‘THE GOOD AND BAD CONFESSION’ IN BULGARIAN ART

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Abstract: The paper considers the advent of a new topic in Bulgarian art from the late 18th century. The iconography of “The Good and Bad confession” appears for the first time in the hermitage *St. Luke* in 1799 at the Rila Monastery. The author of the scene is the iconographer, Christo Dimitrov. His new iconographic model continues to spread throughout the Bulgarian Revival (18th-19th century) as part of an overall mural ensemble of didactic stories in the narthex of the temples. Depicting ‘The Good and Bad Confession’ close to subjects like ‘Going to the Sorceress for Remedy’, ‘The Aerial Tollbooths’ and ‘The Last Judgment’ raises certain problems like: Why do all those subjects occur precisely during the Bulgarian Revival and what is their origin? According to this article, the origin of ‘The Good and Bad Confession’ and its relation to the other didactic subjects is ‘Western’ – Catholic doctrines and canons of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Because of ‘Europeanization’ in Balkans in the 18th-19th century, Western ideas and scenes have been introduced in the Bulgarian lands, already transformed in the Orthodox spirit in Russia and Mount Athos.

Keywords: *good and bad confession, Penance, iconography, Bulgarian Revival, Western influences, prototype*

Preliminaries

In Orthodoxy, Confession is part of the sacrament of Penance. Its essence is expressed in several stages: repentance for sin, confession, and forgiveness of sins¹. The sacrament of Penance is real/efficient/operative

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¹ Cf. Blagoy Chiflyanov, *Pravoslavna liturgika*, Sofia, UI “Sv. Kliment Ohridski”, 2008, p.

when a sincere and complete confession of all sins is made. The remission consists of the absolution prayers of the priest and the invisible forgiveness/blessing at the same time by Jesus Christ Himself. Sincere confession is a prerequisite for forgiveness and salvation and leads to the development of the iconography “The Good and Bad Confession” (Righteous and sinful confession) in Orthodox art.

‘The Good and Bad Confession’ is a late phenomenon in the picturesque repertoire of the Orthodox Church. In Bulgaria, it first appeared during the Bulgarian Revival (18th-19th century) and it took place among so-called *Didactic stories* in the narthex of temples.

Fig.1: The Good and Bad Confession, The Joy and Cry of the Angel and the Devil, the hermitage “St. Luke”, Rila Monastery, 1799, Christo Dimitrov

Confession is represented as follows:

1. Good confession (also called: Righteous, pure, true): a sinner is making a confession to the priest. He is confessing all sins and an angel lays a wreath on his head; usually, the action takes place against the background of an icon of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ blessing in the clouds or an icon of St. Mary.
2. Bad confession (also called: Wrong, false, sinful): a sinner is making a confession to the priest. From his mouth little snakes – a symbol of small sins, go out, while a large snake is stuck in the sinner’s mouth. It is a symbol of great sins², which are not confessed. The Devil is telling him to be ashamed and not to tell his sins.

265; Avksentiy (Archim.), *Liturgika*, Vol. II, Plovdiv, IMN, 2007, p. 159-180.

² The meaning is explained in the engraving of St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ: Dinko DAVIDOV, *Svetogorska grafika*, Beograd, Galerija SANU, 2004, p. 215.

In some cases, “The Joy and Cry of the Angel and the Devil” is added to those scenes. An angel instructs and leads the good-confessing person and the devil cries that his efforts were in vain. This storyline spreads in Bulgaria during the Revival in different versions by prints³, hermeneias⁴, mural paintings and icons⁵.

Thus far the Orthodox iconographic version of Confession has been partially studied by Bulgarian researchers⁶. Particular attention to its various types in 18th-19th century is paid by the Macedonian researcher Jasmina Chokrevska-Philippe⁷. A number of authors have worked on the dogmatic and historical aspects as well as the liturgical development of the Sacrament⁸. Several publications are dedicated to the Western

³ *Ibidem* and Dory PAPASTRATOS, *Paper icons. Greek orthodox religious engravings 1665-1899*, Vol. I-II, Athens, Papastratos Publications, 1990, p. 86-93.

⁴ See Cod. Gr. 412 (Hermeneia of Dicho Zograf), Tsentar za slaviyano-vizantiyski prouchvaniya “Prof. Ivan Duychev”, (1835-1839?) f. 125 r-126 v.

⁵ Cf. Asen VASILIEV, *Sotsialni i patriotichni temi v staroto balgarsko izkustvo*, Sofia, Balgarski hudozhnik, 1973, p. 86-88; Ivanka Gergova i dr., *Korpus na stenopisite v Balgariya ot XVIII vek*, Sofia, Akademichno Izdatelstvo Profesor Marin Drinov, 2006, p. 245; Elena POPOVA, *Zografat Hristo Dimitrov ot Samokov*, Sofia, Agata A, 2001, p. 50, 61, 181-182; IDEM, “Temi, vavedeni v balgarskata zhivopis ot Hristo Dimitrov”, in *Problemi na izkustvoto*, no. 3/2001, p. 6; Elka BAKALOVA, “Didactic themes in church mural painting of the 19th century Bulgaria. Western influences?”, in *Association Internationale d'Etudes du Sud-Est Européen Revue*, no. 35-39/2005-2009, p. 388-391.

⁶ See A. VASILIEV, *op. cit.*, p. 86-88; E. Popova, *Zografat Hristo...*, p. 50, 61, 181-182; IDEM, “Temi, vavedeni...”, p. 6; E. BAKALOVA, *op. cit.*, p. 388-390; Aleksandar KUYUMDZHIEV, *Stenopisite v glavnata tsarkva na Riskiya manastir*, Sofia, Akademichno Izdatelstvo Profesor Marin Drinov, 2014, p. 414-421.

⁷ Jasmina CHOKREVSKA-FILIP, “Probivot na temata ‘Pravedno i greshno ispovedanije’ vo slikarstovoto vo Makedonja”, in *Patrimonium.mk*, no. 3-4, 5-6/2008-2009, p. 219-232.

⁸ Aleksandr ALMAZOV, *Taynaya ispovedy v Pravoslavnoy Vostochnoy Tserkvi: Opayt vneshney istorii*, Vol. 3, Odessa, 1894; Elena BRAMBILLA, *Alle origini del Sant'Uffizio. Penitenza, confessione e giustizia spirituale dal medioevo al XVI secolo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2001; Dino MANZELLI, *La confessione dei peccati nella dottrina penitenziale del concilio di Trento*, S. I., 1966, p. 6-148; Miguel ARRANZ, “Les formulaires de confession dans la tradition byzantine (Les sacrements de la restauration de l'ancien Euchologe constantinopolitain: II-3). 1^{re} partie”, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* (OCP), 58/1992, p. 423-459; 2^e partie in *OCP*, 59/1993, p. 63-89; 3^e partie in *OCP*, 59/1993, p. 357-386; IDEM, *I penitenziali bizantini. Il Protokanonarion o “Kanonarion Primitivo” di Giovanni monaco e diacono il Deuterokanonarion o “Secondo Kanonarion” di Basilio monaco*, Roma, PIO, 1993; IDEM, *Penitenza bizantina*, Roma, 1999; IDEM, Basilio Petrà. *La penitenza nelle chiese ortodosse, Aspetti storici e sacramentali*, Bologna, Edb, 2005;

allegorical representations of Penance⁹.

In Bulgaria, the subject is depicted for the first time by Christo Dimitrov in the hermitage *St. Luke* in 1799¹⁰. The same painter introduces in Bulgarian Revival art a series of new subjects as “Going to the Sorceress for Remedy”, “The Aerial Tollbooths”, “Archangel Michael Wrestles the Rich Man’s Soul”, “St. Luke Portraiting the mother of God”, “The Virgin going through the Sorrow” etc.

So, the main issues about the iconography of the Good and Bad Confession are: Why does the topic “The Good and Bad Confession” appear exactly during the Bulgarian revival? Is it Orthodox iconography? What is the meaning and the relation to other didactic stories to which it is always attached? What is its graphic and ideological prototype?

1. The sacrament of Penance: a brief introduction

The Sacrament of Penance has undergone a long theological, liturgical and juridical development throughout Church history¹¹. In the apostolic period, *public confession* spreads (Jas. 5:16)¹². In the first

Ernesto VALGIGLIO, *Confessio nella Bibbia e nella letteratura cristiana antica*, Torino, G. GIAPPICHELLI, 1980; Cyrille VOGEL, *Il peccatore e la penitenza nel Medioevo*, Torino, Elledici, 1988.

⁹ Giulia BASILICO, “La raffigurazione della Penitenza in stampe del XVI e XVII secolo”, in *Grafica d’arte*, no. 83/2010, p. 8-13; Carmelina NASELLI, “L’esame di coscienza e la confessione dei peccati in alcune stampe e formule popolari”, in *Studi e materiali di Storia delle religioni*, XXIII (1951-52), p. 78-79.

¹⁰ See A. VASILIEV, *op. cit.*, p. 88; E. POPOVA, *Zografat Hristo...*, p. 50, 61, 181-182; IDEM, “Temi, vavedeni...”, p. 6; E. BAKALOVA, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

¹¹ E. g.: Penitenza (Sacramento della Penitenza), in *Telogia* (a cura di Giuseppe Barbaglio, Giampiero Bof, Severino Dianich). Milano, San Paolo Edizioni, 2002, p. 1106-1138; Amédée TEETAERT, *La confession aux laïques dans l’Église latine depuis le VIII^e jusqu’au XIV^e siècle*, Bruges-Parigi, J. de Meester et fils, 1926.

¹² Danilo CECCARELLI-MOROLI, “Il sacramento della Penitenza nei sacri canones del primo millennio: uno sguardo alle fonti con qualche breve nota in margine”, in *Kanonika*, no. 19/2013, p. 15-27; *La disciplina della penitenza nelle chiese orientali*, Roma, PIO, 2013, p. 15-16; Victor SAXER, “Libri Penitenziali”, in *Dizionario patristico e di antichità Cristiane*, Vol. II, Milano, 1994, coll. 2749-2751; “Sacramento della Penitenza”, in *Gerald O’Collins & Edward G. Farmigia, Dizionario Sintetico di Teologia*, Città del Vaticano, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995, p. 325-326; Robert TAFT, “Penance in Contemporary Scholarship”, in *Studia Liturgica*, 18/1989, p. 2-21.

millennium, the Sacrament of Penance is discussed at several councils: Laodicea (343-351), Carthage (419) and Trullo – Quinisext council (691-692)¹³. The Council of Laodicea (canon 2) defines that if penitents are constant in their confession and contrition, and they are already completely away from the evil, after a time of *repentance* (μετανοία), proportional to the fault, they can be re-admitted to communion, thanks to God's mercy and kindness¹⁴. The Council of Carthage (canon 6, 43) adds to the Council of Laodicea that remission of sins and admission into the bosom of the Church can be done only with the *consent of the bishop*¹⁵.

Even in this early period, the holy fathers clarified the essence of Penance and confession. *Confession is a remedy, and the priest is a doctor* of the penitent-sick. In patristic literature, μετανοία means a change of mind and of a way of thinking¹⁶. To repent means to radically change your way of thinking and existence. Thus, sin, which is the disease that separates us from God is removed, treated, in order to reconcile man to the Lord.

Gradually, with public confession, the practice of *secret confession* was started.

It spreads in the East (after the 4th century) and in the West (after the 6th century). It consists in the sinner confessing to the priest by whom he receives forgiveness of sins. In the Byzantine Church, the sacrament of Penance becomes a privilege of monks. Considered particularly important is the manifestation of charisms in the hierarchy, emanating directly from God¹⁷. Πνευματικὸς πατήρ is the one who has the gift of the *fiery prayer* reading in the hearts and διάκρισις – discernment of spirits and thoughts¹⁸.

In the *Latin Church*, *secret confession* was practiced *after the 6th century*. For this purpose, the *penal books*, containing faults (sins) and their punishment, were created¹⁹. In the 12th century due to abuses with

¹³ The text which synthesizes that and defines the Eastern (Orthodox) doctrine of Penance is canon 102 of Quinisext Council (Danilo CECCARELI-MOROLI, *op. cit.*, p. 20-21).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 19-20.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 18-19.

¹⁷ Cf. Pavel EVDOKIMOV, *Pravoslaviето*, Sofia, Omofor, 2010, p. 368 and Cyrille VOGEL, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ D. CECCARELI-MOROLI, *op. cit.*, p. 16-178.

the so-called *fees* in the penal books, the Latin Church changed its attitude/idea of justification. Emphasis shifted from justification after a completion of penances to justification at the time of the confession of sins²⁰. After 12th century, penal books were replaced by *Codes of confession* (*Summa de confessione*)²¹, and repentance practices were carried out in three forms: 1. *Solemn public confession*; 2. *Not solemn public repentance*; 3. *Secret confession*.

Gradually, of the three types of confession in the Western Church, only secret confession has remained. Its practice and nature were reviewed and defined on the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

*The Council of Trent (1545-1563)*²² was the nineteenth universal council of Roman Catholic bishops. The council responded to the attacks of the Protestant Reformation and restore inner peace in the Western community²³. It refutes the ideas of Martin Luther's (1483-1546) Reformation and prepares Roman Catholic reform, called the *Counter-Reformation* against Calvinism and Lutheranism.

Among the most important topics discussed at the council is the sacrament of Penance. It is seen in the more general context of the doctrine of grace and the sacraments²⁴. Notes on the Sacrament of Penance are found in the decree on Original Sin (5th session), and one containing justification (6th session)²⁵. The final version of the text consists of a precise definition of the Catholic doctrine of Penance and Confession and canons with retraction of Protestant criticisms against the God's origin, the nature and the implementation of the sacraments in

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

²² Hubert JEDIN, *Storia del Concilio di Trento*, Vol. II, Morcelliana, 2009, p. 429; Giuseppe ALBERIGO, "L'ecclesiologia del Concilio di Trento", in *Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, no. 18/1964; G. ALBERIGO / P. BREZZI / E. CATTANEO, *Il Concilio tridentino: prospettive storiografiche e problemi storici*, Milano, Editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1965; Jedin HUBERT, *Storia del Concilio di Trento*, vol. I-IV, Morcelliana, 2009-2010; Adriano PROSPERI, *Il Concilio di Trento: una introduzione storica*, Torino, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 2001.

²³ *Trento: un concilio para la union (1550-1552): Fuentes (1549-1551; 1552-1553)*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1981.

²⁴ Dino MANZELLI, *La confessione dei peccati nella dottrina penitenziale del concilio di Trento*, S. I., 1966, p. 20.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

twelve anathemas²⁶. The topic was studied and developed from 1547 to November 25, 1551, the date of proclamation²⁷. One of the main problems was that Protestants contended that the full confession of sins is not possible and the remission of sins and justification is due only to the faith in the word of God. According to the doctrine:

“...the entire confession of sins was also instituted by Lord... for all who have fallen after Baptism... Jesus Christ Our Lord... left priests His own vicars, as presidents and judges... they may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness or retention of sins... Whence it is gathered that all the mortal sins, of which, after a diligent examination of themselves, they are conscious, must need be enumerated by penitents in confession, even though those sins be most hidden, and committed only against the two last precepts of the decalogue... For venial sins, whereby we are not excluded from the grace of God, and into which we fall more frequently, although they be rightly and profitably, and without any presumption declared in confession... But, whereas all mortal sins, even those of thought, render men children of wrath, and enemies of God, it is necessary to seek also for the pardon of them all from God, with an open and modest confession. Wherefore, while the faithful of Christ are careful to confess all the sins which occur to their memory, they without doubt lay them all bare before the mercy of God to be pardoned: whereas they who act otherwise, and knowingly keep back certain sins, such set nothing before the divine bounty to be forgiven through the priest: for if the sick be ashamed to show his wound to the physician, his medical art cures not that which it knows not of.”²⁸

From this text becomes clear the conceptual origin of the iconographic topic ‘The Good and Bad Confession’. There are several key moments which are reflected in the image: 1) Only a full (good) confession of all sins leads to remission of sins, which is shown by the Blessing Christ and coronation of the penitent by the angel in the first picture. 2) In the second picture with the wrong confession are condemned the Protestant views on incomplete confession and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ by God’s grace - the devil is glad that the sinner hides sins and departs from salvation. 3) In the Bulgarian Revival,

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 21, 125-140.

²⁸ D. MANZELLI, *op.cit.*, p. 125-140.

the iconography of the good and bad confession is usually displayed near the Last Judgment. Such placement corresponds to the exercise of the judicial act of the priest over the sinner – the decision regarding which sins can be forgiven and which need more spiritual exercises before forgiveness. The main connection is also that the judgment in the good confession and the remission of sins liberates from the Last Judgment²⁹.

2. The Good and bad confession in Bulgarian Revival

The Council of Trent had a strong influence in the whole post-Trent Catholic art and in Orthodox art several centuries later. On it is formulated the Art decree, approved on 3 December 1563, during the 25th session, that explains the nature, meaning and veneration of art in the Roman Catholic world. The decree defends holy images and their veneration and painting in the churches. But what is really reflected in the art of the Western world and iconographic changes overall are canons and decree of the council on St. Mary, the Eucharist, worship of saints and their relics, and the intercession of saints. The text recommends that holy images have to educate and teach the faithful. This leads to simplification of iconographies in order to be more understandable for people. Because of the pedagogical value of the holy images, all *non-canonical* iconographies, based on superstitious sources, are restricted. The most popular topics after the council are the Eucharist, the Dormition of the saints, Purgatory, angels and Guardian Angels, Confessions. For the first time, Old Testament symbols are added to the iconography of the Immaculate Conception.

During the Bulgarian Revival, processes similar to the West Renaissance occurred in Bulgarian Church art. The iconographic repertoire of narthex acquires new *didactic* subjects like “The Last Judgment”³⁰, “Going to the Sorceress for Remedy”, “The Aerial Tollbooths”, “The Death of the Righteous and the Sinner”. They are placed near each other with a clear theological purpose. The righteous (good) confession liberates from the *Particular judgment* (the aerial

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

³⁰ It is not a new subject for the Bulgarian Revival but the Last Judgment has a new iconographic scheme different from the post-byzantine one.

tollboths)³¹ and from the Last Judgment, the good confession cures sin. Putting “The Good and Bad Confession” next to “Going to the Sorceress for Remedy”³² juxtaposes the *real doctor – priest* and his *medicine – the confession* to the *false doctor – sorceress*, who draws people into sin. The scene represents patients who go to the healer-sorceress, led by devils, and on the platter with the drug for the patient a devil makes ca-ca.

The iconography of “The Good and Bad Confession” is painted for the first time (in Bulgaria) in the hermitage St. Luke in 1799 by Christo Dimitrov³³. Christo Dimitrov, founder of one of the most important Bulgarian Revival schools – Samokov’s painting school is known in Bulgarian art as a painter with Athos manner³⁴. He studied and worked in Mount Athos, from where he has introduced a variety of new topics in Bulgarian Revival art³⁵. Such is the case with “The Good and the Bad Confession”. This is the only case in our monuments, where the scenes are three, as to right and wrong confession “Crying and Joy of the Devil and the Angel” was added. In later images, confessions were reduced to two scenes – *right* and *wrong* as “The Devil Sorrow and Joy of the Angels” fit into the two pictures or drop the case.

Where is this subject borrowed from? The most common source of iconographic variants in Bulgarian Revival are Western or Orthodox engravings³⁶. Earlier prints with the same iconographic scheme are not yet known. The same iconographic scheme is found in later examples – prints by Hadji Isai and dated from around 1840³⁷. From the comparisons between the mural from the St. Luke’s hermitage and the

³¹ Tatyana IVANOVA, “Mitarstvata na dushata v ikonografiyata na Strashniya sad”, in *Problemi na izkustvoto*, no. 4/2013, p. 25-35.

³² Cf. A. VASILIEV, *Op. cit.*, p. 75-82; E. POPOVA, *Zografat Hristo...*, p. 50, 61, 181-182; IDEM, “Temi, vavedeni...”, p. 6; E. BAKALOVA, *Op. cit.*, p. 391-393.

³³ See A. VASILIEV. *Op. cit.*, p. 88; E. POPOVA, *Zografat Hristo...*, p. 50, 61, 181-182; Idem, “Temi, vavedeni...”, p. 6; E. BAKALOVA, *Op. cit.*, p. 388.

³⁴ Cf. Yordan IVANOV, *Sv. Ivan Rilski i negoviyat manastir*, Sofia, Tsarska pridvorna pečatnitsa, 1917, p. 110; NEOFIT RILETS, *Opisanie na bolgarskogo svyashthenmago monastirya Rilskago*. Sofia, 1879, p. 76.

³⁵ E. POPOVA, *Zografat Hristo...*, p. 175-193; IDEM, “Temi, vavedeni...”, p. 3-10.

³⁶ Ivanka GERGOVA, *Duhovni obrazi. Ruski ilyustriran sinodik. Izsledvane*, Sofia, Akademichno Izdatelstvo Profesor Marin Drinov, 2013.; D. PAPAISTRATOS, *op. cit.*; Evtim TOMOV, *Vazrozhdenski shtampi i litografii*, Sofia, Nauka i izkustvo, 1962.

³⁷ E. TOMOV, *op. cit.*, il. 130.

Hadji Isai's print the common source of both of them is obvious. It is clear that the three scenes of the hermitage St. Luke are presented in the same way, but divided vertically into two fields. There are several differences like the huge amount of text on the print and the image of St. Andrew of Constantinople (Andrew the Fool-for-Christ) not present in the mural³⁸. With the image of St. Andrew of Constantinople is another print that came from the monastery Koutloumousiou, Mount Athos. It's called: "St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ" (Sveti Andrej Radi Hrista Yurodivi) and it is work of an unknown author, containing texts in Greek and Church Slavonic³⁹, but is undoubtedly the model copied in Hadji Isaj's print. In Hadji Isaj's print, only Church Slavonic text is used, the style is amended. Mount Athos' print is dated to the middle of 19th century, but it certainly is a later version or a copy of an earlier prototype of the 18th century⁴⁰. Probably with the prevalence of that earlier prototype, unknown today, we could explain the emergence and spread of "The Good and Bad Confession" in Balkan Peninsula and Mount Athos in the 18th-19th century⁴¹.

Fig. 2: *St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ*, Print from the monastery Koutloumousiou, Mt. Athos, middle of 19th century

Fig. 3: *Last Judgment*, Print from the Historical Museum, Samokov, Bulgaria, Antimos Peloponnesus, 1841

³⁸ A. KUYUMDZIEV, *op. cit.*, p. 417; D. DAVIDOV, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

³⁹ D. DAVIDOV, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

⁴⁰ A. KUYUMDZIEV, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

The exact description of the iconography of the two prints is given in the first Hermeneia (1835-1839) of Ditcho Zograph (№ Gr. 412, CSBR Prof. Yvan Duychev). The description is part of the torments of sinners. Ditcho describes the Last Judgment, individual torture scenes, and the Good (according to the text of the Hermeneia – ‘Holy confession’) and the Bad confession.

Dimitar Krastev (Ditcho Zograph)⁴² is known as one of the first *painters-theorists* of the Bulgarian Revival⁴³. Like Manuel Panselinos and Dionysius from Furna, in the course of many years, Dicho Zograph collects various sources (models), which he subsequently unites and creates one of the largest hermeneias⁴⁴. In the case of ‘The Good and Bad Confession’, he describes exactly the above-mentioned print with Andrew of Constantinople (Gr. 412, f. 125 r – f. 128 r). Putting the description in the register with torments of sinners is also not accidental. This is done following the model of the Last Judgment’s prints from Mount Athos⁴⁵. There the register of individual torments of sinners begins with ‘The Righteous Confession’⁴⁶. The only difference between the Hermeneia’s text and St. Andrew of Constantinople’s print is in the Bad confession, in which Dicho’s text contains an icon of Christ, located above the confessor who holds a book with text: *I am the door...* (f. 125 r). This icon, whether it is with Christ or the Virgin Mary’s image, is present in some murals and icons. The diversity in terms of the text is only in the list of St. Andrew, in the Hermeneia he says: *unconfessed being eaten by the devil* and it becomes clear why this description is located at the beginning of the descriptions of torture sinners in hell. There are many mural examples when the Good and Bad confession is joined to the Last Judgment, as mentioned above. In

⁴² See Asen Vasiliev, *Balgarski vazrozhdenski maystori. Zhivopistsi, rezbari, striteli*, Sofia, Nauka i izkustvo, 1965, p. 179-187; Idem. *Erminii. Tehnologiya...*, p. 31-32; Polina Tsokova, “Dicho Zograf”, in *Makedonski pregled*, no. 3/2005, p. 149-166.

⁴³ Ralitsa LOZANOVA, “Erminiyata na Dicho Zograf ot Muzeya za istoriya na Sofiya”, in *Duhovna kultura*, no. 4/2001, p. 30.

⁴⁴ See A. VASILIEV, *Erminii. Tehnologiya...*; Ralitsa LOZANOVA, *Op. cit.*, p. 30; Emanuel MUTAFOV, “Pogled vrz dvete erminii na Dicho Zograf”, in *Nova cepija*, no. 3/2001, Skopje, p. 278.

⁴⁵ D. PAPASTRATOS, *op. cit.*, p. 86-93.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

Mount Athos' prints of the Last Judgment, the Good confession is included as a first picture in the register of torture of sinners⁴⁷. The scene is simplified, without the presence of angels and devils⁴⁸.

The existence of 'The Righteous Confession' as part of the Last Judgment prints confirms the connection between the two issues. For the first time, Elena Popova reveals the prototype of 'The Good and Bad Confession' in the iconography 'Allegory of the Confession', a theme taken up by Western painting in the 16th century, which spreads in the Cretan version on the islands of the Ionian Sea⁴⁹. In 'Allegory of the Confession' the righteous and sinful confession are depicted, and below them torture of sinners. According to Elena Popova, 'Allegory of the Confession' appears for the first time in the icon by George Klondzas (at the end of the 16th century at the Museum of the Old Orthodox Church in Sarajevo) and in 18th-19th century it becomes extremely popular in Greek painting⁵⁰. Examples include: icon (in early 18th century) from the church Panagia ton Xenon, Corfu, icon in the collection of Kelopulos, icon at the catholicon of the monastery St. Trinity in Dzankaroli near Hania in Crete, the icons in the Byzantine Museum, dating from the early 19th century (№ T750 and T754)⁵¹. From the listed examples, we could conclude that the 'Allegory of the Confession' emerged in the islands with strong Venetian influence⁵². On the icon from Panagia ton Xenon, Corfu can be found quite similar characteristics with the Bulgarian Revival iconography. The annotation in the icon is: *Father confessor carries out a confession*; above – *The Keeper of the soul who leads to repentance the penitent*; to the right Devils hold the inscription: *The devil, who involves human into sin and the devil who cries during the repentance and the confession of the sinner*⁵³.

For the earliest graphical base of 'The Righteous and the Sinful Confession' can be considered the Western engraving of the *secret confession* used before the Council of Trent⁵⁴.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 86-93.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ See E. POPOVA, *Zografat Hristo...*, p.181-182; IDEM, "Temi, vavedeni...", p. 6.

⁵⁰ E. POPOVA, *Zografat Hristo...*, p.181; IDEM, "Temi, vavedeni...", p. 6.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² E. BAKALOVA, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 389.

Fig. 2: St. Antonin, Confessione generale, s. a., s. l.

Fig. 3: Gangala (Frate Giacomo), Confessione generale

It spreads on the front page of printed books related to confession since the 15th century in Venice⁵⁵. It is usually part of the saint's life books, books for confession or morally instructive literature. The engraving consists as follow: the penitent is kneeling in front of the priest and is making a confession.

In the 16th century, in some of the prints appear angel and devil talking to the penitent. After the Council of Trent, when the doctrine of Penance and confession is determined in Roman Catholicism, the iconography of confession changed. To the 'Right Confession' is added the 'Sinful Confession' and the consequences of it – tortures of the sinners in the hell. An example of that is the iconography 'Allegory of the Confession'. Throughout the 16th century, the image continues to be part of the front page of the so-called *Questionnaires* for confession, composed by various saints or pious personalities. A huge amount of this type of books is printed in Venice, containing images of Confession⁵⁶.

It is no coincidence that the Orthodox engravings of 'The Good

⁵⁵ See the print in: Victor ESSLING, *Bibliographie des Livres a figures vénitiens de la fin du XVe siècle et du commencement du XVIe*, 1469-1525, Paris, H. Leclerc, 1892, p. XXXI.

⁵⁶ E. g.: MICHELE (FRA) DA MILANO, *Confessione generale*, Venetia, 1493, p. 181; ANTONIN (ST), *Confessionale*, Venetia, Nicolo Brenta & Alexandro Bindoni, 1507; PACIFICO (FRATE), *Summa de confessione*, Venetia, 1518; FORESTI (Jacopo Filippo), *Confessione. Confessio, o vero Inter/rogatorio copmosto per il / Reverendo frate Iaco/bo Philippo Ber/gomense*. Giulielmo de Monteferrato, 1522; Confessione generale del beato Bernardino da Feltre molto utilissima, 1529; etc.

and Bad Confession' appear and spread in Mount Athos. It is known as the Orthodox center which is legitimating Western iconographies into Orthodox art⁵⁷. In Mount Athos, a number of painters from the Greek islands under the Venetians are employed⁵⁸. They interpret the Western themes in purely Orthodox spirit, create amazing murals, in the engraving studios the new subjects are reproduced and spread in the Balkans.

In Bulgarian wall painting, after Christo Dimitrov, the scene of 'The Good and Bad Confession' is found in numerous examples: the narthex of the church *Veil of our Lady (Intercession of Theotokos)* in the Rila Monastery by Thoma Vishanov (1811); the open narthex of Ilientsi by Costa Valyov (1832); the narthex of the church *St. Dimitar* in Yarlovtsi, Pernik, by Costa Valyov (1845); the narthex of the Rila Monastery catholicon, by Dimitar Hristov and Zafir (1847); *St. Nicholas*, in Raduil by Yoan Ikonopisets (1848), the narthex of the church *St. George* in Kalkovo, by Nicola Valyov (1863), the frescoes in the church *St. George* in Giurgiu, Sapareva banya, by Milos Iliev (1883) etc⁵⁹. Brothers Makriev included the scene in the church *St. Mary* in Petrich and the monastery *St. George* in Gega, Petrich etc⁶⁰. They are present in the works of the last generation of painters from Bansko⁶¹.

In painting 'The Good and Bad Confession' different Bulgarian Revival painting schools follow similar models. The print with St. Andrew of Constantinople is often used, but Andrey of Constantinople is deliberately discharged into icons and prints. The engraving is remade, usually, the joy and crying of the angel and the devil are removed from the mural, but mentioned in the accompanying texts.

As a conclusion, the origin of the theme could be recognised in the Catholic doctrine of the Good Confession defined on the council of Trent. According to my opinion, this is the ideological prototype, thanks to which the print of the Confession on the front pages of *Summa de*

⁵⁷ Cf. Elena GENOVA, "Modeli i patishta za modernizirane na tsarkovната zhivopis v balgarskite zemi ot vtorata polovina na XVIII i XIX vek", in *Istoricheskoto badeshte*, no. 2/2001, p. 47, 65; Vasil ZAHARIEV, *Vazrozhdenski hudozhnitsi*, Sofia, BAN, 1956, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Emanuel MUTAFOV, *Evropeizatsiya na hartiya. Sachineniya za zhivopista na gratski ezik prez parvata polovina na XVIII vek*, Sofia, Aba, 2001, p. 65-177.

⁵⁹ A. KUYUMDZIEV, *op. cit.*, p. 421 and cited literature.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

confessione evolves. This originally Western theme has been transformed in Orthodox iconography in Russia and Mount Athos and introduced in the Bulgarian lands by hermeneias, engravings and highly educated Bulgarian iconographers.

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