion on the eve of the execution for people sentenced to death. After the execution, such thieves and murderers were buried separately from other laypeople "in a poor house" (Ukazatel alfavitnyy, 1834, p. 301; Svod zakonov, 1832, pp. 412–413; PSZRI, 1830a, p. 417; PSZRI, 1830c, p. 705; Polnoe sobraniye postanovleniy, 1910, p. 258).

A generally widespread Christian rite of confession and repentance of a believer before death was considered an indispensable guarantee of a person's salvation in the afterlife (Romanova, 2007, p. 230). The idea of heaven and hell as an afterlife of retribution for righteous deeds and sins, for good deeds and evil deeds, introduced a utilitarian, mercantile, selfish-consumer motive into repentance and confession. People were motivated to perform these sacred acts by the fear of hellish punishments and the desire for heavenly blessings, and the psychological discomfort caused by this fear (Moskalets, 2004, p. 79). Civil legislation of the 19th century prescribed a special punishment for those relatives or strangers who had the opportunity and did not call a priest to a dying person to conduct a pre-death confessional rite: arrest for a period of three weeks to three months (Svod zakonov, 1900, p. 23).

Society and the church had a special attitude towards people who died in accidents, thieves, murderers, and suicides. If a person was still alive but died under unexplained circumstances that happened suddenly, for example, falling from a tree, they had the right to confession. A priest conducted an investigation into the cause of a person's death. In the event of accidents, people were given a funeral and buried like other laypeople. In the event of an investigation into the fact of "committing a suicide", suicides were not given a funeral and were not buried among other deceased parishioners. People dying as a result of robbery or theft were confessed, but just like suicides, they were not given a funeral and were buried in fields, forests or in "poor houses" (PSZRI, 1830a, p. 417).

Thus, confessional liturgy and Orthodox rituality in general constructed a religious identity. At the same time, secularization processes took place, i.e. the separation or combination of religious and secular spheres of human activity, which to a certain extent suppressed, limited freethinking, encouraged betrayal, gave rise to the institution of denunciations, lowered self-esteem, rejected healthy ambitions, and inhibited a progressive development of individual personality traits and mass consciousness of the Ukrainian communities. Such influence contributed to the formation of the national character special traits of the Ukrainians, among which we should mention: discipline, responsibility, tolerance, peace-lovingness, tolerance, reconciliation, passivity, helplessness, paternalism, guilt, etc. Thus, separate tools were formed to intimidate and motivate believers to greater piety (Boyko, 2020; Borodenko, & Fazan, 2023, pp. 16–32).

At the same time, a certain system of Christian ethical and social rules and duties motivated the analysis of one's own and other people's actions, self-organized the individual, generated a developed sense of justice and an endless search for truth. Through confession and prayer, spiritual inquiries were formed – appeals to Christ in order to protect national interests in the fight against internal and external offenders of the Ukrainian community.

Such subtle mental impulses in the development of an individual and the entire Ukrainian people, which came from the depths of history and the subconscious, formed national mental traits, rooted them in the collective memory and behavior of many generations of the Ukrainians. Thus, a special national mentality was born, which was based on a system of views, ideals, interests, established traditions, assessments, social attitudes and norms. It is based on a synthesis of real social needs, experiences, and archetypes of the collective unconscious. In the process of socialization of a confessor at an individual domestic level, his national self-identification took place, which could take on certain religious magical forms and was determined by political economic, socio-cultural factors and circumstances (Boyko, 2020). The aforementioned Yu. Shumovsky considered holidays and rituals to be the most important component of the spiritual life of the Ukrainian people, as a reflection of ethnic identity, moral values, mentality and history (Taras, & Yaremchuk, 2023, pp. 208–220).

**Conclusions.** The sacrament of confession preceded the Eucharist. The installation of the confessional procedure occurred at the time of the establishment of Christian canons in the middle of the 2nd – 7th centuries. Three forms of the sacrament were formed: the confession of a sinner individually before God, through a collective confession of Christians in the church, which was gradually replaced by one-on-one communication with the priest. From the 3rd century, confession to a monk or other holy person became widespread. The custom of opening a human soul to the Almighty is presented in the Ukrainian Nomocanon of 1620, P. Mohyla's "Trebnik" prayer book of 1646, and subsequent directives and statutory acts of the 17th – 19th centuries.

In the process of spreading confession among the Ukrainian Orthodox population, the anonymity of a sinner was emphasized, but over time, on the contrary, the personification of a believer was demanded from the clergy. In the confessional preface, a priest addressed the parishioners with a list of cautions regarding the observance of the necessary rules of behaviour and the fulfillment of God's instructions. There was a canonically approved prayer speech by a priest regarding forgiveness of a sinner in the "Trebnik" prayer book. The faithful could independently construct the text of a personal confessional prayer-appeal in a direct "conversation with God".

Canonical Christian literature and civil procedural norms defined the confessional behaviour of an Orthodox Christian and a parish priest, as well as the punishments for violators of the sacrament. Civil legislation noted a special significance of church rites in the lives of convicted people. Violators of confession could not act as witnesses in court regarding civil and criminal proceedings. The feeling of fear prompted people to participate in the holy sacrament, determined its importance in the lives of Orthodox believers. The rite of confession before death was of a particular importance.

Let us assume that confession, in combination with other sacred acts, influenced the fundamental principles formation of the Ukrainian Orthodox ritual. Together with civil legislation, the sacred act contributed to discipline, education, the establishment of Christian-ethical norms of morality and the isolation of certain components of the national mentality of the Ukrainian people, such as their own character traits, self-awareness, and socio-cultural identity.

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