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***FORGIVE US OUR SINS***  
**Confession**  
**in Late Ming and Early Qing China**

Edited by  
NICOLAS STANDAERT and AD DUDINK

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## INTRODUCTION

Confession in early modern Europe has been the subject of several studies. But what happened to the confessional practice when it moved to other cultures? This is the major research question of the present book as applied to late Ming and early Qing China. The origin of this research can be traced back to the *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume One (635–1800)* (Leiden 2000) compiled by researchers of the K.U. Leuven, in collaboration with an international team of circa twenty scholars. As a reference work, the *Handbook* comprehensively presents many different aspects of Christianity in China, including sciences, arts and crafts. But there was one major absentee: ritual, which is often considered essential for understanding China. The compilers did not include it because they became aware that a serious investigation of the vast amount of Chinese and Western sources and an in-depth research of ritual in the Catholic and Chinese traditions would require a postponement of the publication of the *Handbook* itself. A first step in filling this gap was the organisation of an international workshop on “Chinese and Christian Rituality in Late Imperial China” (Leuven, June 2004). The present volume includes the revised contributions by Eugenio Menegon and Erik Zürcher, to which we added a reworked version of an article by Liam Brockey as well as the edition of the primary source he used for his article. They portray from different angles one of the sacramental rituals, viz. that of confession.

The first article by Eugenio Menegon presents two main facets of the Christian rituals for the confession and absolution of sins within the context of Chinese social and religious experience: the prescriptive-normative aspect, and practice as recorded in historical documents. It shows that in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the ritual could take on differing meanings in the hands of both priests and Christians. While the daily experience of confession was powerfully connected with the Christians’ concern for salvation in the afterlife, its practice changed from a pastoral of perfection to a pastoral of fear. The kind of audiences that increasingly preoccupied the missionaries, as well as their expanding numbers, determined a growing neglect of individualized spiritual direction through confession, and a rise in a penitential rituality concerned with efficaciousness, which found its climax in the phenomenon of indulgences in the eighteenth century.

The second article by Erik Zürcher focuses on a comparison between Christian and Chinese confessional practices. It is mainly an attempt to analyse seventeenth-century Buddhist and Buddho-Daoist penitential rites, especially the communal confessional liturgies called *chanhui*. In doing so, the article defines the main points of similarity to, and difference with, the Catholic confession. It shows that the Catholic sacrament of confession, unlike the Buddhist *chanhui*, was strictly personal, and that it was much closer to the Confucian way of self-improvement by being based on an individual examination of conscience. Zürcher is of the opinion that Christianity, by providing purifying and redeeming rituals, indeed could be a substitute for the Buddhist ceremonies that so far had served to “complement Confucianism.”

The third essay by Liam Brockey examines the use of auricular confession by Jesuit missionaries in China during the seventeenth century through making the link with their European background. By focussing on the way that the members of the Society of Jesus in the China mission dealt with their penitents in the mission field confessionals, it shows that the Jesuits in late Ming and early Qing China shared the intention of their confreres in Europe to bring about change in the morality of their followers through the sacrament of penance. Jesuits were keen to imbue their Chinese Christians with a desire for this sacrament, something at which they claimed to be increasingly successful over the course of the seventeenth century.

This essay is followed by the publication of a confessional manual composed by José Monteiro S.J. (1646–1720). It is edited and supplied with an introduction by Liam Brockey and Ad Dudink. This manual not only reveals one of the central components of a Jesuit plan aimed at accelerating the process of educating missionaries for service in China, but also illustrates many aspects of the concrete confessional practice in China at that time.

These different approaches show how confession as a foreign ritual became embedded in the Chinese Christian communities. It is hoped that these studies can contribute to a better understanding of other rituals as well.

The editors of this book are grateful to FWO-Vlaanderen, Onderzoeksråd K.U.Leuven, and the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for the support that made this research possible.

NICOLAS STANDAERT and AD DUDINK



The First of the Four Last Things: Death  
Philippe Couplet, *Simo zhenlun* 四末真論 (1676),  
BAV: Borg. cin. 345.7, f. 1b.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL  
CONFESSION AND SALVATION  
IN SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
CHINESE CATHOLICISM

EUGENIO MENEGON\*

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## Introduction

In this essay, I explore two main facets of the Christian rituals for the confession and absolution of sins within the context of Chinese social and religious experience: the prescriptive-normative aspect, and practice as recorded in historical documents. The first part focuses on the way missionaries and converts described in writing the complex of moral teachings introducing Christian ideas of salvation and sin, as well as the more properly sacramental notions linked to the preparation for and the performance of the ritual itself. The second part employs a number of Chinese and Western sources, including missionary reports on the daily religious life of Christian communities, to explore the practice of confession as a community-building device, as a response to individual psychological and spiritual needs, and as a disciplinary tool. The co-existence of all these aspects shows that the ritual could take on differing meanings in the hands of both priests and Christians, and be employed to different ends within a common belief in sin and salvation in the afterlife that European and Chinese traditions, each with its own specificities, shared.

## PART 1

## The Sacrament of Penance in Prescriptive Texts

Since the very beginning of the early modern Catholic mission in China, the sacrament of penance was one of the rituals that most Chinese Christians experienced soon after conversion. Through preaching and prescriptive texts, catechumens and converts received full exposure to the idea and practice of ritual confession of sins. However, in literati circles and among non-Christians the Jesuits preferred to first introduce a set of moral teachings that propaedeutically prepared the ground for Christian life and for the sacramental ritual reserved to baptized Christians. The Jesuit propaedeutical presentation fit well within the late Ming interest for confessional literature

and so-called “ledgers of merit and demerit,” but also resonated with existing Chinese preoccupations for sin and salvation.

## Moral Themes as Propaedeutical Steps to the Introduction of the Catholic Theology of Penance

*Death reaches everywhere*

Alas! In the bustle of the world, years go by and quickly reach an end, pressuring on the living. The silver face of the moon changes every month. But the rosy softness of spring flowers withers from morning to evening!

No matter what your beauty, you cannot avoid wrinkles, nor stop hair from becoming white. When old age and decrepitude arrive, they rapidly summon the lethal night upon you, and you close your eyes in death.

Death reaches everywhere, does not fear royal palaces, does not shirk the houses of the poor. Poor and rich, ignorant and cultured, all are conducted along the tenebrous way. Burial under three inches of dirt, that awaits me as well as the royal prince!

What is the use in making so many efforts to avoid the heat of summer? Why take so many pains to avoid the inconveniences of the autumn wind? Soon you will have to separate yourself forever from your wife, your relatives, your friends.

If you have a beautiful house, decorated with precious things, maybe someone else will come and live in it. Is there anything you do not love about it? However, none of the numerous trees in your garden, except for the pine and the catalpa, will survive after the funeral of the master. All the riches you have accumulated with so much effort day after day will be enjoyed by your descendants, and squandered at once.<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1601, the famous Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), then residing in the imperial capital Beijing, composed this rhythmic text on the brevity of life together with another seven ones on related topics to accompany Western-style music in the imperial palace. In Ricci's words, these “eight short compositions in Chinese characters regarding eight moral topics, full of beautiful sentences of our authors,” were written to “exhort to virtue and to a good life.”<sup>2</sup> The songs were well received by literati in the capital, who started copying and spreading them in their circles. The most

<sup>1</sup> This is the eighth song in the collection *Xiqin quyī bā zhāng* 西琴曲意八章 (*Eight Songs for the Western Qin*), see *TXCH*, vol. 1, pp. 289-90; an Italian translation in D'Elia 1955, p. 14. Ricci translated the Chinese title of the collection as “Canzone [sic] del manicordio di Europa voltate in lettera Cinese,” see *FR* II, no. 601, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> *FR* II, no. 601, pp. 134-35.

acute among these literati observed that through this *artificio* the Jesuits had attempted to teach the emperor how to rule wisely and to live virtuously.<sup>3</sup>

These moral themes connected to the passing of time, the brevity of life, death, and the fate of humans in the afterlife had obviously been carefully chosen by Ricci for discussion with his literati audience. Ricci's emphasis on these themes can be most clearly seen in his book *Jiren shipian* 畸人十篇 (*Ten Chapters of an Extraordinary Man*), a collection of moral teachings published in form of dialogues in the capital at the beginning of 1608, after two years of compilation work. This book, which borrowed some of the contents of Ricci's famous earlier treatise *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, first edition Beijing, 1603), represented a rather faithful testimony of conversations with contemporary men of letters between 1595 and 1601, mainly in Beijing. This tract reflected to a certain extent the literati's interest for, and surprise at, some themes of Christian moral life presented by the foreign priest through aphorisms.<sup>4</sup>

In particular, the *Ten Chapters* represented a purposeful effort to highlight themes connected to salvation: the misery of human life as compared with the bliss of the celestial kingdom; the necessary retribution for one's sins in paradise and hell; the fact that responsibility for our actions, including our sins, is with us, and not with fate, as embodied by fortune-tellers; the notion that wealth and its by-product, avarice, are major obstacles to salvation; the need to prize time and prepare for death; and finally, the methods to reach salvation through a virtuous life, i.e., meditation about death, examination of conscience, and penance (in particular, fasting).

Both in *The True Meaning* and in the *Ten Chapters*, Ricci expressed criticism of the Buddhist understanding of afterlife, but also attacked the current emphasis among Confucian literati on the acquisition of merits in this life through the moral accounting in texts known at the time as "ledgers

<sup>3</sup> FR II, no. 601, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> On the overlaps between the two books, see Lin 1978. Ricci indicated that his compilation was not so much inspired by the "paradoxes" of ancient philosophers, but rather by the Christian tradition, that had assimilated also classical wisdom. As Ricci reported to General Acquaviva in a letter dated August 22, 1608, the book was a compilation of the sayings of "Western sages" of all epochs, "those that I could remember with the help of the few books that we have here"; TV, vol. 2, p. 362. In Ricci's own estimation, the *Ten Chapters* were a great editorial success: "Among all the books we have composed so far ... none has been more accepted than the recently printed *Paradoxes* in ten chapters with appendixes. [...] We already know that it has been reprinted in two or three other provinces, and from many places they ask us for copies, and thus we have already handed out a few hundreds of them." See TV, vol. 2, pp. 361-62.

of merit and demerit," and their disinterest for the afterlife. If one does not believe in the immortality of the soul, in retribution *post mortem* for the sins committed, and in a paradise and a hell, then he or she will not be concerned about eternal salvation, and will centre his or her attention on life in this world.<sup>5</sup> Ricci clearly saw the themes connected to the Christian idea of *memento mori* as important in establishing a platform for the propagation of Christianity among literati: it was necessary to convince them of the fallacy of their understanding of life and death in order to introduce a Christian vision of these ideas, and instill in them a desire for salvation in the afterlife. Thus, the strategy of Ricci was to advance explanations based on natural theology, and to confute Buddhist, Daoist and Neo-Confucian ideas contrary to Christianity.

The detailed treatment of examination of conscience, meditation techniques (e.g., *memento mori*; silence), repentance, and penitential practices such as fasting in the *Ten Chapters* can be seen as preliminary steps to the only remaining element missing in Ricci's presentation, the Church sacrament of penance administered by the priest. Ricci could rely on literati familiarity and predilection for introspection and meditation (*zuogong* 坐功) and the Buddhist-Daoist tradition of *zhai* 齋 (fasting and purification) to introduce the ethical elements of penance, but stopped short of presenting its ritual dimension, entailing priestly intermediation, and a ritual community. In view of his target audience, i.e., the cultured literati in the Confucian tradition who had yet to accept membership in the Christian Church, he chose to underline the importance of repentance for sins as a form of *personal* moral self-cultivation, independent of priestly intermediation.

Nevertheless, as adumbrated in his discussions of paradise and hell in *The True Meaning*, Ricci implicitly introduced a hierarchy of audiences and of pastoral approaches to spiritual progress:

It is only the inferior man (*xiaoren* 小人) who requires our instruction (*jiao* 教) – the superior man will assuredly already know the truth. Instruction, therefore, must be accommodated to the ways of thinking com-

<sup>5</sup> See the extensive discussion on afterlife in *The True Meaning*, chapter 6 (Ricci 1985, pp. 284-345). Yet, not all literati were agnostic. Yang Tingyun had been a Buddhist devotee before converting to Christianity, and Xu Guangqi, in Ricci's account, "seeing that the sect of the Literati speaks little of the afterlife and of the salvation of souls, had taken many teachers from the sect of the Idols (= Buddhists) and other sects, which all promise the Paradise after death, but he had been dissatisfied with all of them"; see FR II, no. 680, p. 252. Zürcher, however, points to the superficiality of Xu's knowledge of Buddhism and his practical, almost anti-theological bend, noting (2001, p. 155), that the depiction of Xu as a religious seeker, also found in Xu's Chinese biography of 1678, smacks of *cliché*.

mon to the inferior man ... . Humble people (*xiaomin* 小民) must begin from the standpoint of gain; only then can they be led to accept a higher standard of morality.<sup>6</sup>

All should believe in paradise and hell, as symbols of our fate in the after-life, but for different reasons. The lowest motive was to do good in order to go to Heaven and to avoid Hell: "The masses (*min* 民) have long been fond of gain (*li* 利), and if one does not guide them with the promise of gain, or frighten them by warning them of the losses they can incur, one will not be able to lead them."<sup>7</sup> An intermediate motive to do good was to repay the Lord of Heaven for his grace. The highest motivation, finally, was to do good simply to follow the will of God. This three-fold path to moral perfection was known in Christian spirituality as the "Three States or Ways," an idea first developed in full by the Franciscan theologian Bonaventure in his *De triplici via* (1259–1260?), and which influenced Jesuit spirituality through the work of the Spanish mystic Garcia de Cisneros (d. 1510); Christians were thus divided in beginners, progressants, and perfected.<sup>8</sup>

Ricci's emphasis in the *Ten Chapters* and in *The True Meaning* on self-cultivation depended on the fact that, at least initially, the Jesuits were indeed after the most intellectually refined public of Chinese high literati, whose Neo-Confucian formation privileged the idea of a disinterested good moral life: thus the appeal to elements of the highest way, that of the perfected.<sup>9</sup> However, in practice, most people had to engage in a daily struggle

<sup>6</sup> Ricci 1985, pp. 311–313 (modified translation).

<sup>7</sup> Ricci 1985, pp. 312–313.

<sup>8</sup> See *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 16, cols. 1200–1215, entry "Voies" by Aimé Solignac.

<sup>9</sup> In the same tradition of the Ricci texts I examined we find at least another contemporary work. In the early 1610s, one of Ricci's companions in Beijing, Diego de Pantoja circulated and eventually published a famous and extensive treatise on the seven capital sins and the seven virtues to overcome them, entitled *Qike* 七克 (*The Seven Victories [over the Seven Capital Sins]*). The treatise received wide attention among scholars at the time, and had numerous reprints. In spite of its direct engagement with the topic of sin, however, the text once again avoided any reference to sacramental confession. Pantoja was clearly following the example of Ricci. *Qike* rather tried to offer to a public of sympathetic literati a Christian "method" of moral betterment superior to that of the "ledgers of merit and demerit" so popular in this period. To do so it often criticized existing practices. For example, in the same vein of Ricci, Pantoja did not miss occasions to attack the Buddhist ideas of karmic retribution. Talking about the sin of gluttony, he criticized the vegetarian diet of Buddhists precisely because it is attached to the idea of retribution (*j.* 5, f. 19a–b). Pantoja also disparaged the automatic feature of retribution of good and evil, and proposed instead the more stringent Catholic system of rewarding good and punishing evil. Yet,

with sin, and needed "instruction" as well as incentives to do good, squarely falling within the beginners and progressants.

All along, the Jesuits (Ricci included) aimed at developing Christian communities focused on catechetical formation and ritual life. An early example of deep Jesuit engagement with religious-ritual activities was the work of Niccolò Longobardo (1565–1655), successor of Ricci as superior of the mission, and one of the pioneers of catechization among rural publics in Guangdong and elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> The commitment of early Jesuits to their more properly religious mission can also be gauged from the government reaction against the catechetical and ritual activities of Alfonso Vagnone (1568–1640) among commoners during the Nanjing anti-Christian campaign of 1616–1617.<sup>11</sup> Ricci and his contemporaries, however, were too few to be able to engage with the same vigour both the learned and often agnostic literati, and those who had converted (including a handful of higher degree holders, but mainly made up of lower degree-holders and male and female commoners). In the first twenty years of the mission (1582–1602), only 500 people were baptized, and by 1616 there were probably around 6,000 converts in China – a tiny number.<sup>12</sup> Yet, this should not blind us to the developments in the religious-ritual realm already happening in the first few decades of the mission. These activities show continuity with the future growth of ritual life in larger and well-established local Christian communities, especially from the 1630s on, and help us to properly place the pre-catechetical ideas on sin and penance I discussed so far within the framework of the growing Christian rituality in late Ming times.<sup>13</sup>

### The Ritual Forms of Cleansing from Sins: From Baptism to Confession

The final objective for the missionary was to convert the Chinese to Christianity, and baptism opened to the neophytes a gate onto the ritual world of their new religion. Awareness of sin, and rituals to eliminate or control sin, were at the core of the religious offering of Christianity: after imparting baptism, priests could finally inject the kind of self-cultivation techniques

the focus remained on moral self-cultivation. On this text, see Waltner 1994; Zhang 1997; for a reliable discussion of the composition date and the existing editions, see Dudink 2001, p. 212, note 65.

<sup>10</sup> See *FR* II, no. 641, pp. 193–194; Oliveira e Costa 1999, *passim*; Jennes 1976, pp. 10–11.

<sup>11</sup> See Dudink, "Opponents," in *HCC*, p. 511.

<sup>12</sup> Jennes 1976, p. 30; *HCC*, p. 382.

<sup>13</sup> For a chronological perspective on the growth of Jesuit Christian communities in the seventeenth century, see *HCC*, pp. 546–557; and Brockey 2002.

neutrally presented in the *Ten Chapters* with properly Christian and ritual contents. Baptism itself represented not only the first ritual act of conversion to a new life, but also an expression of repentance for all sins committed until then, and a way to cancel those sins. It was, in effect, a ritual of general absolution. This is confirmed by the depictions of the sacrament found in early catechisms. The first published catechism, Michele Ruggieri's (1543–1607) *Tianzhu shilu* 天主實錄 (*The True Record on the Lord of Heaven*, 1584), for example, devoted its last short chapter to baptism under the title “Jieshi jingshui chu qianzui” 解釋淨水除前罪 (Explaining how the pure water washes away previous sins). The description was all polarized on baptism as a way to cancel sins, keep at bay evil demons and ascend to paradise after death, as opposed to a scenario for the unbaptized dominated by Satan and leading to damnation in hell.<sup>14</sup> Ruggieri's catechism was soon abandoned following a negative appraisal by Ricci. In the *Shengjing yuelu* 聖經約錄 (*A Concise Record of the Holy Scriptures*), the first *doctrina* compiled some years later by Ricci and his companions, baptism appears again as a way to cleanse oneself of previous sins, although, compared with Ruggieri, less emphasis was put on the “benefits” of salvation, and more on community belonging (after baptism, “one becomes a member of the Holy Teachings and is called a *qi-li-si-dang* 契利斯當,” i.e., a Christian).<sup>15</sup>

Converts apparently also placed great emphasis on baptism as a way to wash away past sins, rather than merely seeing it as a liminal ritual to join the Christian community. This is reflected by the example of Li Yingshi 李應試 (Paul, 1559–1620?). Like customary among cultured men in the community of Beijing in Ricci's time, Li wrote a “written protestation of faith or a speech which was read in front of the altar [on the day of baptism] and then left to the Fathers.”<sup>16</sup> In Ricci's translation of the Chinese original, dated September 21, 1602 (Wanli 30.8.6), Li says:

... considering that since I was born, up to my present age of forty-three, because I had never heard about this great law [of Christianity], in all my actions I was never able to avoid committing sins and falling into errors, therefore, I pray the Celestial Father to grant me His merciful grace, and to cancel and forgive all the robberies, falsities and cheating, dishonest and immodest actions, avaricious attitudes, all the words and thoughts to harm others, and all kinds of sins, serious or light, which I committed on

<sup>14</sup> *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, pp. 78–79.

<sup>15</sup> *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, pp. 111–112. On the difference between *catechismus* as apologetic texts and *doctrina christiana* as introduction to the main tenets of the faith for catechumens, see *HCC*, pp. 609–615.

<sup>16</sup> See *FR II*, no. 695, p. 263.

purpose or unintentionally. In this way, from now on, after having received the water of Holy Baptism, I shall diminish my sins and renew myself, adoring You [Lord] and following Your Holy Law, believing in Your doctrine and dutifully respecting the Ten Commandments, without relaxing a moment in being cautious and obedient [to those precepts]. I shall abandon all the bad habits and abuses of this world, reforming my bad behaviours and all that is not in conformity with Your holy teachings, and I will not ever again desire them.<sup>17</sup>

This declaration, written on his own initiative, not only reflects the instruction Li Yingshi had received from missionaries prior to taking the step of baptism, but also testifies to the man's interiorization of the sense of sin, and the attending need to be purified from it (“scancellare e perdonare,” to cancel and forgive [sins]). Probably following catechetical instruction, Li grouped sins according to the classic medieval theological categories in actions, words and thoughts, and further divided them in grave (i.e., mortal) and light (i.e., venial) ones.<sup>18</sup> Sins were to be “diminished” through a virtuous life regulated by the Church's Commandments, and the grace of God, but the assumption was that a state of sinfulness was unavoidable, and required other means to purify oneself. Giulio Aleni's (1582–1649) discussions with Fujianese literati in the famous collection *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄 (*Daily Record of Oral Instruction*, post-1640) on the sinfulness of the human condition, and the importance of baptism and confession confirm that these themes were often raised with educated converts.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, although we know that sacramental confession was part of Christian life since the very beginning of the mission, Li Yingshi's declaration offers an indication that converts were initiated to the sacrament only gradually,

<sup>17</sup> *FR II*, no. 695, pp. 263–64.

<sup>18</sup> Sins of omissions were also mentioned by missionaries in their writings. In the *Ten Chapters*, for example, Ricci, as he had done in *The True Meaning*, described his daily routine in the Ignatian tradition: in the morning, one thanks God and asks him to grant the gift to avoid sin, and in the evening one examines for traces of sin in one's thoughts, words, and actions. Later in the text, however, he expands this medieval triad with the fourth category of “omissions.” See *TXCH*, vol. 1, pp. 207–214; see also *FR II*, p. 303, note 1.

<sup>19</sup> Among ca. two dozens passages on the complex of repentance, sin, baptism and confession, see for example *Kouduo richao*, j. 2, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, p. 148 on the need to repent at the moment of death; *Kouduo richao*, j. 2, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 157–158, on the degrees of gravity in sins and their confession; *Kouduo richao*, j. 5, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 331–332, on the cancellation of sins at baptism; *Kouduo richao*, j. 7, *CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, p. 485 on confession and repentance; *Kouduo richao*, j. 7, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 500–501, on the importance of celebrating the feasts and to get confessed.



while the accent was initially put on Confucian-style self-control along a path of moral betterment, as shown by Ricci's writings. The case of Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633), the most prominent late-Ming Christian, seems to confirm the graduality of ritual initiation. When in 1603 Xu returned to Jiangnan after failing the metropolitan exams, he lived for a couple of weeks with the Jesuits in Nanjing, attending mass daily, being catechized, and finally receiving baptism. Ricci reports that after his baptism

one day he asked what remedy would one have if he sinned after becoming Christian. They answered that it was confession. Thereafter they explained to him the sacrament of penance. Then, having learnt the way to do confession, he received this sacrament, and again he received it another time, when he last went to the [Jesuit residence] before departing for Beijing to take the doctoral [i.e., *jinsshi*] examinations.<sup>20</sup>

Like Xu Guangqi in Nanjing, Li Yingshi in Beijing learnt in due time about the sacrament of penance, and asked that he, his wife, his sons and all the people of his household be confessed.<sup>21</sup>

The Jesuits took this gradual approach for a number of reasons. First, missionaries, as noted by d'Elia, showed much prudence, and did not admit neophytes to confession and communion in the period immediately following baptism, fearing a possible relapse.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, catechetical instruction up to the 1620s, especially in rural contexts and among commoners (such as during the expeditions of Diego de Pantoja [1571–1618] and Gaspard Ferreira [1571–1649] in the countryside around Beijing in 1604), was quickly accomplished in matter of a few days, done orally or through very simple catechisms, and “remained restricted to the absolutely necessary truths.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, sacramental confession, which at any rate needed the presence of a rarely-seen priest, was possibly mentioned, but initially remained a remote ritual. Finally, the newly converted initially offered a certain resistance to this ritual. The Jesuit mission's Annual Letter of 1602, for example, refers to the difficulties of sacramental confession: “one of the matters that the new Christians find most difficult is to have to manifest one's sins” to the confessor.<sup>24</sup> Exemplary actions were thus needed to convince all of the legitimacy of confession. In 1603 (?), Christians in Nanjing felt encouraged to

<sup>20</sup> *FR II*, no. 683, p. 255.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of Ricci to Ludovico Maselli S.J., February (?) 1605, in *TV*, vol. 2, p. 256. Ricci adds that he “felt particularly surprised that even [Li's] wife knew by heart the *Confiteor* in Latin, which is a language very difficult to pronounce for these people.”

<sup>22</sup> *FR II*, no. 678, p. 249, note 3.

<sup>23</sup> Jennes 1976, pp. 17 and 43.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in *FR II*, no. 683, p. 255, note 3.

go to confession only after a noted literatus, probably Xu Guangqi himself, was seen publicly kneeling in front of the priest to confess.<sup>25</sup> Yet, in rural contexts and among lower classes, resistance may have been less fierce. Longobardo, active in the countryside of Shaozhou in Guangdong in the years 1597–1611,

introduced the Sacrament of confession more and more day by day, finding less difficulties than it had been initially thought. He thus was called by sick people to listen to their confessions. He administered this sacrament in front of all, with great wonderment of the pagans, who said that it was something beyond natural forces to be able to uncover one's secret sins to another person.<sup>26</sup>

Naturally, pastoral approaches to different publics were bound to be different. While the ritual sequence was strictly codified and fundamentally unchangeable, preparation to the ritual could be accomplished through a diverse and variable range of meditational and devotional steps. In the next section, an examination of the texts on the sacrament of penance indeed shows that missionaries produced them with different publics in mind.

#### The Presentation of Sacramental Confession in Chinese Texts<sup>27</sup>

Possibly, the first clear, and yet very brief, description of sacramental confession in Chinese is contained in the catechism *Shengjing yuelu*, compiled by Ricci and others. Under the fourth sacrament (*poenitentia*, *bai-ni-deng-ji-ya* 白尼登濟亞) we read:<sup>28</sup>

*Poenitentia* in translation means to repent with sorrow (*huitong* 悔痛). According to the rules of the Teachings of the Great Lord, men and women have often to do self-examination (*xingcha* 省察). All those who have trespassed against the Commandments shall repent with sincere heart, and set their will to become good. Then they should kneel on the side of the seat of the Spiritual Father (*shenfu* 神父), the *sa-ze-er-duo-de* 撒責耳鐸德 (i.e., *sacerdote*), and reveal in all truth the faults and sins they have committed, asking for absolution (*jie* 解), and listening to the instructions [of the priest]. After the *sacerdote* has recited the [prescribed] prayers, then one is absolved (*shejie* 赦解) on behalf of the Great Lord.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *FR II*, no. 683, p. 255, note 3.

<sup>26</sup> *FR II*, no. 731, p. 326.

<sup>27</sup> Manuscript confessional texts in romanisation written by foreign missionaries for their own use will be mentioned later.

<sup>28</sup> *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, p. 113.

This synthetic presentation of the sacrament of penance contained the key four elements usually associated with the ritual: examination, repentance, confession, and satisfaction. Crucially, it also introduced the figure of the priest, who was addressed as *shenfu* specifically during confession (normally, he would be called *xiansheng* 先生 or *laoye* 老爺).<sup>29</sup> Even in this short précis of the sacrament, the priest was clearly presented as the only one who held the key to absolution. Yet, a fuller explanation of the sacrament presumably was at this stage still done orally.

The need was soon felt to offer more exhaustive written introductions to confession, an imperative stemming from recurrent questioning on the sacrament by prospective literate converts, as well as a function of the growth of the Christian communities in China. The rather long *Dizui zhenggui* 滌罪正規 (*Correct Rules to Wash Away Sins*, 4 *juan*; Fujian, 1627) by Giulio Aleni can be considered the foundational text on ritual confession and penance in the China mission. The text was compiled by Aleni, and, as customary, it must have been elaborated in the company of a Chinese literatus, possibly Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1562–1627), who in fact wrote a preface to it. A number of existing Western texts as well as Aleni's own experience in the field may have been the sources for the book.<sup>30</sup> *Dizui zhenggui lue* 滌罪正規略 (*Abridged Correct Rules to Wash Away Sins*, n.d., late Ming; 1

<sup>29</sup> See Margiotti 1958, pp. 542–543, note 74, listing the various respectful addresses towards Catholic priests in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century China, including a discussion by Philippe Couplet of the address during confession.

<sup>30</sup> Turrini 1991, pp. 106–109, notes the emergence of a series of printed “confessionals for penitents” in Italy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which are no longer simple lists of sins in the late medieval tradition, but rather “explanatory and devotional texts” on the sacrament, thought for lay readers. It is among these texts (such as *De sacramento poenitentiae* of the Jesuit Luca Pinelli; Pinelli 1613) that the Italian Aleni may have found inspiration for his *Dizui zhenggui*. In the existing collections of ancient Western books in China, we do find this kind of texts. As noted in Brockey 2002, p. 401, Jesuit missionaries to China usually brought with them at least a treatise of casuistry or a confessional *summa*. Other Orders did the same. The catalogue of the Beitang library (Verhaeren 1949) contains a series of entries of manuals for confessors and penitents (a total of 34); most date to the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and are in French, Italian, Latin, Portuguese and Spanish. Among them are the works of the famous Jesuit spiritual writer Paolo Segneri (1680s), including two editions of Segneri's *Il confessore istruito* (nos. 3454–3455) and two of *Il penitente istruito* (3472–3473), belonging to the Jesuit residence of Zhenjiang 鎮江 (Chin Kiam; see Dehergne 1959, p. 305) in Jiangnan, and to the College of Beijing. I have consulted a photocopy of the 1672 first edition of Segneri's *Il confessore istruito* held in BAV Stampati Barberini V.XI.67, courtesy of Prof. Elisabetta Corsi; and a French translation of Segneri's *Il penitente istruito*, see Segneri 1696 (Theology Library, K.U. Leuven).

*juan*) is, according to its title, an abridged version of *Dizui zhenggui*. It may well be an assemblage from translations of Western tracts, as indicated in the title page (*yizhu* 譯著).<sup>31</sup>

A comparison of the two texts indicates that they have a similar structure (see table of comparison in Appendix 1), but although *Dizui zhenggui lue* contains passages also found in *Dizui zhenggui*, the two texts are rather different in style. While *Dizui zhenggui*, due to its length, complexity, and – one must acknowledge – even its verbosity, was suited to a limited circle of devout and highly literate converts, *Dizui zhenggui lue* had a much wider appeal, and it became the most popular Chinese-language introduction to the sacrament of penance. In the words of a Franciscan in the early eighteenth century, *Dizui zhenggui lue* was “shorter and clearer [than the full version of *Dizui zhenggui*], and accommodated to the understanding of all kinds of people, ..., and we commonly use this second [abridged] edition for the Christians in China, not the first [unabridged] one.”<sup>32</sup> Its target audience made up of “all kinds of people” may have more readily appreciated its conciseness, systematic exposition, and even the final appendix with a few didactic miracle stories on confession that was missing in the more learned *Dizui zhenggui*. Finally, the inclusion of *Dizui zhenggui lue* in pocket-sized prayer books no doubt guaranteed the ubiquity of Aleni's abridged text.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> I used the reprint of the *Dizui zhenggui* in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 337–580 (cf. Chan 2002, pp. 129–130); and the version of *Dizui zhenggui lue* (in *WXS*, vol. 3, pp. 1195–1272). See *HCC*, p. 625 for the dating of *Dizui zhenggui*. Brunner 1964 (p. 96) advances the hypothesis that since *Dizui zhenggui lue* contained in the prayer book *Tongku jingji* 痛苦經蹟 was edited in Hangzhou by local Christians (see *Dizui zhenggui lue*, f. 1a [*WXS*, vol. 3, p. 1197]), and that a number of texts in the 1620s were published under the protection of Li Zhizao, *Dizui zhenggui lue* was possibly first printed before the death of Li in 1630. Another hypothesis is that it may have been printed under the aegis of Yang Tingyun, who authored the preface of *Dizui zhenggui*.

<sup>32</sup> Comment of Carlo Horatii da Castorano on *Dizui zhenggui lue* (in his “Parva elucidatio,” as quoted in D'Arelli 1997, p. 440). Castorano's confrere, Ottaviano (D'Arelli 1997, p. 450) observed that while *Dizui zhenggui* needed minor corrections, *Dizui zhenggui lue* was free from errors (see entry in D'Arelli 1997, pp. 451–452).

<sup>33</sup> *Dizui zhenggui* only contained in appendix a passage on the penances of early Christian hermits in the desert based on the “Scala [*Climax*] Paradisi” by St. John Climacus (7th c.), which can be found in part in *Dizui zhenggui lue*; compare *Dizui zhenggui*, *juan* 4, ff. 25b–28a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 574–579) and *Dizui zhenggui lue*, ff. 30a–31ba (*WXS*, vol. 3, pp. 1255–1258). Compact prayer books which included the *Dizui zhenggui lue* had been initially compiled by the Jesuits, but similar versions by other congregations appeared later on. Being used daily by many Christians at home and in church, they had, together with oral instruction by catechists and priests, the greatest impact in introducing sacramental penance among “all kinds

This booklet was only the most successful among a series of texts distributed by missionaries and catechists to penitents. The Flemish Jesuit François de Rougemont (1624–1676), for example, established during the 1670s in Jiangnan the practice to give out a few days before confessions “pamphlets on the correct way to make penance and confess” (*libelli de modo recte poenitendi et confitendi*).<sup>34</sup> These were quite likely booklets inspired by Aleni’s prototype. Surviving copies of texts on confession dating from the eighteenth century show that these introductions became at times simply an outline of the penitential steps written in vernacular Chinese onto one single sheet of paper. These fliers were ideal for easy distribution by catechists preparing the local community for the visit of a confessor. They retained the essential elements of the penitential practice, and their simple language, often literally copied from Aleni’s *Dizui zhenggui lue*, was suited to a rural audience. One such text, entitled *Gaojie siyao* 告解四要 (*The Four Essentials of Confession*), possibly compiled by Franciscans and local Christians, was printed and distributed on one long sheet of paper in Nan’an 南安 Prefecture (Jiangxi) in the early eighteenth century. It retained the same structure of Aleni’s work, centring on the classic elements of penance (examination, contrition, confession, and satisfaction), and is translated in Appendix 3.<sup>35</sup> Some later texts only slightly deviated from Aleni’s text reflecting changes in the didactic-catechetical presentation of confession in Europe. For example, a succinct *Tianzhu shengjiao gaojie daoli* 天主聖教告解道理 (*Doctrinal explanation of Catholic Confession*, BnF, *Chinois* 7276-I) by the French Vicar Apostolic of Fujian Charles Maigrot M.E.P. reveals the influ-

of people.” *Dizui zhenggui lue* is not only found in the *Tongku jingji* but also in prayer books by other congregations, such as the Franciscan *Shengjiao zongdu* 聖教總牘 (*General Collection [of Prayers] of the Holy Teachings*, 1701), in *juan 5*, for a total of 38 folios, BAV, *Raccolta Generale Oriente*, VI.100; and in the prayer book *Zongdu cuoyao* 總牘撮要 (*Abridged Collection [of Prayers]*) compiled by the Dominican Francisco Varo. Varo mentions on f. 1b of his preface a text entitled *Dizui guilue* 滌罪規略 [*sic*], included in the second *juan* of the prayer book, which is quite likely Aleni’s booklet. The Corsiniana Library copy (call number 44.A.I.) of Varo’s prayer book I consulted is unfortunately incomplete, and does not include *juan 2*; a complete copy in St. Petersburg was not available to me. The *Dizui zhenggui lue*’s diffusion is also testified by the presence of a worn-out, incomplete copy of the book, listed among manuscript and printed materials that Qing officials confiscated from a Christian family in the province of Huguang in 1769; see a palace memorial by the Huguang Governor-general Ding Chang 定長 and Hubei Governor Cheng Tao 程燾 (January 6, 1769 – Qianlong 33/11/29) in *Qing zhong qianqi Xiyang Tianzhu-jiao zai Hua huodong dang’an shilliao* 2003, vol. 1, p. 287.

<sup>34</sup> See Golvers 1999, p. 410.

<sup>35</sup> BnF, *Chinois* 7276-VIII.

ence of the method of confession in *five* steps (rather than the usual four) popular in France in the late seventeenth century: 1. Examination; 2. Contrition; 3. Firm resolution to reform (*zhenxin dinggai* 真心定改); 3. Confession; 4. Satisfaction.<sup>36</sup>

While most texts were introductions to confession for Christians, at least one treatise was authored with apologetic aims. Ferdinand Verbiest’s (1623–1688) *Gaojie yuanyi* 告解原義 (*The Original Meaning of Confession*, 1677) rather than explaining the ritual steps of sacramental penance to Christians defended the sacrament within the context of the anti-Christian campaign of the Calendar Case in the late 1660s. The text countered criticisms from non-Christian courtiers in Beijing against the Catholic sacraments, and confession in particular, and this explains the abundance of metaphors and comparisons with the Chinese context (such as the difference between a court of justice in a *yamen* and the confessional), and some attacks on Buddhist and Daoist practices of absolution of sins.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, we have some special Chinese-language texts containing sections on the sacrament of confession, which had a very limited circulation and were not officially allowed by Rome. These were liturgical manuals for the Chinese clergy, produced in the 1670s by Lodovico Buglio (1606–1682) as part of the Jesuit attempt to translate the Catholic liturgy in Chinese. One of these texts, for example, the *Siduo dianyao* 司鐸典要 (*A Compendium for the Priest*) was a rendition of the *De Instructione Sacerdotum* (1st ed. 1599) by Francisco de Toledo (1534–1596), a Jesuit professor at the Collegio Romano. Although these Chinese liturgical texts were printed in very few copies and only occasionally copied in manuscript form, their discussions on confession – including some pastoral tips on how to deal with penitents – give us an idea of the kind of education that, beginning in the late seventeenth century, Chinese priests received in matters pertaining to confession, based on existing European manuals.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> These five steps, which became ubiquitous in catechetical literature in France starting in the 1650s, followed the method contained in the “Istruzioni pe’ sacramenti: Della penitenza” from the *Dottrina cristiana breve* of Roberto Bellarmino S.J. See *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 12, col. 984.

<sup>37</sup> I have consulted the copy of *Gaojie yuanyi* from ARSI *Jap.-Sin.* II, 48; Nicolas Standaert’s unpublished bibliographic notes on this text; a draft translation at the Ferdinand Verbiest Project, Leuven (U. Libbrecht ed.); and Witek 1999.

<sup>38</sup> On Toledo’s *De Instructione Sacerdotum*, see Keenan 2004. I used the copy of *Siduo dianyao* preserved in the Royal Library in Brussels, codex 21055, through the kind assistance of Ad Dudink. On this and other texts translated by Buglio, see *HCC*, p. 627, and Standaert 2004. It is not unlikely that the first few Chinese Jesuits trained in Macao in the 1680s had access to the *Siduo dianyao* as a sort of textbook. Wu Yushan 吳漁山 (1632–1718), for example, joined Couplet in 1680 with the intention to

In sum, Chinese-language texts on confession, produced for the Chinese, fell within four main categories, addressing both Christian and non-Christian publics: simple catechetical texts on confession for the vast majority of Christians; elaborate texts (such as Aleni's *Dizui zhenggui*) for Christian literati; apologetic texts for non-Christians, in defence of the sacrament; and (rare) manuals for Chinese priests.

### The Elements of Sacramental Confession: Introduction

To have a clearer idea of the way the sacrament was generally administered in the China mission, I am first going to examine how a person would prepare for it, and finally receive the sacrament according to prescriptions. Manuals for confessors and instructions for the penitents offer us a picture of the ritual actions of the two parties involved, but also show us what kind of ideas about penance and confession were presented to Chinese converts. Other types of texts (missionary reports, literati's writings etc.) illustrate not only how later generations of missionaries presented the ritual to their public and performed it, but also how Chinese Christian authors described and appraised the ritual in their writings.

The authoritative ritual manual *Rituale Romanum* of 1614 confirmed the mechanics of confession established in earlier times, and gave an official and uniform version of the ritual for Post-Tridentine Catholicism. The China mission, however, was established at a time of changes in liturgical manuals, and until at least the 1630s it did not receive the official text of the *Rituale*. Thus, the Jesuits of the Chinese Vice-Province were asked to use at the time the so-called "ritual of Japan," i.e., the printed *Manuale ad sacramenta ministranda* compiled by the Bishop of Japan Luís Cerqueira S.J. (1552–1614), and first published in Nagasaki in 1605. The *Manuale* was receptive to the new regulations issued by the Council of Trent, but found its immediate sources in Iberian ritual books.<sup>39</sup> Lodovico Buglio made an al-

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accompany him to Rome as a linguistic expert in the work of liturgical revision of Buglio's texts. However, due to the opposition of the Vice-Provincial Giandomenico Gabiani (1623–1694), who doubted Wu's capability to learn enough Latin at the age of fifty, Wu remained in Macao, where he studied as a novice; see Bontinck 1962, pp. 247–248. Although Wu and his two other Chinese companions Liu Yunde 劉蘊德 (1628–1707) and Wan Qiyuan 萬其淵 (1631–1700) may have learnt enough Portuguese to communicate with their confreres, it is only natural to surmise that they also took advantage of the existing Chinese Christian books for their formation. Yet, by the late 1720, missionaries noted that very few copies of these texts had ever been printed, precisely to avoid that Chinese could read them without understanding their true meaning. See Bontinck 1962, p. 353.

<sup>39</sup> See Palmeiro 1629, par. 3, "Administração dos sacramentos," f. 26r, no. 2: "[In baptism] we will use the ritual of Japan, and we will do the ceremonies that it orders

most complete translation of it in Chinese during the 1670s, under the title *Shengshi lidian* 聖事禮典 (*Ritual for the Holy Sacraments*), and complemented it with the translation of Toledo's *De Instructione Sacerdotum*, the *Siduo dianyao*. Both texts contain sections on the sacrament of penance. The most influential instructions for Chinese penitents undoubtedly were the texts by Aleni, *Dizui zhenggui* and especially its abridged version, *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, and I privilege their descriptions since they offered the performative framework for the faithful.

In the general introduction to *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, Aleni presented an organic picture of the sacrament of penance. The ritual confession (*gaojie zhi li* 告解之禮) of sins was not simply constituted by the encounter with the priest, but had to be accompanied by its three other elements:

The components [of the sacrament] are four: examination (*xingcha* 省察), contrition (*tonghui* 痛悔), confession (*gaojie* 告解), and satisfaction (*bushu* 補贖). Examination must be detailed, contrition must be complete, confession must be full, satisfaction must be swift, and not even one element can be missing. ... When we are in sin, and we confess according to the rules, while relying on the protection of the Lord, we will avoid eternal perdition and ascend to the Celestial Kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

This description was obviously in keeping with Western models of the sacrament, and reflected a long-standing consensus among theologians and pastors. However, especially in the wake of the Council of Trent, the elements of examination and contrition (that is, a proper preparation for the ritual itself) received special emphasis.

### Examination of Conscience

In the introduction to *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, Aleni employs the metaphor of the penitent as a sick person, and of the confessor as a doctor:

The damage to the spirit inflicted by sins is similar to a disease harming the body. When people are sick in the body, they have fear as soon as they know it, and invite a good doctor because they want to be cured quickly. [However], when there is a disease of the spirit, one does not know how to make an examination, or when one makes an examination, one does not know how to fear, or when one fears, one does not reflect.

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since we do not have a copy of the Roman Ritual." I would like to thank Liam Brockey for sharing a photocopy of this document. On the compilation history and the contents of the *Manuale*, see Tsuchiya, 1963; López Gay 1970, pp. 272–295.

<sup>40</sup> See *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, f. 2b (*WXS*, vol. 3, p. 1200).

This [is like] when, in search of salvation from a mortal disease, one is afraid of a good doctor, and willingly inflicts death upon himself, alas!<sup>41</sup>

This metaphor insists on the importance of knowing one's sins, of being able to recognize and enumerate them. In other words, it emphasizes preparation for the ritual, and the crucial role of self-examination in recognizing the "disease" of sin. As a consequence, one can secure the proper "medical" advice from the confessor-doctor.

Aleni's description of the confessional sequence ("Jiezui ligui" 解罪禮規) in his *Dizui zhenggui* offers further details, explaining that several days before the ritual the penitent should silently do an examination of conscience, as to elicit deep repentance about the sins committed. During preparation he should engage in introspection, and avoid reciting repetitive prayers like the rosary, which were possibly deemed a distraction from true examination. Self-examination had obviously deep resonance for Chinese Christian literati of the Ming and Qing periods, educated to do "quiet sitting" and familiar with the *gongguo ge* 功過格 (ledgers of merit and demerit).<sup>42</sup> But ideally it was required of all, not simply of elite and literate Christians. To make it easier for people to remember their sins, since "they are either too occupied or have not confessed in a long time, and thus their sins are confused," Aleni suggested to examine oneself according to the order of the Ten Commandments and of the Seven Capital Sins, which was the standard European practice.<sup>43</sup> Thus the burden of this preparation was on the penitent, although lists of sins were distributed for assistance by catechists and priests, as I mentioned earlier.

<sup>41</sup> See *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, f. 1b (*WXSB*, vol. 3, p. 1198). The medical metaphor is also taken up by Li Sixuan, compiler of Aleni's Chinese biography, where Aleni himself is compared to a doctor: "If [during confession] there was someone who did not express himself clearly, or whose narrative was confused, he even more was intent upon listening carefully, like a good doctor who, when feeling the pulse carefully [tries to] know the root of the disease, and then [is able] to treat the patient in accordance with his ailment"; see Zürcher's translation in Zürcher 1997, p. 113; cf. *CCT ARSI*, vol. 12, p. 255. For an instance of this metaphor in the preaching of Aleni, see also *Kouduo richao*, j. 3, f. 12a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, p. 201).

<sup>42</sup> On this topic see Brokaw 1991; Wu Pei-yi 1979 and 1990; Waltner 1994; Zürcher (article in this volume).

<sup>43</sup> Quotation from *Dizui zhenggui*, f. 9b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 374). On the European antecedents of this practice, see Rusconi 2002, p. 97. On the examination of conscience in general, see *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vols. 28-29, col. 1789-1838, entry "Examen de conscience" by Antoine Delcharde.

These lists can be found both in *Dizui zhenggui* and *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, and were modelled on European prototypes, but also adapted to the Chinese context, not unlike the adaptations introduced among the native populations of Latin America and the Philippines.<sup>44</sup> For example the "List of examination questions" (*xingcha tiaomu* 省察條目) compiled in the order of the Commandments so as to facilitate self-examination in *Dizui zhenggui lüe* (ff. 5a-15b), which is a simplified version of the more extensive and analytical list in *Dizui zhenggui* (j. 1, ff. 10b-25a), enumerates a series of Chinese "superstitions" forbidden to Christians under the first commandment, such as siting, fortune-telling, numerology, worship of gods and so on. That section also qualifies as sinful any behaviour slighting the Church's rituals, and in particular a carefree attitude towards the sacramental confession of sins. Under the fifth commandment against killing, we find the sins of suicide by hanging, slashing, poisoning or drowning, and of ingestion of abortion-inducing drugs to get rid of unwanted daughters. These were crimes also according to imperial laws, and quite common in Chinese daily life.<sup>45</sup>

Often, however, especially in rural missions, people went to confession unprepared, due to their own ignorance of the basics of the faith, or simply out of laziness or lack of time. Thus missionaries had to prepare themselves to interrogate in detail during confession the penitents through so-called *confessionaria*, i.e., list of questions for the penitent, also organized along the Ten Commandments. Most of these *confessionaria* were copied and memorized by new priests as a language exercise and to help them in their first pastoral duties.<sup>46</sup> Given their practical nature, they were written in vernacular and Romanised Chinese, rather than in Chinese characters. One of the most famous of these lists of questions was the "Brevis methodus confessionis instituendae" compiled by the Franciscan Vicar Apostolic of Shaanxi

<sup>44</sup> These lists resembled what was called a "general confession" by some authors, with series of sins concluded by self-accusatory expressions like "it is my fault"; see Tur-rini 1991, pp. 215-216. On the practice of confession among native peoples in Latin America there is already a vast literature; see for example Azoulai 1993 and Martiarena 1999; on the Philippines, see Rafael 1988.

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix 4 for a translation of the list of sins under the First Commandment. Compare the observations on the adaptation to Chinese life in Catholic confessional lists in Zürcher (article in this volume) and in Brockey 2005 and his article in this volume.

<sup>46</sup> See the comments by Tommaso Maria Gentili O.P. (1828-1888) regarding the first few months in his mission in Fujian in 1853: "I exercised myself to read the questions and answers of the *Confessionario* that I had copied in Macao. I spent almost three months in this exercise"; see Gentili 1888, vol. 3, p. 127. Similar experiences among Jesuits and other orders in earlier times were the norm; see Brockey 2002, p. 370, and Brockey (article in this volume); Varo 2000.

Basilio Brollo da Gemona (1648–1704) in the late seventeenth century, and first published in 1703 as an appendix to Francisco Varo's (1627–1687) *Arte de la lengua Mandarin* (printed in 1703).<sup>47</sup> Like the lists of sins found in Aleni's *Dizui zhenggui* and *Dizui zhenggui lue*, the questions of the *confessionaria* reflected the reality of daily life in China, and the kind of sinful behaviour that priests wished to discipline in the Chinese context, including superstition or abortion.

Moreover, the priests had to be prepared to mentally weigh the sins of their penitents, enumerated according to the Commandments, and to suggest some order if the penitent was confused.<sup>48</sup> Foreign priests had at their disposal a plethora of manuals written for this purpose, and were trained in casuistry as part of their formation.<sup>49</sup> Both *Siduo dianyao* and *Shengshi lidian* suggested that if the priest felt that the penitent had not engaged in proper examination, he should dismiss him with kind words and invite him to return for confession later. It was also important to be delicate and patient towards neophytes and women. With women, in particular, it was imperative to avoid any superfluous word "not pertaining to the matter of confession."<sup>50</sup>

The confessional encounter, finally, was not only a cleansing ritual for the penitents, or a disciplining tool of moral behaviour, but also a rare opportunity for the priest to check the level of his flock's doctrinal back-

<sup>47</sup> Varo 2000, pp. 214–253. Several versions of manuscript *confessionaria* from the China mission can be found scattered in European archives, e.g., in the Staatsbibliothek Berlin (*Libri Sinici* no. 27, a version of Brollo's text), and in the Corsiniana Library in Rome (44.A.I no. 4). On a Jesuit Portuguese-language *confessionarium* from China kept in the Academia das Ciências (Lisbon), see Brockey (article in this volume). *Confessionaria* were popular in all missionary contexts; see e.g., Beckmann 1951.

<sup>48</sup> The *Siduo dianyao* laments (j. 1, f. 51b) that "nowadays many are unclear about the fact that [confession is about one's own sins]. Thus it often happens that the husband talks about his wife, the wife about her husband, the master about his servant, and the servant about his master."

<sup>49</sup> On the teaching of cases of conscience in Jesuit colleges, see Angelozzi 1981. Jesuit students in the Macao College, including those from Japan and a few from Macao, were also trained in casuistry until the first decade of the seventeenth century; for a reference to the practice, see Oliveira e Costa 1999, p. 97, reporting that around 1603 in Macao "besides daily repetitions and disputes, [the students] also conduct monthly public disputes in theology, [moral] cases and philosophy." Even later on in the century, when the College entered in a crisis and theology was no longer taught, lessons of casuistry continued to be taught, see *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>50</sup> *Siduo dianyao*, j. 1, ff. 53a–b; *Shengshi lidian*, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 11, pp. 435–434.

ground, and to impart instruction.<sup>51</sup> A dialogue on confession in Chinese, possibly a linguistic exercise dating to the 1680s and originating in all likelihood in Fujian, shows that prior to imparting the sacrament priests may have engaged in an interrogation on the basic contents of the faith, to check whether the contents of the *doctrinae christianae* distributed to catechumens, including the main prayers and articles of faith, had been absorbed. In certain regions of China in the eighteenth century, such as in the M.E.P. mission in Sichuan, priests would deny confession to penitents who were found ignorant of the most basic elements of the faith.<sup>52</sup>

### Attitude of Contrition

Prescriptive texts unanimously considered that a second step was necessary in the preparation for the ritual of confession: sorrowful repentance, in Chinese *tonghui* 痛悔. Technically, the theological term for this concept is contrition, from the Latin *contritio*, "a breaking of something hardened." The Council of Trent (Sess. XIV, ch. IV, "De Contritione") defined it as "a sorrow of soul and a hatred of sin committed, with a firm purpose of not sinning in the future."<sup>53</sup> Medieval theologians had debated the nature of penitential sorrow for centuries, splitting in two camps: those who believed that only perfect contrition could assure salvation, and those who deemed that the overflowing grace of God manifested in sacramental confession would make up for human fragility. For these latter theologians, attrition, that is

<sup>51</sup> Francisco de Toledo S.J. in his famous *De Instructione sacerdotum* (I used the 1657 Paris edition; see Toletum 1657) in Book 3 on Confession, ch. 17, entitled "De examine faciendo a Confessario," pp. 519–521, observes that in the examination before confession, the confessor has to ask whether the penitent knows the basics, such as the *Credo*, the commandments, the sacraments etc. At p. 522, the additional commentary adds that "... it is sufficient for rustics to [say in confession that they] believe whatever the Church believes. ... Thus they do not sin if they are ignorant of the mystery of the Trinity, as long as they only explicitly believe that God rewards good people, and punishes evil people." See also the pastoral instructions by André Ly encouraging instruction of ignorant Chinese Christians in confession; Launay 1924, pp. 214–215.

<sup>52</sup> The manuscript dialogue is entitled *Shengjiao yaojin de daoli* 聖教要緊的典禮 (*sic* for 道理), and is preserved in BnF, *Chinois* 7046-I, ff. 1b–24a. An attached document, entitled *Xinlai Shenfu bai ke wenda* 新來神父拜客問答 (ff. 33b–37b) is a mock dialogue between an old catechist from Lianjiang 連江 county in Fujian and a newly arrived priest. This suggests that this cache of materials may have been produced in Fujian. On refusal to grant confession based on ignorance of the faith, see Taurinus 1891, pp. 48–49; on the catechetical elements integrated in confession in the early modern European context, see Turrini 1991, p. 95

<sup>53</sup> See *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 1913–1922, vol. 4, entry "Contrition" by E. Hanna.

“imperfect contrition” (from the Latin *attero*, “to wear away by rubbing”; past participle *attritus*), dictated by fear of God and of damnation, was sufficient for salvation if conjoined with the ritual of penance. After Luther attacked the idea of contrition by way of his theory of grace (God’s grace was sufficient for salvation), however, the Catholic Church felt the need to enshrine the centrality of contrition. However, no theological consensus was reached on the topic, and the late seventeenth century saw a flaring-up of controversies between attritionists and contritionists, especially in France.

Aleni unequivocally explained to Fujianese literati the central importance of contrition, as well as the need to engage in continuous examination of conscience to achieve it, as this passage on the difference between “being moved to repentance” and contrition from the *Kouduo richao* illustrates:

The Master said: “The sincerity of confession all depends on the fullness of sorrowful repentance (*tonghui* 痛悔 = contrition). Now many faithful think that to be moved to repentance (*donghui* 動悔) is sufficient. That is completely missing the point.” [A local Christian literatus] replied: “Repentance is one, what is the difference between ‘being moved to repentance’ (*donghui*) and ‘feeling sorrow in repentance’ (*tonghui*)?” The Master continued: “What is called ‘to be moved to repentance’ is nothing but a small movement of the heart that we obtain when we have done the examination of our sins at the time of confession. But if one is sorrowful, then he must feel enormously sad (*aiyuan poqie* 哀怨迫切), and correct (*chengyi* 懲艾) [himself], without being at ease. If one prays for the Lord’s help with this [disposition], then [perfect repentance] is almost surely achieved.”<sup>54</sup>

The recitation of the Act of Contrition (*Huizui jing* 悔罪經) memorized by Christians was designed to stir the soul to full repentance before sacramental confession.<sup>55</sup> The Tridentine emphasis on contrition explains why in Chinese Christian texts the concept of *tonghui* figures so prominently, and almost no space is dedicated to attrition. Yet, an echo of the polemics surrounding the concept can be heard even in Aleni’s Chinese texts, where he felt the need to mention the Western theological concepts in Chinese sounds: “True repentance is called in the West *gong-di-li-zang* 共弟利藏 [*contritio* - *con-*

<sup>54</sup> *Kouduo richao*, j. 4, f. 23b (CCT ARSI, vol. 7, p. 300).

<sup>55</sup> See two versions on the Act of Contrition, Chinese texts in Appendix 2; cf. Brunner 1964, p. 276 (p. 182, French translation), for Version A, addressed to Jesus, used until the late Ming. Version B, which became the most used, is addressed to God the Father. A third version, also addressed to Jesus, was introduced in the eighteenth century, and produced some controversy, as recorded in archival documents in ARSI; see Brunner 1964, pp. 116-117.

*trição*.”<sup>56</sup> In a question-and-answer section on repentance, he then proceeded to say that *ya-di-li-zang* 亞弟利藏 [*attritio* - *atrição*; in Chinese *weiquan tonghui* 未全痛悔] was sufficient, together with the absolution received by the priest, to be saved. However, attrition was inferior, since it came from ourselves, and originated in shame for sin and fear of God’s judgement after death, not out of hatred for sin and love for God, as perfect repentance should. By itself, and without the ritual, it could not save us.<sup>57</sup>

Aleni also published a short pamphlet on repentance entitled *Huizui yaozhi* 悔罪要指 (*Essential guide to repentance from sin*; BAV, Racc. Gen. Or. III, 224.6), which was an elaboration of an earlier draft by his confrere Lazzaro Cattaneo (1560–1640), where the question of contrition was further explored. From a reading of this text, it appears that in fact the most important issue at stake in discussions of contrition and attrition was the possibility of death without sacramental confession. In China, where priests were very few, this was a matter of great import for one’s fate in the afterlife. To die without a confessor at the bedside was a dangerous prospect, since only perfect contrition assured God’s forgiveness even without a priest’s inter-mediation. The case of a Christian literatus in Ningbo (Zhejiang) shows that Christians had seized upon the concept of contrition as the last resort in case of emergency. Unable to meet the visiting Jesuit Martino Martini (1614–1661) due to the Ming–Qing hostilities in the region in 1645, the man decided to take matters in his hands. He knelt in front of a holy image, and after reciting many Acts of Contrition, ordered one of his servants to beat him one hundred times with a bamboo stick: “With this act of penance and humility – comments the source – he wished to oblige God to forgive his sins.”<sup>58</sup> Also the late Ming Hangzhou Christian literatus Fan Zhong 范中 commented on the possibility of receiving forgiveness through perfect contrition:

If the priest is absent and one accuses oneself (*zisong* 自訟) and feels ashamed, and with sincere heart shows contrition (*tonghui*) [in the face of] the Lord, and has the will to confess as soon as the occasion comes, then one’s sins will be forgiven, and one will receive what is allotted in Heaven.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Dizui zhenggui lue*, f. 21a (WXSJ, vol. 3, p. 1237).

<sup>57</sup> *Dizui zhenggui lue*, f. 24a (WXSJ, vol. 3, p. 1243); see also Appendix 3, *Gaojie si-yao* 告解四要 (*The Four Essentials of Confession*), 2.

<sup>58</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 310.

<sup>59</sup> Fan, *Tianzhu shengjiao xiaoyin* 天主聖教小引, late Ming, f. 8b.

Although the vocabulary used by Fan smacked of Confucian rhetoric (*zìsòng* 自訟, self-accusation, for example was a typical Neo-Confucian attitude found in meditation and ledgers of merit and demerit), in fact his statement was also theologically correct: in principle, perfect contrition was sufficient to obtain God's forgiveness. And yet, Fan himself recognized that one had to confess anyway ("confess as soon as the occasion comes"). In the final analysis, as Aleni implicitly recognized in the *Huizui yaozhi*, since nobody could be sure of having reached the state of perfect contrition, sacramental confession remained crucial. Therefore, missionaries impressed upon Chinese Christians the centrality of the ritual of penance, in spite of the possibility left open by the theological theories on "priest-less" perfect contrition.<sup>60</sup>

That some Chinese Christians had thoroughly internalized the importance of contrition in conjunction with sacramental confession can be seen in the writings of Zhang Geng 張廣 (ca. 1570-1646/1647), a literatus from Quanzhou (Fujian), and a follower of Aleni. In an essay on baptism and confession for fellow Christians, Zhang observed:

Sorrow for one's sins (*tongzui* 痛罪) is useful. We say that when someone goes against the laws of the country, we punish him with a fine in money. But to feel sorry in the heart is no use, since the money of the fine cannot be restored again to him. If we lose an inheritance, there is no

<sup>60</sup> This is confirmed by an exemplary story entitled "Evil not confessed is never forgiven" appended to Aleni's *Dizui zhenggui lue*, ff. 37b-38b (*WXSJ*, vol. 3, pp. 1270-1272): "Those who repent for their sins and look for absolution must first follow and act according to the rules of the [Holy] Teachings. It is like taking a medicine: it must be taken according to the prescription, and only then it will yield the desired effects. Thus to say that you can roughly tell one or two [sins], and then kowtow and beat your chest, and this is enough to be absolved, this is simply to fall into the net of the devil. How miserable! Once upon a time in the Western lands there was an old woman. She would go to church many times to recite prayers, and her heart was so moved that she even cried. Once a gentleman of great virtue all of a sudden saw that behind that lady stood a demon, in the form of a black man, who was happily jumping and laughing. The virtuous gentleman was surprised and asked him immediately: 'This woman is there praying the Lord in earnest, why do you laugh at her?!' The demon replied: 'This woman, committed a mortal sin when she was young, and she has not confessed it all her life. To [simply] feel contrite and ask for forgiveness does not conform with the Lord's prescriptions to obtain absolution. And to pray with sorrowful heart is thus an empty act! In the end, she will simply go down to my hell! That is why I laugh at her stupidity!' From this, one can see that if one does not respect the rules of the Teachings, and does not employ the [sacrament of] confession to get absolved, one goes against the prescriptions of the Lord. Even if one says that by being repentant one can absolve oneself, in fact in the end this is like keeping oneself in the dark and deceiving oneself. Sins cannot be forgiven on such grounds. How careless!"

use in feeling sorry in the heart. The inheritance cannot reappear. When we receive an insult, to be sorry in the heart is of no use. A humiliation is not as bad as being stabbed. If we become dangerously ill, there is no use in feeling sorry in the heart, since we will not hasten recovery. Only feeling sorry for one's sins is useful. If you feel sorry, then you confess your sins and eliminate them. How good, how marvellous! To be sorrowful and to get absolved is such a joy that people are almost unable to make use of it.<sup>61</sup>

Zhang's emphasis on contrition and confession was not casual: to feel guilty and repentant was relatively easy, but to have the courage to overcome one's shame to confess with the priest represented for many a delicate and arduous step. Zhang himself continued: "If one does not face a priest, he will not be able to face his shame [*can* 慚]; if one does not frequently confess, he will not be able to be ashamed [*kui* 愧] and reform." The discussion by Zhang's contemporary, the Ningbo Christian literatus Zhu Zongyuan 朱宗元 (1616-1660) of the need to overcome shame (*xiu* 羞 or *chi* 恥) to approach the confessor only underscores how deeply the problem loomed.<sup>62</sup> Aleni himself had once to shake his literati followers who were reluctant to confess at the time of a feast, telling them: "You feel guilty (*fujiu* 負疚) and bow, but postpone cleansing [from sins through the sacrament of penance]. How will you ever get the grace of the Lord, if you linger on in seeking it?"<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Zhang Geng, *Tianzhu qinli lingxi gaojie er yao gui zhi li* 天主親立領洗告解二要規之理, late Ming, ff. 4b-5a.

<sup>62</sup> See Sachsenmaier 2001, p. 212 (commentary by Sachsenmaier) and pp. 300, 413-414 (Chinese texts by Zhu). On sin and shame in Chinese culture, see e.g., Eberhard 1967; Santangelo 1991; Standaert 1993b. A semi-hagiographic case reported in the 1647 *Littera Annua* further confirms that shame represented a formidable obstacle to confession. A Christian in Jiading committed a grave sin, and in spite of the calling of his conscience to repentance, he did not dare to confess it. At night, he dreamt of a young woman who had recently died in fame of virtue and sanctity. But when he approached her to ask for protection, she covered her face with her hands, and told him "You are so filthy and disgusting, how do you dare to look at my face?" He woke up in a sweat, but still was not moved to confess. Then, on another night, he again dreamt that two Fathers were exhorting him to confess. This time, he decided to put aside his shame and went to church, where he "confessed everything in its entirety"; see Gouvea 1998, p. 372.

<sup>63</sup> See *Kouduo richao*, j. 7, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 484-5: "June 2, 1637 was the third day of Pentecost (Pentecost Tuesday) [following the feast of] the Holy Spirit. Among the faithful there were some who had not yet made an effort to engage in confession. The Master shook them up saying: 'Once upon a time there was a man who died. When his cadaver was cremated, the body was consumed, but his heart would not be incinerated. All were wondering about the cause, and a famous doctor



Thus, besides examination, different means were suggested to penitents to elicit full contrition and psychologically prepare them to sacramental confession, such as meditations (*nian* 念) about sin, death, and the impermanence of life, and the recitation of the Act of Contrition, commonly found in prayer books in at least two different versions. Aleni suggested that “although this prayer can be recited every day in the morning and the evening, it should be used especially when one is approaching baptism, confession, or a moment of danger for life, to avoid eternal damnation and seek to ascend to Heaven.”<sup>64</sup> In preparation for the ritual, moreover, penitents could recite other special prayers. *Tianzhu shengjiao nianjing zongdu* 天主聖教念經總牘 (*A General Collection of Prayers of the Teachings of the Lord of Heaven*, 1628), the first extensive Chinese-language prayer book, for example, contained deprecatory prayers to acknowledge one’s sins, to be recited just before confession and to be recited afterwards.<sup>65</sup>

### The Rite of Sacramental Confession: The Encounter Priest–Penitent

#### Physical Context

Once the penitent had engaged in examination and achieved contrition – Aleni explains in *Dizui zhenggui* and *Dizui zhenggui lüe* – he should announce in advance to the priest his request for confession. At the appointed

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saw this and told them: ‘It is because it has poison in it, that is why.’ Now, the fire of the Spirit has descended already for three days [on you], and the reason why it cannot inflame your hearts, I suspect, is because they are poisoned. You feel guilty and bow, but postpone cleansing [from sins]. How will you ever get the grace of the Lord, if you linger on in seeking it?’” In another occasion (June 9, 1637), Aleni encouraged his faithful to overcome shame for sin and to confess: “There was a faithful who had been enticed by the devil, and desired to go against the commandments and take the wrong road. But he repented and wished to be pardoned. However, he could not overcome his sense of shame and dejection. The Master [Aleni] consoled him saying “People are no saints, how could everything [they do] be perfectly good? It is normal to have committed some fault. However, once the fault has been committed, one should not dread changing course, otherwise this is like opposing [sin] in nothing at all. Thus the ancient sages said: ‘To have sins is human, but to avoid confessing them is diabolical. If one has committed an error and speedily reforms, then this is something worthy of angels.’ Thus, why should you be ashamed?”; see *Kouduo richao*, j. 7, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, p. 485.

<sup>64</sup> *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, f. 26a (WXS<sub>B</sub>, vol. 3, p. 1247). Aleni suggested ten meditations about sin, death, and the impermanence of life, see *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 2, ff. 10a-12a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 437-441). For two different versions of the Act of Contrition, see Appendix 2 of this essay; cf. note 55.

<sup>65</sup> Brunner 1964, pp. 56-57 and 224-225 [Chinese text 314]; 77-80 and 260-261 [335], 262 [335-336].

time, he should go in front of the altar, take off his cap and kneel at the side (*ce* 側) of the priest’s seat. This was also the common practice in Europe until the introduction of confessional boxes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the confessor sat on a chair, a position which emphasized the priestly role of spiritual judge, and penitents knelt on a side, with their head bent to express humility.

Cerqueira’s *Manuale* contains a section on the sacrament of penance (pp. 62-99), and explains in detail the elements of the ritual. According to the *Manuale*, and similarly in its Chinese translation in the *Shengshi lidian*,

[t]he penitent will accept with humility the sacrament of penance, and with humble spirit he will kneel at the feet of the priest, with both knees bent and without weapons, if he was carrying them. [One] will confess with serious countenance and facing towards a side of the confessor, especially in the case of a woman, who shall also wear a veil, while men will confess bare-headed.<sup>66</sup>

While the mechanics of confession reflected the medieval liturgical rules, special provisions regarded men and women, contemplating, for example, the deposition of arms, which were invariably worn by all Japanese men.

A visible bodily attitude of repentance was considered crucial in showing true contrition. In Europe, an important external sign of such humility was the fact that men approached the priest with their heads uncovered. Moreover, people who approached confession had to wear modestly, according to the sumptuary laws approved by Church and state, and instructions for confessors specified that the clothing of the penitent offered a preliminary assessment of his or her disposition.<sup>67</sup> Unlike in Europe, however, in China it was normally considered impolite to speak to a superior, including the gods, without wearing a hat.<sup>68</sup> For this reason, missionaries allowed men to wear caps during mass, against the European custom, and wore themselves a special bonnet, the *jijin* 祭巾, designed for the celebration of the mass.<sup>69</sup> How-

<sup>66</sup> Cerqueira 1605, p. 86. On this passage see López Gay 1970, p. 284. Cf. *Shengshi lidian*, *CCT ARSI*, vol. 11, pp. 441-442

<sup>67</sup> De Boer 2001, p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> For a discussion of the matter, see the manuscript “Apud Sinas in signum reverentiae tegendum esse caput” (“In China it is a sign of respect to cover one’s head”), Gama 1668. See also Pimentel, “Brief Account” (1670s), in Wills 1984, p. 203: “... this people [i.e., the Chinese] consider the uncovering of the head a very boorish and discourteous act.”

<sup>69</sup> See Margiotti 1958, pp. 356-359, “Cappello in chiesa,” and especially p. 356, note 113, quoting a letter of Greslon to Gama, June 22, 1668, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Jes. 270, int. 12, pp. 359-64: “It is decided in the old orders of the Visitors that the Christians of this mission, when engaging in the sacraments not

ever, at the time of confession, all men still had to take off their hats, while women had to wear a veil, like in Europe. The taking off of the hat was generally interpreted in China as a discourteous act, but on the other hand it could also imply utmost humility in front of an official with judicial authority.<sup>70</sup> The act of kneeling was obviously also somewhat degrading, although it was possibly more accepted in China than in Europe, given the usual custom to kneel and even to kowtow to elders and government officials. Still, some literati must have felt a sense of discomfort in humiliating themselves in front of a foreign priest. Zhang Geng, in his essay on confession, had to confute the objections of those who felt that baring one's head and kneeling in confession was shameful:

Some say that to kneel and confess in front of a priest without wearing one's cap and bare-headed is like being subjected to an injustice. Ridiculous! When common people take the initiative to go and present a denunciation [to officials], they go bare-headed and kowtowing in a lamenting way, and it is obligatory to go in this way. Capped gentry have standing, and yet when they go to an official to receive retribution for their crimes, they do the same. Thus, asking for forgiveness without wearing a hat, while fearfully reporting to an official, does not mean that one is being subjected to an injustice. How could it be shameful to go bare-headed in

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only of confession, but also of communion, remain bare-headed, as it was deemed that this was a sign of higher respect, reverence and humility ... until now the Christians, not only in Beijing, who can serve as model in this matter, but also in all the other communities, excluding the community of Fr. Antonio de Gouvea in Fujian and that of Fr. Trigault in Jiangzhou, ... have always taken communion and served mass bare-headed." In spite of Greslon's position in favour of taking the hat off to receive the Eucharist and to serve mass, however, most missionaries were of the opposite opinion, and the usage of wearing the hat in church was tolerated in most missions. It appears, at any rate, that the hat was always taken off during confession, as also confirmed in Gama 1668, f. 151v, where he specifies that the hat is kept during rituals, except for confession ("sacra excepta ex homologesi"). The Catholic *jijin* was probably inspired by the Daoist priest's hat, the *leijin* 雷巾. It was first approved by Pope Paul V in his brief *Romanæ Sedis Antistes* of 1615 and abolished in 1924; see Bontinck 1962, pp. 387-88.

<sup>70</sup> The issue must have been of great importance especially for Chinese degree-holders, whose gowns and caps were a significant marker of status and of legal privilege; on judicial procedure towards the gentry in the Qing, see Ch'ü 1962, p. 174. Philippe Couplet observed in the 1680s that it was customary "among the Chinese to cover the head as a sign of reverence during the sacred ceremonies, except when going to confession, when they [instead] go bare-headed, like they do when, guilty of a crime, they appear in front of the magistrates." See Gatta 1998, p. 86, italics mine.

front of the substitute judge, the priest, who has been appointed by order of the lofty Lord?<sup>71</sup>

Zhang's comparison of the encounter priest-penitent with the interaction between Chinese subjects and gentry with their officials was in keeping with his stern view of the "tribunal" of penance, and of the priest as a judge, and contrasted with the more benign view of the confessor as a doctor presented by Aleni.<sup>72</sup> Zhang again underscored the negative role of shame in the encounter, something that had been often remarked as an obstacle to confession in Europe too. For that reason, manuals prescribed that eye contact between confessor and penitent had to be avoided (thus the penitent knelt on a side of the chair). The avoidance of eye contact was prescribed both to diminish the sense of shame of the penitent in front of the priest, and to prevent any sexual innuendo, in the case of female penitents. For those same reasons, priests were instructed to keep a very calm demeanour, without showing with bodily gestures or their voice any reaction to the revelations of the penitent.

According to common rules, the rite had to be performed in an open spot of the church. We do know, however, that confessors in Europe also used to hear confession through grilles in the walls of churches and monasteries. Confession in private quarters (such as in the cells of monastery, or private houses) was discouraged, although prohibitions against it suggests that it did happen. Medieval legislation insisted that confession in private homes could be allowed only in case of serious illness, and that the door of the bedrooms of women must be open at all times. The public celebration of the ritual was both linked to the early-medieval conception of the sacrament, conceived as a form of public penance, and to concerns for sexual scandals.<sup>73</sup>

After the Council of Trent, growing concerns on the matter of the improper location of confession favoured the invention of one of the most common furnishings found in European Catholic churches since the Counter-Reformation period, the confessional.<sup>74</sup> What later often took the form of a

<sup>71</sup> Zhang Geng, *Tianzhu qinli lingxi gaojie er yao gui zhi li*, f. 3a.

<sup>72</sup> In fact, both metaphors were present in the discourse on confession in Europe; see e.g., the introduction in Segneri's *Il confessore istruito*. Thus, the "judicial" aspect apparent in the physical encounter between priest and penitent as described by Zhang was in fact already strongly present in the European tradition as well.

<sup>73</sup> This summary derives from De Boer 2001, pp. 91-95.

<sup>74</sup> Starting in the 1560s, diocesan authorities in Italy expressed growing concern for the practice by members of religious orders to confess in monasteries. Thus, in 1575, Pope Gregory XIII issued an order to the mendicant orders and the Jesuits to "stamp out the abuse of hearing confessions from within the monastery provided with grilles through which [the confessors] hear the penitents" (De Boer 2001, p. 96). Such con-

closed "box," in the early modern period remained mainly an open contraption designed to "minimize the risk of transgression and scandal" in the confession of female penitents, and, more in general "to separate confessor and penitent, while providing a public setting for the sacrament."<sup>75</sup> This church furnishing, however, took a long time to become ubiquitous everywhere in the Catholic world. In East Asia, the confessional was sporadically used. According to Cerqueira's *Manuale*, as we have seen, the separation between the female penitent and the confessor was simply a veil over the head. Nevertheless, already around the time of publication of the *Manuale*, some instructions for the Japan mission by the Visitor Pasio prescribed that

in order to keep proper decency, and avoid occasions of rumour and scandal, in all churches, including those in villages, confessionals with grilles be made ... When travelling in villages where there is no church, [priests] should bring along a chair and a tablet with a grille that can be pulled up and lowered down, to be placed between [the priest] and the penitent.<sup>76</sup>

This portable confessional apparently was never used in China, where other means were suggested. When by 1629 the Jesuit Visitor André Palmeiro (1569–1635) issued some "Ordinances" for the Chinese Vice-Province, he offered some specific instructions on the separation between confessor and penitent, as well as on the location of confession:

When confessing, be it either in the church or, in the case of women, in their houses, it is unnecessary to use the surplice, but in some cases the use of it in administering this sacrament is not prohibited; and, whenever possible, between the priest and the penitent there should be a net made of bamboo, or a screen, instead of the grid of a confessional.<sup>77</sup>

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cerns found official sanction in the *Rituale Romanum*, issued by Pope Paul V in 1614, where, under Title 3, Chapter 3, it is stipulated that "the proper place for the sacramental confession is the church or a public or semi-public oratory."

<sup>75</sup> De Boer 2001, p. 85. The concept of the confessional first appeared in the 1570s in Northern Italy, and its form was officially sanctioned by the Archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo, in his diocesan handbook *Instructions for Church Fabrics and Furnishings* (1577). The Borromeo confessional is synthetically described by De Boer (p. 91) as "a wooden structure consisting of a chair (the confessor's seat) and a kneeling bench (for the penitent) mounted against one of its sides. Vertical panels enclosed the seat from behind and on two sides, while leaving it open at the front. The whole structure sat on a large, low base, and was topped by a roof. ... [T]he panel separating the seat and the bench ... had a small window closed off by a metal sheet with tiny holes and covered on the inside with a piece of cloth, ... the grille."

<sup>76</sup> López Gay 1970, p. 125.

<sup>77</sup> Palmeiro 1629, no. 9.

From this rule, we see that a certain liturgical informality was allowed while traveling (the surplice, a large-sleeved tunic of half-length, made of fine linen or cotton, and worn by clergy in the administration of sacraments, could be dispensed with, while the stole must have always been worn), and that a bamboo net or a folding screen were deemed sufficient to separate priest and penitent. Moreover, it appears that women were usually confessed in their own homes. That fixed confessionals did not make their appearance in China is confirmed by the 1664 missionary conference of Canton, which also prescribed only a simple separation, such as a veil or something similar, a measure which was particularly thought for women.<sup>78</sup> The continued use of a simple "confessional chair" is confirmed by the Dominican linguist Varo, who translated "confesionario" as *jiezui zuo* 解罪座 (seat to absolve from sins) or *ting renzui zuo* 聽人罪座 (seat to listen people's sins) in his *Vocabulario de la lengua Mandarin*.<sup>79</sup> Also in eighteenth-century Sichuan confessionals were never used, but rather substituted by a square screen of bamboo, with a cotton veil at the centre to allow the conversation to flow, especially for the confession of women.<sup>80</sup> Qing judicial materials refer to confession (*jie zui* 解罪) as a process happening "inside a dark room, without separation between men and women, where they communicate secret words in private to each other."<sup>81</sup> Yet, confessional boxes may have existed in the larger and permanent churches such as those found in Beijing. Buglio in the *Siduo dianyao* (1670s), for example, refers to confession in a *shen ting* 神廳, that could be, however, either a confessional box, or a small chapel.<sup>82</sup>

Regulations and anecdotal materials indeed suggest that the location and practice of confession for men and for women varied. While men could easily be confessed in churches or other public spaces, women could initially only be confessed in their homes, and later on in special "segregated" chapels. A 1625 testimony by Francesco Sambiasi S.J. (1582–1649) regarding

<sup>78</sup> See Margiotti 1958, p. 359, quoting Navarrete, *Controversias*, p. 217: "In mulierum confessionibus audiendis interponatur velum, aut aliquid aliud, inter sacerdotem et poenitentem."

<sup>79</sup> Varo 2006, p. 155 (*Vocabulario*, p. 54).

<sup>80</sup> Launay 1920, vol. 2, p. 325, so describes it: "une claie en bambou voilée d'un morceau de coton, dont le synod de Se-tchoan [1803] détermine la grandeur: 2 pieds de long sur 2 de large." Cf. the more detailed text of the *Synodus Vicariatus Sutchenensis*, in Taurinus 1891, p. 68.

<sup>81</sup> See excerpt of a memorial by Governor-general of Min-Zhe Gioro Mamboo 滿保 and Governor of Fujian Huang Guocai 黃國才, dated July 2, 1723 (*Yongzheng* 1/6/1), in BAV, *Borgia Cinese* 316 (5).

<sup>82</sup> See *Siduo dianyao*, j. 1, ff. 51a and 52a.

Jiangnan gives us an idea of the Jesuit practice of confession of women in private homes:

As to the way to administer the sacrament [to women], I will only mention what we [Jesuits] used to do in Jiading, where we had no church. In the house of Ignatius Sun [i.e., Sun Yuanhua 孫元化 (1581-1632)], whose family was completely Christian, and where they led a saintly life worthy of a monastery, the main hall was the place reserved for the confession of women. There, between the priest and the women, standing up like a wall, was placed a large and thick mat, which did not allow seeing anything on the other side. And in the room stood also the butler of Ignatius Sun, a grave old man, and a Christian of great virtue.

Since there was such guard, who was used everywhere with great strictness, trust towards the Fathers was so firm that several men, even among the idolaters, whose Christian wives were sick in bed, would ask the Fathers to come and confess the [women], something the latter often requested. And the [idolaters] were surprised that the Fathers, even in the case of moribund [women], would hear their words only at the presence of their husbands, and from afar. [The women, moreover], would conclude their confessions speedily, never taking more time than necessary, having being well instructed through existing excellent books to expose [in confession] only their bare sins.<sup>83</sup>

This was not only the experience in Jesuit missions, but also later on in the communities evangelized by other religious orders. The Dominicans, in fact developed an especially active ministry towards women. In the early years of the Dominican mission of Fuan in north-eastern Fujian (1630s-1640s), we learn that "the husbands themselves brought the priests to their own homes in order for them to teach, baptize and confess their wives."<sup>84</sup> Later on, the ritual was performed in churches, as Victorio Riccio O.P. (1621-1685) observed in the late 1660s: "confession ... is done publicly, and often with a division between the confessor and the female penitent, or in front of their husbands."<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> This is the summary of a letter from the China missionary Sambiasi, as found in Bartoli 1825, Book 4, pp. 53-54, "Gran circospezione usata da' Padri nel confessar le donne Cinesi."

<sup>84</sup> Aduarte 1962-1963, vol. 2, p. 487.

<sup>85</sup> Riccio 1667, f. 68r.

### The Ritual Sequence

Let us now concentrate on the ritual sequence following the kneeling of the penitent. First, the penitent had to make the sign of the cross. In China, Christians were taught to make the double sign of the cross according to the Iberian custom: tracing three small crosses on the forehead, mouth and chest with the right thumb, then a large sign of the cross on the forehead and chest with the right hand, and finally joining the hands in front of the chest, while pronouncing the formula in a mix of Chinese and sinicized Latin terms for the three persons of the Trinity. This way of making the sign of the cross opened also all prayers, and was commonly used in China until the 1950s.<sup>86</sup> At this point, the priest was supposed, in case he did not know the penitent, to ask before starting the ritual about his/her social standing (job and marital condition), so as to assess whether he/she could receive confession (if a man was living with a woman without being married, or had concubines, for example, he was not allowed to confess).<sup>87</sup>

Then the penitent had to recite the first part of the *Confiteor* (*Jiezui [shi] jing* 解罪[時]經) in Chinese (the *Manuale* indeed says *vulgari sermone*), up to the point where the individual declares that sins are his own responsibility for three times ("mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa"; in Chinese: *wo zui, wo zui, gao wo dazui* 我罪, 我罪, 告我大罪), while beating his chest (*foxin* 拊心) each time. This prayer, unlike the preparatory prayers privately recited before and after confession, was truly part of the rite, since it had to be recited in front of the priest. It was included in a large number of publications, and learnt by heart by all Christians.<sup>88</sup>

Confession proper followed this recitation of the first part of *Confiteor*. The beginning was invariably a declaration of how much time had elapsed

<sup>86</sup> Cerqueira 1605, p. 86: "... the penitent shall do the sign of the cross with his right thumb on his forehead, lips and chest, saying 'Per signum \* crucis, de inimicis \* nostris libera nos Deus \* noster [The symbol \* indicates the action of the sign of the cross; 'Through the sign of the cross, free us from our enemies, ye, our God']. Then he will do a second sign of the cross with the right hand from the forehead to the chest, and from the left shoulder to the right one, saying: 'In nomine Patris, et Filij \* et Spiritus Sancti. Amen'." The Chinese language formula of the sign of the cross and instructions on performance are found in the 1628 *Prayerbook*, see Brunner 1964, p. 277 (cf. p. 30) and in some doctrinae, see e.g., *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, p. 218 and p. 310. A Chinese-language narrative description of the triple sign of the cross, with an explanation of its meaning, is found in García, *Tianzhu shengjiao rumen wenda* 天主聖教入門問答 1642, ff. 28a-b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 2, pp. 443-444).

<sup>87</sup> *Siduo dianyao*, j. 1, p. 52b.

<sup>88</sup> Chinese text in Appendix 2; see Brunner 1964, pp. 275-276 (French translation pp. 181-182).

either since baptism or one's last confession, whether satisfaction for previous sins had been accomplished, and whether unconfessed sins had surfaced.<sup>89</sup> Then the new confession could begin. Ideally, a good penitent should have already done a thorough examination of conscience, and mentally gone through the list of the Ten Commandments and the Seven Capital Sins in order to construct a map of committed sins according to species, number and circumstances. The confessor was always advised in prescriptive texts to listen without reacting to the confession, mentally noting the types and circumstances of sins revealed, as suggested in *Siduo dianyao*. However, in case it was needed and – at least by the books – only if the penitent asked for it, the priest could further interrogate (*jie* 詰) the penitent with appropriate questions, which could be similarly organized according to the Commandments. An example of such questions is contained in the romanized *confessionarium* by Brollo, as well as in the Fujian “dialogue on confession” discussed earlier.<sup>90</sup> If the priest felt that the penitent was distorting the presentation of his sinful actions, questioning could be further refined according to the “seven circumstances of sin”: who committed the sin, what sin, in what place, if someone assisted in committing the sin, the reason for sinning, the way, and the timing.<sup>91</sup>

After finishing their confession, penitents had to admonish themselves (*ziyan* 自言) about their sinful state and set their mind on moral reform. Aleni presented this final process in two slightly different versions in his *Dizui zhenggui* and *Dizui zhenggui lue*. Interestingly, in *Dizui zhenggui lue* the passage carried an initial sentence missing in *Dizui zhenggui*, as follows:

... after I became Christian I lied, gossiped and entertained evil thoughts [i.e., venial sins], did not confess completely my sins in previous confessions, did not conduct a detailed examination of conscience, and did not elicit full contrition in myself.”

These were possibly common problems of most penitents, who approached confessions without proper preparation. The penitent had then to express a firm resolution to avoid sin in the future, and formally petitioned the priest “to impart absolution on behalf of the Lord.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 3, f. 23a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 521); *Dizui zhenggui lue*, f. 26b (*WXSB*, vol. 3, p. 1248); see also Brollo's list, in Varo 2000, p. 217.

<sup>90</sup> See above, note 52, and Varo 2000, pp. 214-253 (Brollo's text); cf. *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 3, f. 23a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 521); see also below, pp. 199-239.

<sup>91</sup> *Siduo dianyao*, j. 1, f. 52b.

<sup>92</sup> The prayer is in *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 3, f. 23b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 522); and *Dizui zhenggui lue*, ff. 28a-b (*WXSB*, vol. 3, p. 1251-1252).

Then the penitents had to prostrate to the ground (*fudi* 伏地) and complete the recitation of the *Confiteor*. After this recitation, the priest was expected to impart some instructions to the penitent on proper satisfaction, a topic I discuss in next section. Finally the priestly absolution (*jieshi* 解釋) concluded the rite. The formula was whispered in Latin, as the Chinese translation done by Buglio in the 1670s was never employed. There were two possible formulas of absolution (*shizui jing* 釋罪經), a longer one for normal conditions, and a shortened one in cases of emergency, such as confession *in articulo mortis*. The essential part of the formula in both cases was the same: “Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen” (I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen).<sup>93</sup> After receiving absolution Aleni reminded his readers that they should “not forget to wear the cap on the head again and thank [the priest] with a bow; then [they could] retire.”<sup>94</sup> The penitent had to keep a meditative demeanour, thank God through prayer, and avoid talking with others about “base matters” or revealing the penance imposed by the priest (an action deemed arrogant and boastful). Vernacular texts, like the dialogue from Fujian mentioned above, repeated the same general instructions for confession in an even simpler language.<sup>95</sup>

### Satisfaction

Satisfaction comprised three main categories of meritorious actions (*gong* 功): prayer, mortification, and acts of charity. The latter also included restitution to wronged people, through payment of what was due to them, or restoration of their tarnished name. Prescriptive texts considered prayer useful to counter sins of pride; mortification to tame sins of the flesh; and charity to counter sins of avarice.<sup>96</sup> Among literate faithful, prayerful satisfaction was sustained also by the reading of spiritual writings. François de Rougemont deemed that such readings, together with daily examination of conscience, were the best means to maintain in the faith isolated individuals or commu-

<sup>93</sup> For Buglio's Chinese translation of the formulas, see *Siduo dianyao*, j. 1, ff. 56b-57a and *Shengshi lidian* in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 11, pp. 442-443: 我釋爾。于爾諸罪。因 罷 德肋。及費略及斯彼利多三多。名者。亞孟。

<sup>94</sup> *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 3, f. 24a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 523).

<sup>95</sup> See *Shengjiao yaojin de daoli*, p. 3b: “You must take off your hat, and kneel down, make the sign of the cross, recite the first half of the Confiteor, then you have to declare your sins following the order of the Commandments. [etc.]”

<sup>96</sup> *Dizui zhenggui lue*, ff. 29a-30a (*WXSB*, vol. 3, pp. 1253-1255), and *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 4., ff. 1a-a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 525-531).

nities who could only rarely see a priest for confession and mass.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, in the context of rural society, where social relations were so powerfully linked to the concept of “face,” and poverty made neighbours dependant upon each other, the restitution of stolen goods (even of a stray chicken) or the reparation of one’s good name may have been equally important actions.<sup>98</sup> In the rural context of Sichuan, for example, satisfactions were rather practical and fell within the three general categories mentioned above as follows: (1) intensive recitation of prayers, pious readings, examinations of conscience; (2) abstention from drinking wine, from smoking tobacco, and from attending operas; abstinence from forbidden foods more frequently than prescribed by the Church calendar; (3) alms for the poor, giving hospitality to travellers, visits to the sick and the prisoners, teaching of catechism to children and pagans.<sup>99</sup>

#### Special Forms of Satisfaction: Public Penance

Although by the early modern period, confession and satisfaction were mainly an individualized business, occasionally public acts of confession and penance were still enacted. Members of various religious orders in Europe, including the friars and the Jesuits, were famous for launching campaigns of public penance, including processions and mass ritual confession, to pacify communities split by feuds. In such cases, satisfaction often preceded, rather than followed, sacramental confession, as an act demonstrating that egregious sinners had truly repented and made amend in front of the whole community.

These displays of public satisfaction happened also in China. The Jesuits, in fact, had a clear policy on this matter. Provision no. 21 of Visitor Palmeiro’s “Ordinances” for the China mission (1629) states: “When some Christian gives notable scandal, it is good to convince him to give some satisfaction, according to the judgement of the Father Superior, by asking for forgiveness in public to the community when they are meeting in the church, or in other similar ways.”<sup>100</sup> In such cases, a general confession (i.e., an examination covering all the life of the penitent) was often required

<sup>97</sup> Golvers 1999, p. 410.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, a reference to the petty sin of stealing and eating a chicken which strayed from a neighbour’s courtyard. The priest asked the penitent to return the monetary value of the animal. Other similar petty sins were cheating on weight while selling merchandise, or giving back adulterated silver, and the like; see *Shengjiao yaojin de daoli*, BnF, *Chinois* 7046-I, f. 15a; see below, pp. 226-229.

<sup>99</sup> Launay 1920, vol. 2, p. 326.

<sup>100</sup> Palmeiro 1629, f. 25v.

at the outset. Only after a public penance had been taken in front of the community, the penitent could ask for personal auricular confession, and be reintegrated in the community through absolution. In Quanzhou (Fujian), for example, a Christian who had been giving scandal to the community for eight years through his unspecified “perverse example” had been forbidden from entering the local church. However, when he decided to repent and re-join the church, he was obliged to engage in a series of public penitential practices. On a Friday during one of the major liturgical times of the year (*sesta feira mayor*), possibly during Lent or Holy Week, he flagellated himself in front of a gathering of the local Christians, asking forgiveness to all. Then he continued with twelve days of fasting and physical disciplining, reciting the rosary, and offering oil for the lamp of Mary’s altar in the local chapel. Once he reached a sufficient state of repentance and contrition, he confessed with a priest, not without first flagellating himself inside the church, and asking once more forgiveness in public. Such display of devotion led another local Christian man, who “did not believe in the sacrament of penance,” to ask instruction from the local Father, do a general confession, and become aware of his doctrinal error.<sup>101</sup>

A similar case happened in Hangzhou around 1678, as reported in a letter by Prospero Intorcetta (1625–1696). A man, who had committed some nefarious sin and offended the Christians of the city, became repentant. He then went to the church in front of the altar where the priest had just celebrated the mass, took off his shirt and started flagellating himself on the back, asking for forgiveness. The spectacle of his bleeding flesh moved to tears all the people present, who felt pity for him. But he would have continued to beat himself, if some faithful in tears had not run to Intorcetta, who was in a nearby meeting place to hear confessions, and had not called him to the church. The missionary then stop the man’s flagellations, “consoled him with sweet words, and the man asked for a confession (*sacra exomologesis*). After giving him absolution, the Father left him reassured and full of spiritual solace.”<sup>102</sup> This time, the Christian had decided to engage in a display of public penance on his own accord, possibly out of spiritual anguish and psychological pressure from fellow Christians, rather than because of the imposition from the local priest of some form of satisfaction for his sins.

Palmeiro’s provision on public penance, apparently, applied also to women. In the locale of Shanjian (?) in Fujian in 1643, for example, two young Christian married women, after baptism, recanted. But when an itine-

<sup>101</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 249.

<sup>102</sup> The letter is summarized in Dunin-Szpot 1710, f. 289r.

rant missionary came by, they repented and asked for mercy. The Father showed himself very strict: they first had to fast for several days, and engage in corporal penances. Then, accompanied by a crowd of Christians, they went to the church, and, prostrated on the ground, they confessed their faults and asked for forgiveness. After receiving absolution from the priest, they offered two frontals to decorate the church, a tangible and public sign of their repentance.<sup>103</sup>

Public penance remained always a possibility in the China mission, even during the period of suppression. The M.E.P. missionaries in Sichuan, for example, imposed during the eighteenth century rather serious public penances for crimes such as concubinage, usury, apostasy, theft, use of magic, witchcraft, and money forgery. The penances consisted in expulsion from church, attendance of mass from the gates of the chapels rather than inside, flagellation in front of the priest and the catechists, prohibition to take communion, repeated public confessions, and communal prayer asking forgiveness for the penitent. Mgr. Jean Basset (1662–1707) condemned a money forgerer, Luc Kouo (Guo), to stand at the gate of the church every Sunday for several months, to be flagellated and to publicly confess his sins, while a catechist, Simon Lan, had to expiate in a similar way for embezzling the funds of the mission. In 1741, Mgr. Joachim Enjobert de Martiliat (1706–1755) imposed a sort of *incomunicado* to an apostate in Chengdu, and paid for him to stay in an inn, away from religious services and the community, while the local Chinese priest André Ly (1692/1693–1774) obliged apostates to abstain from wine and to fast for several days a week for long stretches of time. Mgr. François Pottier (1726–1792) would bar these individuals from sacramental confession for an entire year, and from the community of faithful for six months. Some of the local M.E.P. missionaries became in fact so notorious for their severity, that Propaganda Fide in an instruction dated April 29, 1784 felt compelled to oblige confessors to give absolution to penitents who had done their penances, something the Jansenist-leaning M.E.P. priests, both French and Chinese, were reluctant to do. The warning had to be repeated in 1796, when Mgr. Jean-Didier de Saint-Martin (1743–1801), Vicar Apostolic of Sichuan, and a member of M.E.P. himself, censored the rigorist attitude of his priests in China and Tonkin, and found that excessive public penances and refusal of sacramental confession could be quite harmful to the community and counterproductive for individuals, simply pushing notorious sinners into complacency.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 164.

<sup>104</sup> Information here is taken from Launay 1920, vol. 2, p. 327; from a 1796 letter of Pottier to the Lazarist Aubin on the problem of confession, *ibid.*, pp. 33–35; and from Launay 1924, pp. 34–35.

## PART 2

### The Importance of Confession in Christian Life: Sacrament, Community, and Fear of Damnation

So far, we have mostly seen how the sacrament of penance was presented in prescriptive texts to different social groups, and how the ritual sequence was generally practiced. In this second part, using a number of Chinese and Western sources, including reports on the daily religious life of the Christian communities penned by missionaries, I will explore the practice of confession as experienced in social and religious life.<sup>105</sup> In particular, I will focus on two dimensions of the sacrament of penance: the ritual as a community-building device, and the ritual as a response to psychological and spiritual needs in individual experience. Finally, I will also briefly discuss another important dimension of the ritual, i.e., its disciplinary nature.

Confession was an important ritual that rhythmized the life of the Christian community like no other ritual, mass included. Without confession, one could not fully participate in the eucharistic banquet, as dramatically highlighted by the practice in eighteenth-century Sichuan to allow to approach the altar and take communion only to those faithful who could show a written patent issued by the confessor attesting proper confession.<sup>106</sup> While communion at mass was not always distributed to all, confession was a ritual that all baptized could partake of. We know that women were rather assiduous in asking for confession, more than men, and although initially the Jesuits reserved sacraments to adults, with the rooting of local communities also children became the target of early Christian initiation by all orders and congregations.<sup>107</sup> Confession was the first sacrament, after baptism, to be offered to neophytes. The acts of the Synod of Sichuan of 1803, reflecting the eighteenth-century practice in that province, for example, prescribed that

<sup>105</sup> I chose to also employ a number of miraculous and pious stories from *Litterae Annuae* and similar sources, since they are not merely a reflection of hagiographic conventions, but also a mirror of individual experiences in the local Christian religious life of China. Similar stories, in fact, can also be found in rare sources authored by Chinese Christians in their own language, as has been shown by Erik Zürcher (Zürcher 1985).

<sup>106</sup> See *Sacra Congregatio* 1907, vol. 1, p. 407, no. 683, for a reference to a condemnation by the Particular Congregation for China of Propaganda Fide, dated January 14, 1806, against the current praxis of confessors in Sichuan to issue a special permit with a seal (*martula sigillum signata*), testifying confession and thus permitting to receive the eucharist during mass the following day.

<sup>107</sup> The lower male attendance of confession is suggested by a Dominican missionary in eighteenth-century Fujian: “more than half of the [Christian] men reserved ... confession for the hour of their death”; Royo 1733, p. 335.

children be initiated to the sacrament of penance at the age of seven or eight, although it was probably common for priests to delay the ritual to the age of nine or ten, when the children had received better religious instruction.<sup>108</sup>

Confession was an individualized ritual, and yet it was public insofar as it was celebrated under the eyes of all, albeit at a distance. Visibly, and yet secretly, the penitent was showing to all that he or she had reconciled with God. At times, confession took a communal dimension. As the cases of public penances I discussed above show, confession could be denied to egregious sinners whom the community and the priest recognized as such, until they had engaged in public acts of penance. This shows how the sacrament of penance was one of the building blocks of community life, which affirmed belonging and reconciliation. Moreover, ritual confession, together with the mass, confirmed belonging to a Christian community not only in the eyes of all members, but also in the eyes of the figures of authority, the priest and the lay leaders.

Existing statistics seem to confirm that confession was the one ritual that the vast majority of Christians experienced at least once a year, if not more. It represented a rare moment of personal encounter with the priest, and together with the mass, it forced all to convene from different villages to a designated church or home for what was a special moment of reconciliation and feast.<sup>109</sup>

### Confession and the Gathering of the Community

The periodic obligation to confess derived from a central idea in the theology of the sacrament of penance: confession with a priest was considered necessary for the forgiveness of grave sins (also called mortal sins; for light, or "venial," sins, other forms of devotion and mortification could be sufficient). Without priestly absolution of mortal sins, damnation was unavoidable. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had mandated as compulsory a yearly confession, usually before Easter (therefore also called "Easter precept"), and in spite of increasing advocacy of frequent confession in post-Tridentine Catholicism, most Christians still confessed only once a year.

In China, frequent confession was even more difficult than in Europe, due to two main practical obstacles: insufficient number of priests and large areas to be covered by so few ministers. The sacrament was thus mainly offered in conjunction with the celebration of important feasts of the liturgical

year. In rural villages without resident priests, however, itinerant rural missions were conducted at different times of the year, and not necessarily during the liturgical seasons of Lent and Advent. In ordinary times, active communities could avail themselves of other devotional forms to foster a sense of belonging (e.g., lay-led common prayer, catechetical instruction and charitable activities), but during annual priestly visits and the main liturgical seasons, the sacraments officiated by the priest represented the core of common activities.

Confession and communion in the larger Jesuit missions during the seventeenth century were mostly administered during major solemnities, as observed in the 1636 *Littera Annuæ* of Beijing:

During feasts [Christian men] attend church, and during solemnities they confess and take communion in great numbers. ... A similar devotion can be seen among women, who meet in special oratories, where we celebrate mass for them, preach and hear confessions.<sup>110</sup>

Easter, the major feast of the year, saw large number of confessions. Confession during the Holy Week was sometimes accompanied by display of images of the Passion, by special preaching, and by corporal penances. During Holy Week in mid-1630s Jiangnan, for example, not only men, but also women would "meet, hear mass, confess very frequently ... and some of these women were so devout in their penances, that the Father had to control their fervour, taking away from them the instruments of penance they use, that are so fierce as to make one scared."<sup>111</sup> Similar devotion could be seen among the members of the women confraternity of Fuzhou in the early 1640s, who would meet during Holy Week in the house of some Christian in three different quarters of the city, doing their confession, attending mass and listening to sermons.<sup>112</sup> Christmas was another important season for massive numbers of confessions, and on Christmas Eve urban churches were filled with Christians awaiting their turn to confess.<sup>113</sup> In the region of Shanghai, where confraternities started to be established in the 1630s, also the feasts of the patrons of the confraternity, and in particular of Our Lady, were an occasion for the male members to congregate and confess in a chapel, usually once a month. Women, on the other hand, would initially meet in private houses to assist to the mass and do their confession in days they

<sup>108</sup> See Taurinus 1891, p. 44.

<sup>109</sup> A clear indicator confirming the centrality of the sacrament of penance in the community's religious life is given by statistical data found scattered in missionary sources; for a preliminary tabulation of some data, see Appendix 5.

<sup>110</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 61.

<sup>111</sup> Gouvea 1998, pp. 78-79.

<sup>112</sup> Gouvea 1998, pp. 217 and 238.

<sup>113</sup> Reference to a crowd of penitents on Christmas Eve in the Fuzhou church in 1645, in Gouvea 1998, p. 244; for similar activities in 1670s Changshu, see Golvers 1999 p. 410.



chose together with their spiritual directors (“determinão dia em que se ajuntão todas em huma caza”).<sup>114</sup> Also in Fuzhou, devout men would confess once a month, and take communion on the main feasts within the activities of a Confraternity of Our Lady.<sup>115</sup>

In more isolated communities, intense rounds of confessions and celebration of the Eucharist happened during the occasional trips of itinerant missionaries, and took place whenever the priest reached a locale.<sup>116</sup> For example, Girolamo de Gravina S.J. (1603–1662) toured the Christian communities of the region of Changshu for the duration of a month in 1643. He was so overwhelmed by the number of Christians who wanted to confess “day and night” that he had no time to recite his own prayers. In his words, “the fervour of these Christians was such that they did not let me breathe!” During that visit, “one thousand four hundred people did a [general] confession of all their life.”<sup>117</sup> Even during periods of suppression of Christianity, and in rural contexts, such as in the Dominican mission of Fujian in the 1740s, priests would frequently visit secret churches to administer confession and celebrate mass “during major feasts in the larger villages, and during minor feasts in the smaller hamlets.”<sup>118</sup> In the same period, Jesuit missionaries in Huguang (Central China) travelled on boats to visit their communities of poor converts, disembarking and exercising their ministry mainly at night, whenever they reached a locale. In these situations, confessions were usually heard in some house between 11 pm and 3 am, followed at 4 am by mass and communion. Christian men would travel up to twenty-five miles to be confessed. Occasionally, if their boat was recognized by their converts, missionaries were asked to hear confessions directly on the vessel along the rivers.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 74.

<sup>115</sup> Gouvea 1998, pp. 103 and 217.

<sup>116</sup> For mentions of visits to various communities and rounds of confessions in Fujian, see for example Gouvea 1998, pp. 153 (Shaowu, 1643) and 158 (Lianjiang, 1643). Girolamo de Gravina arranged in the late 1640s for Christians living in smaller villages of Jiangnan to confess once or twice a year, during a day of their choice free from work in the two periods of Advent or Lent. By dividing them in confraternities, and by selecting free days, “the job becomes easier and [their] conscience is soothed”; see Gouvea 1998, p. 371. In the mid-nineteenth century the Dominican Gentili observed that the so-called Easter precept (confession and communion once a year) was calculated in a given village “from one year to the next, whatever the time [of the missionary’s visit] happens to be.” See Gentili 1888, vol. 3, p. 151.

<sup>117</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 128.

<sup>118</sup> González 1952–1958, vol. 2, p. 133.

<sup>119</sup> See Krahl 1964, pp. 19 and 22.

But such fervor was not universal. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Chinese priest André Ly, active in Sichuan, lamented that local Christians, men and women, had grown into a “bad habit”: even when they lived near the church, they would wait for the coming of a feast and the evening hours to confess, rather than show up early in the morning.

They all come *en masse*, and overwhelm the confessor until the middle of the night. It is not rare that many would come without examination, without contrition, and as a consequence, they leave [after confession] without developing increased love for God and fear of sin. What is then left of the pious advice of the confessor and of sacramental penance?<sup>120</sup>

Obviously, Father Ly and his faithful had a different conception of confession: the first, educated by the French missionaries of M.E.P., wanted to use confession as a tool of spiritual direction, while the faithful may have been more interested in absolution as a form of ritual cleansing, which unburdened their conscience, and opened the way to heaven. Also Jesuit priests lamented that seasonal massive bouts of confession were an enormous burden for them, did not allow them to impart good spiritual direction, and also may have had little effect on the life of Christians. In his spiritual diary, François de Rougemont (1670s) chastised himself for being impatient, hasty, or too harsh during a six-day intense period of confessions and baptisms that obviously tried his mental and physical state.<sup>121</sup>

Missionaries might have found more rewarding to confess in an intimate setting Christian literati and officials, and their relatives. In the case of particularly important individuals, in fact, missionaries would make special trips to confess them and their families, and to celebrate mass. For example, one of the resident Jesuits in Nanjing in the mid 1630s (possibly Francesco Sambiasi) travelled to a locale four days away from his Nanjing residence “to confess and console” a Christian official.<sup>122</sup> In another case, an important military official (*zongbing* 總兵) and *jinshi*, called Lucas Chen, invited Sambiasi to visit him and his Christian family near Changshu (Jiangnan) in 1643. During the visit everybody, including the women, “who were as devout as European ladies ... confessed and took communion many times.”<sup>123</sup>

Such special care obviously might have abated during the latter part of the seventeenth century, when the number of elite Christians dwindled, although Court Jesuits in the early eighteenth century described with pride the piety of the Manchu noblemen of the Sunu clan, including a large number of

<sup>120</sup> See Launay 1924, p. 267; cf. Olichon 1933, pp. 298–299.

<sup>121</sup> See Golvers 1999, pp. 409–410.

<sup>122</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 70.

<sup>123</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 127.

women, and their attendance of confession and the eucharist in special chapels in their palaces.<sup>124</sup>

No matter whether they were divided in groups of men and women within the same church building, separated in oratories for men and women belonging to confraternities, in the private chapels of officials, nobles and literati, or in ordinary homes, secret chapels and boats during periods of persecution, Christians continued to cherish confession with a priest as one of the ritual moments defining their religious identity.

### Women's Devotion to the Sacrament and Social Pressure

A revealing proof of the importance of confession is offered by the attitude of women to the sacrament. Men had to surmount their own personal sense of shame to approach the confessor and reveal their weakness and sinfulness, as Zhang Geng and Zhu Zongyuan had noted. But women had to do more than that. They had also to infringe upon the rules of propriety, which demanded a strict segregation of the sexes, and to overcome the social prejudice against the clergy current among the vast majority of literati.<sup>125</sup>

In late imperial China, there was a widespread perception among men that female piety was associated with religious heterodoxy. Women frequented temples, were acolytes of monks, nuns or shamans, and sometimes formed religious sororities. All of these activities were also connected in men's minds to sexual misconduct.<sup>126</sup> Lineage rules preserved in genealogies prescribed the seclusion of women as a way to ward off bad influences from the so-called "three nuns" (Buddhist nuns, Daoist nuns, and female fortune-tellers) and six "service women" (brokers, matchmakers, sorceresses, bewitchers, medical women, and midwives). Moreover, such rules also proscribed visits to temples, festivals and other celebrations, as Chinese literature was replete with stories of lewd monks taking advantage of young girls in temples and during festivals.<sup>127</sup> Imperial laws also reflected a great deal of suspicion of the clergy in sexual matters, and suggested severe punish-

<sup>124</sup> See Witek 1993; Menegon 1996; Corsi 2004.

<sup>125</sup> Women too, of course, had to overcome shame to confess in full their sins. An appendix to Aleni's *Dizui zhenggui lue*, ff. 31b-34b (WXSJ, vol. 3, p. 1258-1264) contains an exemplary story, where a lady damned in hell lists the main categories of women's sins (obviously in the confessor's eyes): "The major kinds of sins committed by us women are 1. impure actions against the sixth commandment [= sexual sins]; 2. too much attention being paid to jewellery and appearances; 3. believing in witches (*wu* 巫), sorcerers (*xi* 覡), and occult arts; 4. omitting sins in confession out of shame or taboos." *Dizui zhenggui lue*, f. 34a (WXSJ, vol. 3, p. 1263).

<sup>126</sup> Furth 1990, p. 197; Mann 1997, p. 191.

<sup>127</sup> Liu 1959, pp. 94-95; Mann 1997, p. 192; Durand-Dastès 2002.

ments for sexual crimes committed by Buddhist monks or Daoist priests.<sup>128</sup> Such prohibitions and suspicions notwithstanding, women continued to test the boundaries of permeability between the inner and outer spheres of their lives, participating in religious activities and pilgrimages outside of their homes.

The choice of the Jesuits to endorse Confucianism and literati culture, rather than Buddhism, obliged them to maintain a relatively detached attitude to women, as Philippe Couplet (1622-1694) observed in 1688:

If the Fathers who first entered in this Kingdom to preach the Gospel had continued to wear like the Bonzes, they would have had an easier task in dealing with women. Women have the freedom to talk to these Priests of the Idols, and to visit their temples to recite their prayers. But the first missionaries decided that it was more important for our religion to deal with magistrates, with literati and with family heads, rather than with those persons [i.e., women] who are more naturally disposed to piety, and who can anyway be instructed in our religious mysteries without visits and meetings, either through the reading of books, or through the intermediation of their husbands.<sup>129</sup>

For this reason, women conducted a separate ritual life. Yet, in spite of this, women grew into a large part of the Christian community, and, as Couplet observed, the part "more naturally disposed to piety." The Jesuits established private chapels for them, and as mentioned in the first part of this essay, would conduct confession with female penitents in special places that could be easily monitored by males of the household. This practice was later also followed by other orders.

Unlike the Jesuits, the Dominicans had a more direct approach to women. Especially in the turbulent times of the Ming-Qing transition in their mission of Fuan (Fujian), the ministry to women intensified, paradoxically also because of anti-Christian sentiments:

Due to the persecution, Christians hid Fr. Juan García for more than three years [in the 1640s] in the most secret places of their houses, which is where women usually reside. Thus [García] had to dispense with their usual customs, and had to see and deal with the [women on a daily basis]. Due to this, [women] started losing the horror they had previously experienced in seeing and dealing with the [male] priest, and they learnt about his [good] intentions through his words and manners. Thus we [Dominicans] started disregarding the ancient ceremonies [separating the sexes], and women would no more flee us. Up to this day, without our

<sup>128</sup> Jones 1994, pp. 132-133 and 352; Sommer 2000, p. 100. On anti-clericalism in China, see Goossaert 2002.

<sup>129</sup> Couplet 1688, p. 8.

or their awareness, this has continued to prepare the way that the Lord has chosen to make [women] grow in faith and devotion.<sup>130</sup>

Local women became so defiant against patriarchal strictures, that they would not be afraid to gather in some house, where "the minister would go secretly, and there he would confess them, give them communion and teach them, without any risk of scandal."<sup>131</sup> With time the situation stabilized, and in keeping with the Jesuit example, local Christians financed the construction of two separate churches for men and for women, and the activities of Christian women, although still segregated from men, started to expand beyond the inner quarters. Women would even "travel from afar, and sleep for a few days at a time in the apartments of [other local] women due to their desire to receive instruction in the Christian doctrine." Some started not only "following the common path of the ten commandments, but even the path to [religious] perfection [i.e., an intense religious routine]."<sup>132</sup> This latter group was the first nucleus of "Christian virgins" (*beatas*), who would later become ubiquitous presences in the Dominican communities.

That even Christian women married to pagans would be allowed to confess and communicate, further underlines the powerful role of the sacraments in affirming their Christian identity. In a set of regulations written in 1685 for his fellow ministers, the Dominican Francisco Varo classified three kinds of Christian women married in non-Christian households within his jurisdiction in Fujian: (1) those married to "gentiles," who received permission from the groom's family to confess and follow other Christian obligations; (2) women who were forbidden by their families to go to church, but who secretly confessed, prayed, fasted, and received communion (they were the majority); and, more rarely, (3) women who were obliged to formally apostate.<sup>133</sup> This picture confirms that in fact most women would see the priests even under the most unfavourable conditions, as the exemplary biography of a Fuan Confucian chaste widow in the Kangxi period (1662–1723), Lian Zhushi 連珠使, lamented in a bitter tone:

Some women neighbours [of Lian Zhushi] were misled into following the Teachings of the Western Ocean heterodoxy [which was then spreading] in our county. Lian Zhushi told them with altered countenance: "Only [I], a widow, know how to avoid shame! How can you kneel to those *Ba-le*

巴勒 [*Padres*], in order to pray for happiness and advantages?" But she was the only one to see this and speak.<sup>134</sup>

Indeed, by the early Qing communal activities of women, involving travel to receive confession and communion, were a common occurrence, as illustrated by a report about the Christian community of Guangzhou (Guangdong) administered by Franciscans in the 1670s. Here we get the picture of how confession of women was conducted within a communitarian ritual moment, as opposed to more private rituals during visits to single households:

So that one may know how much a minister must do when he goes to the churches of the women, I will here report on the manner we keep. First, the Christians or the catechists warn [the priest] that the [women] of a certain quarter desire to receive the sacraments. When receiving this notice, the minister [also] communicates the day on which he will go there to celebrate mass. All the Christian women of that quarter tell each other and get together; and some, [because they are visiting] their female relatives or because they have a need [in the city], come from places farther off. At the convened hour, they all come together in a certain house. The Father takes along an old Christian of authority to accompany him, unless the master of the house [where they meet] is already of that quality. [The priest] goes to this function only with a catechist and a sacristan, leaving at the gate as a guard the mentioned elder. This function starts with some exhortation to those who have to confess and take communion. Afterwards, pulling a veil or a semi-transparent curtain between the penitent and the priest, the minister starts confessing them. These confessions are usually many, and almost all those women, who are already Christian, receive the sacrament. We only forbid it to those who, having been recently baptized, request to receive the sacraments of confession and communion without knowing too well what they are. Once confessions are finished, we celebrate the mass, and during the mass we give communion to those women who are well disposed [to receive it].<sup>135</sup>

Thus, all women in this community ritual, with few exceptions, were allowed to confess and communicate. The reassuring presence of a Chinese male chaperon, and the public setting of the ritual defused any possible suspicion of sexual misdemeanour. In the period of suppression of Christianity, on the other hand, when nightly visits and clandestine rituals in pri-

<sup>130</sup> Capillas 1894 (1647), p. 72.

<sup>131</sup> Riccio 1667, f. 68r.

<sup>132</sup> Capillas 1894 (1647), p. 72.

<sup>133</sup> Varo 1685, f. 30r.

<sup>134</sup> *Fuan xianzhi* 1986, j. 27, "Lienü," p. 490.

<sup>135</sup> *Sinica Franciscana*, vol. 7.2, p. 871, in Juan Martí's O.F.M. retrospective look at the history of the Franciscan mission in China, "Relacion muy importante que hizo N. H. Fr. Juan Martí ... ," Lumbang (Philippines), 10 April 1702, *ibid.*, pp. 695–1036.

vate homes became the norm out of necessity, the situation of physical intimacy gave rise to a series of incidents of so-called *solicitatio ad turpia*, that is solicitation by European and Chinese priests during confession for sexual favours from women. The most egregious cases happened in communities administered by Dominicans, Franciscans and Chinese secular clergy.<sup>136</sup> And yet, the women involved in these cases never doubted the importance of confession, and local communities, although deeply hurt by the scandal, did not reject the sacrament of confession *tout court*, but rather asked for the assignment of a new, trustworthy confessor. In other words, the sacrament never lost its strong hold on the religious imagination of Chinese Christians, remaining a central part of their communitarian identity.

### Confession as a Response to Personal Psychological and Spiritual Needs

The sources and statistics mentioned above point to the important position of confession in communitarian life. Besides being a public ritual, however, confession also had a strong personal dimension: after all, its core part was an individual encounter between priest and penitent. What were the reasons that made this ritual so crucial in the individual consciousness of Chinese Christians? In this volume Erik Zürcher explores answers to this question, by investigating texts written by late Ming Chinese literati, mainly in Fujian, and by showing that confession fit very well with their Neo-Confucian mindset of self-cultivation.<sup>137</sup>

The sacrament, however, fulfilled another important psychological and spiritual need of late imperial individuals: to guarantee protection from the plots of the malignant, by cleansing one of sins (always induced by the devil's enticement) and by offering a needed "insurance policy" for salvation in the afterlife. As students of Chinese religion know well, people felt, and still do, that the human and natural landscapes are inhabited by spiritual

<sup>136</sup> This topic will be the object of a specific study in the future, based on materials from archives in Rome. Apparently, Jesuits and M.E.P. missionaries remained more restrained in their contacts with women, and exerted a tighter control onto their moral life through an exacting routine of spiritual examination and physical penance. This might be a reason why so far I have been unable to find records of egregious misdemeanour among these orders. This is confirmed by studies of solicitation in Spain and New Spain in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, based on the records of the Inquisitions of Toledo, Sevilla, and Mexico. They statistically indicate that mendicant friars, especially Franciscans, and to a lesser degree Dominicans, and secular priests, were the usual culprits of solicitation. The Jesuits guilty of this crime were fewer. See Haliczzer 1996; Alejandre 1994; Sarrión Mora 1994; González Marmolejo 2002.

<sup>137</sup> See Zürcher's article in this volume.

forces continuously at work. A rationalistic French Vicar Apostolic observed in 1793 in Sichuan, that "[t]he supernatural is not extraneous to the thoughts [of the Chinese], but they often do not distinguish if it really exists, or if it is only in their imagination."<sup>138</sup> As a matter of fact, for the vast majority of missionaries and Chinese Christians the saturation of daily life with spiritual presences was not a figment of the imagination, but a reality. What missionaries witnessed in China, and Christians accepted as a reality, was a world filled with diabolical manifestations, to entice people to commit sin, and to finally condemn them to eternal damnation. Small Christian communities or isolated individuals surrounded by "temples of the devil" and by daily behaviours going against the Christian commandments (concubinage, infanticide, different calendrical and fasting rhythms, and so on) required powerful supernatural defensive weapons. Together with exorcism and sacramentals (i.e., amulets), confession was one of the best ways to keep the devil at bay. It also assuaged anxieties for personal salvation until the next priestly visit, as people were concerned about dying without confession and often lived with spiritual anguish for their fate in the afterlife.

Fear, however, was de-emphasized in the Jesuit confessional discourse, since it was seen as the source of the inferior form of repentance, attrition. As observed at the beginning of this essay, it was Jesuit interest in moral reform through Bonaventure's "Spiritual Ways" that had found good reception among late Ming literati, rather than "heterodox talks of paradise and hell."<sup>139</sup> In Jesuit spirituality, confession was indeed seen as yet another means of progress for the soul. The emphasis on confession in its spiritual dimension (rather than simply in its ritual or disciplinarian dimensions) was enshrined in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius, where we find a special form of self-examination, the so-called "general confession." A general confession was a review, in the company of one's confessor, of one's entire life, not simply to receive sacramental absolution, as in regular confessions, but also to lead to a more radical improvement in one's moral and spiritual

<sup>138</sup> These are the words of Mgr. Dufresse M.E.P., in *Nouvelles lettres édifiantes*, vol. II, p. 153, as quoted in Launay 1920, vol. 2, p. 310.

<sup>139</sup> Theories on the afterlife were a common target of accusation by Chinese officials crusading against popular Buddhism, sectarian groups, and Christianity too. During an anti-Christian campaign in the county of Fuan in the late 1750s, the Prefect of Funing found that in the eyes of the people he called "Fuan rustics" (*Fuan yumin* 福安愚民), the soteriological aspect represented the main attraction of Christianity: "What tricks [Fuan] people into following [the missionaries] is their theory of afterlife, which is mysterious like an hallucination and unexpectedly can touch a nerve in the stupid folks and move the crowds. [Such theories] thus become even more attractive than those of Yang Zhu and Mozi." See *Fuan xianzhi* 1986, j. 8, p. 134.

life. This shows that confession for the Jesuits was not simply a periodic ritual to cleanse sins and avoid damnation, but rather a devout practice to direct spiritual growth. In general, the Jesuits presented confession as an act of reconciliation depending on the infinite mercy of God, and less as an act guided by fear for damnation. This vision, which was already found in late medieval texts, became the leitmotiv in Jesuit writings, as it appears from the insistent use of medical metaphors, like those employed by Aleni in his Chinese texts. The confessor is compared to a good doctor healing the penitent from his or her sins. The traditional imagery of confessors as judges, potently re-affirmed by the decrees of the Council of Trent, was thus less prominent among Jesuit authors, at least in the initial period of the history of the Society.<sup>140</sup> In keeping with this view, Ricci had presented in his writings the "unitive way" as the highest degree of perfection, pursued by the Jesuits themselves through their exacting spiritual practices, and had proposed it to Chinese literati.

Yet, the Jesuit had also implicitly observed that most people held "lower" motivations to avoid sin: profit (salvation) and loss (damnation). This majority needed guidance (*jiao* 教) to be freed from sin and be led to salvation (the purgative way). This guidance was offered by the priest through sacramental confession and other forms of spiritual direction. Among these other means, were meditation on sin and on the so called Four Ends (*Quatuor Novissima*, i.e., death, judgement, heaven and hell), all elements adumbrated in Ricci's works, and important components of the so-called "purgative way."<sup>141</sup> As the Jiangxi Christian literatus Xiong Shiqi 熊士旂 recognized in

<sup>140</sup> See O'Malley 1993, p. 137. Early in the history of the Society Ignatius of Loyola himself commissioned Juan Alfonso de Polanco, to write a normative text on confession which exerted great influence on the members of the Society, and had a great editorial success, the *Breve directorium ad confessarii ac confitentis munus recte obeundum* (A brief set of directives to be closely followed for the benefit of confessor and penitents) published in Rome in 1554. The importance attached by Jesuit superiors to confession is also confirmed by the existence of an internal document, *De modo audiendi confessiones*, issued by the second General of the Society, Diego Lainez, containing detailed instructions on the conduct of confessors. On the *Breve directorium*, see O'Malley 1993, pp. 142-143; Turrini 1991, p. 97 ff.; Rusconi 2002, pp. 314-315. On self-examination and confession as a recurrent practice for the Jesuits themselves, see the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* (Padberg 1996, nos. 261, 342, 344).

<sup>141</sup> On the purgative way, see "States or ways," in the *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 1913-1922, vol. 14, pp. 254-255: "Purity of soul may be said to be the proper end of the purgative way, and the forms of prayer suitable for this way or state are *meditations on sin and its consequences, and on death, judgment, hell, and heaven*. The acts which aid toward uprooting the remnants and habits of former sins, and preventing one from ever returning to them, are corporal austerities, mortification of the appe-

plain language in 1621, laziness in matters of spiritual practices and devotions (what is known in Latin as *acedia*, or sloth, one of the seven capital sins) was among the chief problems in communities without a resident priests. Xiong was quick to draw an analogy between the way the examination system rewarded the diligent students, and the way God, the head examiner (*zhukao* 主考), rewarded spiritual discipline with paradise, while punishing with hell the lazy people who fall into sins.<sup>142</sup>

To maintain a good degree of spiritual and devotional "tension," therefore, China missionaries, including the Jesuits, had to use "the promise of gain" and "the fear for loss," as many religious orders (Jesuits, Capuchins and others) were doing in their "popular missions" across Europe at the time. In reporting an edifying case of penitential fervour by a recent convert in Beijing in 1604-1605, Ricci observed with evident contentment, that "God is putting his fear in the hearts of these new Christians" ("Iddio va ponendo il suo timore ne' cuori di questi novelli christiani").<sup>143</sup> In fact, even among more intellectually refined audiences, Ricci introduced a practice that was specifically designed to elicit horror for one's sins, to meditate on death, and to contemplate with all senses the frightening perspective of hell: the first week of the famous *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola. Jesuit spiritual directors usually offered to lay people only the first of the four periods of increasing spiritual progression laid down in the *Exercises*.<sup>144</sup>

In the final analysis, as observed by Jean Delumeau, in spite of the theologians' lengthy explanations on the importance of contrite repentance, pastors in the field had to accept the reality that attrition out of fear for damnation was the prevalent attitude among penitents. In 1667, even Pope Alex-

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tite, abnegation of one's own will, and conformity to the will of God. In a word, the distinctive notes of this state are war against those temptations which entice the soul to sin by the attraction of pleasures of the senses and the natural shrinking from pain; and repugnance to acts known to be contrary to the will of God." Philippe Couplet composed in the 1670s a treatise on the Four Ends, entitled *Simo zhenlun* 四末真論 (*A True Discussion of the Four Ends*); I consulted a microfilm of a 1675 edition in BAV, *Borgia Cinese* 345 (7); and a 1825 edition in the Sinological Library at K.U. Leuven.

<sup>142</sup> See Xiong Shiqi's *Cedai jingyu* 策怠警喻 (An Allegorical Warning on Sloth and Planning, ca. 1621), in *CCT ZKW*, vol. 1, pp. 141-160.

<sup>143</sup> Letter of Ricci to Ludovico Maselli S.J., February (?) 1605, TV, vol. 2, p. 256.

<sup>144</sup> See Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, nos. 24-43. Chinese versions of the *Exercises* are mentioned in Bernard 1945, p. 30, list of 1642 (in fact 1636), no. 60 "Exercicios Espirituaes do Nosso Santo Padre Ignacio" (n. 310 in Bernard's list); p. 55, list Couplet of 1686, no. 226 "Exercitia spiritualia S. P. Ignatii," no. 469. References to the practice by Chinese Christians of the first week of the *Exercises* at the time of Ricci in *FR* I, no. 398, p. 315 and *FR* II, no. 913, p. 489.

ander VII recognized that attrition had in practice triumphed as “the opinion of most schools.”<sup>145</sup> Thus, the “pastoral of perfection” advocated in theory was most of the time reduced to a “pastoral of fear.” The utmost fear was to die in mortal sin.<sup>146</sup>

### Confession at Death and “Pastoral of Fear”

The persons ... who confess frequently are more assured that when death will reach them, they will be in the grace of God, and as a consequence, they will be saved. On the contrary, those who confess only very rarely will be quite likely surprised by death first or later, as it is easy to fall again into sin, given the bad disposition to which they are accustomed. Then they will be eternally damned.<sup>147</sup>

This was only one of the reasons advanced by theologians and spiritual writers advocating frequent confession in the seventeenth century.<sup>148</sup> Yet, given the relative few opportunities to confess in China, for the vast majority of Chinese Christians the complex sin–death–damnation was probably the biggest anxiety-producing feature linked to sacramental confession. To die without confession was quite possible in China. A list of Christian vocabulary and useful sentences compiled by a missionary as a linguistic exercise, entitled *Fengjiao de shiqing* 奉教的事情 (*Matters of religion*; 1680s?), seems to confirm this anxious link among sin, death and damnation. Grouped together under two adjacent headings we find the following concepts:

Good death; to die with or without consciousness; to die quickly; to die well; to die badly; hell of eternal suffering; purgatory; limbo puerorum; limbo sanctorum; to descend to hell; paradise; to ascend to heaven; soul; souls of purgatory; not to have exhaled the last breath yet; to exhale the last breath; the soul has left the body; cadaver; corpse; to leave the world; to die; to die without confession.<sup>149</sup>

This cascading sequence of concepts related to death and the afterlife climaxed in the last expression of the list: “to die without confession” (*meiyou gaojie si* 沒有告解死). Confession was strongly connected in the mind of

<sup>145</sup> See Delumeau 1990a, chapter 4, “Les motifs de repentir” and chapter 5 “Êtes-vous ‘attrit’ ou ‘contrit’?”

<sup>146</sup> On the pastoral of fear, see the *magnum opus* by Delumeau (1990b).

<sup>147</sup> Segneri 1696, pp. 271–272.

<sup>148</sup> Pinelli 1613, pp. 148–152, lists seven reasons for frequent confession, most of them related to a better monitoring of one’s moral progress; see also Segneri 1696, pp. 263–274, where more space is given to the fear of damnation.

<sup>149</sup> BnF, *Chinois* 7046 III, f. 31b.

many with the last hour (*linzhongshi* 臨終時), and numerous anecdotes on confession *in articulo mortis* can be found scattered in missionary sources. The juncture was momentous indeed. The devil was literally waiting for the delicate time of the last hour to snatch away the souls of the faithful, as revealed in an episode involving an old Chinese Christian woman “on her way to the other life” in the 1640s. She called for a priest, confessed and received the extreme unction. However, just before dying, the devil appeared to her, and tried to convince her that the sacraments she had just received were invalid. She then shouted at him, showing him the rosaries and religious medals hanging on the wall, and thus forced him out of the room, dying in peace soon thereafter. Had she surrendered to the diabolical delusion, she would have endangered her soul.<sup>150</sup>

Missionaries, whenever possible, were called in haste to the bed of a moribund, as a cleansed soul was considered necessary for salvation by many Chinese Christians. In fact, Aleni had impressed upon his readers in *Dizui zhenggui*, that “according to the custom of Western countries, whenever someone falls ill, the priority is to first get absolved, and only then to call for a doctor.”<sup>151</sup> An episode related in the 1644 *Littera Annua* of the Jesuit mission makes particularly explicit how important Chinese Christians considered sacramental absolution at death. A Christian woman, who had converted while being a servant in the house of the famous Christian literatus Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565–1630) in Hangzhou in the 1630s, retired to her native village, where she was the only Christian. She remained attached to the devotions of her religion, in spite of pressure from neighbours and relatives to perform Buddhist rituals. At the ripe age of 90, in the late 1640s, she became ill, and begged her family to call a Catholic priest to give her the sacraments. But her non-Christian relatives refused. She became mortally ill, worsening day by day, but every time her relatives thought she was dead, she would come back to life. Finally, she told them “[s]ince you do not wish to call the Father to confess me, thus I am suffering and dying without dying (*morrendo sem morrer*). You certainly know that I would not die before first confessing.” The relatives agreed to call the Father, who confessed her and gave her the extreme unction. After a few hours, she passed away.<sup>152</sup>

Given the scarcity of priests, when news that a missionary was passing by in a given area reached local people, they made sure to call him for ur-

<sup>150</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 85.

<sup>151</sup> *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 3, f. 18a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 511).

<sup>152</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 200. The letter continues at p. 201 with a similar case, that of the mother of Li Zhizao.

gent death-bed confessions. This is the case of two literati in the region of Jiangzhou (Shanxi) in the 1630s. One of them called an itinerant Jesuit to his home, then “confessed with much contrition and tears, and died soon after very satisfied for the mercy received from God.” The other literatus invited the priest to make a detour from his usual route in order to confess his mother-in-law who was sick: but the lady died before the ritual could be started, under the eyes of the missionary.<sup>153</sup> In the Dominican mission of Fujian, missing the call of a moribund could cost dearly to the missionary. In 1771, while the Dominican José Muñoz (1742–1808) was preparing to leave a village in the region of Fuan by boat to reach a locale six hours away to impart the last rituals to a dying Christian (confession, viaticum and extreme unction), a message from a local family reached him, asking for the same service in the vicinity of the village. The missionary advised the family to ask another priest for help, since he was on the move. Offended by the refusal, the family leaked to a group of non-Christians the whereabouts of Muñoz, who was ambushed, robbed of all his belongings, delivered to the authorities, and later expelled from China!<sup>154</sup>

The imagery of judgement in the afterlife and its legal implications were powerfully present in the mind of converts approaching death, and concerns for salvation triggered their desire to ritually cleanse their soul before departing from this life, in the hope to see fulfilled the promise of “immortal life and new worlds for oneself and one’s relatives.”<sup>155</sup> The wife of the third nephew of Xu Guangqi in Shanghai, for example, reported to the local missionary a vision she experienced at the time of the death of her husband in far-way Beijing. Still unaware of his death at the time, she dreamt of Christ sitting on a throne, surrounded by innumerable angels. On the right side was a man, playing a spinet. She saw herself kneeling in front of the throne. A voice thundered: “I wish to come and pass judgement.” She asked whether this was the universal or particular judgement, and the voice replied it was to be a particular judgement. She asked when, and the voice replied it would come in the tenth month. Once awake, the terrorized woman started preparations for her own death, which she believed was coming soon. She called the priest and made a full confession. The Father explained to her that the particular judgement alluded in the dream was nothing but the sacramental

confession she had just experienced. But soon news came from the capital that her 35-year-old husband had died, and it appeared that he was in fact the man seen playing music near the throne of God. The episode is closed by the sentence: “all the people of the family were left in fear.”<sup>156</sup>

The faithful’s preoccupation with confession at death became particularly urgent and widespread during moments of social breakdown and military upheaval. During the Qing siege of Fuzhou in 1647, for example, the number of confessions and extreme unctions increased enormously among the besieged, especially women, who felt enfeebled by hunger, and became aware that their end was near.<sup>157</sup>

When confession *in articulo mortis* was truly impossible because no priest could be called, Christians had to resort to substitute methods, and try to reach the perfect contrition that could assure their salvation. A prominent Fujianese Christian, baptized by Aleni and later member of a Dominican community, Miao Shixiang 繆士珣 (*juren* 1639, d. 1649) from Muyang (Fuan district, Fujian), for example, found no other way to make his last confession before being killed at the hand of Qing troops during the Ming-Qing wars than to write a letter to his Dominican confessor. Besieged in the walled town of Fuan, this remained his last resort to pacify his conscience:

Considering that death was unavoidable, [Miao] kept on moaning and crying almost continually, not because he was going to die, but because he could not receive the sacraments. And being well instructed, he did his best, engaging in fervent Acts of Contrition. And in order to elicit greater [contrition], he made an examination of conscience, as if he was going to confess, and wrote all his faults in a letter addressed to Father [García], asking absolution for those faults, and for all the remaining ones in his life. Juan [Miao] knew well that confession by letter is not allowed, but rather condemned by the Church. Nevertheless, he did all this to show his desires, and as a clear declaration of his true Christian death. He gave this sealed letter to a Christian, who was not a soldier ... This person, after the fall of Fuan, personally brought the letter to Fr. García as Miao had asked him. The Father cried while reading it. In the letter Miao also gave order to bequeath [to the Church] a value of three hundred measures of rice from his property every year for the good of his own soul.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Both cases in Gouvea 1998, p. 91.

<sup>154</sup> See Fernández 1958, pp. 310-311. For cases of successful confession *in articulo mortis* in the Dominican mission during the 1720s, see González 1955-1967, vol. 2, pp. 166-167.

<sup>155</sup> These words referred to a 70-year old military official in Chengdu (Sichuan) who became a zealous Christian in the early 1640s, “grande discipolo do que prometia vida immortal e novos mundos pera si e pera os seus.” See Gouvea 1998, p. 211.

<sup>156</sup> Gouvea 1998, pp. 133-134.

<sup>157</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 347.

<sup>158</sup> Riccio 1667, f. 234v. In a culture so centred on writing, where communication with superiors and with the gods was mostly written, and where personal “ledgers of merit and demerit” were so popular, missionaries were asked by their Chinese audience whether it was possible to confess in writing. Initially, in the Japan mission,

Clearly, the welfare of one's soul in the final moments pushed Miao to use all the means at his disposal to receive absolution, even if the ritual expert he needed was not available to him. Since true contrition could in principle be sufficient for God's forgiveness, as Aleni had taught in Fujian, Miao's efforts were not in vain. But to make sure that his soul, which would have certainly ended up in purgatory (full contrition spared from hell, but not necessarily from purgatory), he also invested in a supplementary "insurance policy," asking for masses to be celebrated as suffrages for his own soul (which is the usual meaning of the expression "for the good of one's own soul").

Another episode from Fuzhou confirms that Chinese Christians were concerned about the moment of their death, and desired to obtain forgiveness for their sins, even in the absence of a priest. A local female lay leader in 1649 became mortally ill in a town where there was no priest to assist her. Before moving there from Fuzhou, the woman had engaged in ministry to the dying for years, encouraging them to recite the Act of Contrition, and to pray to the saints. When approaching death, she instructed her children to put on her heart her rosaries and religious symbols, and holding a cross in her hands, she spent her final hours, as she had done with others before, repeatedly reciting the Act of Contrition.<sup>159</sup>

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written confessions had been tolerated by the Jesuits for a time, but had finally been forbidden under pain of excommunication in 1605; see López-Gay 1970, pp. 121-122. Similarly, Aleni's *Dizui zhenggui* also explained that such confessions were not allowed (*j.3*, ff. 10b-11b; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 496-498), as did the *Siduo dianyao* (f. 37b).

<sup>159</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 427. The idea of "good death" and repentance-confession at death is found in several Chinese Christian texts, including the *Kouduo richao*. A treatise on the topic by João Fróis S.J. (1591-1638), *Shanzhong zhugong guili* 善終助功規例 (*Rules to Assist in a Good Death*; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 5, pp. 333-437) includes a discussion of confession in *articulo mortis*: "When they are getting close to death, sick people should have their heart filled with the grace of God and this is something particularly urgent to do. Thus the person helping them [to die well] should make every effort to assist the sick in achieving [grace] and not desert this duty. The best method is to encourage the sick to receive the sacraments of the Church [*ecclesiae sacramenta* in romanization, *e-ge-le-xi-ya zhi sa-ge-la-meng-duo*]. The Lord employs these sacraments as a sort of useful instruments to fix crooked things. When outside we use holy water to sprinkle, inside we bestow holy protection in order to cleanse sin. This is why we should advise the sick to do confession and to take the other sacraments as soon as possible. This is very urgent and should not be delayed. In fact, to engage in these rituals not only does not harm the body, but is indeed beneficial to life. Do not say 'repent and confess in the coming days or hours.' Today and now should be the set day and time, as the coming days and hours are still unsure. Now it is easy, but if you delay, it will be difficult. Now there is the favourable condition, later, who knows? If one refuses to follow orders when in a peaceful [disposition of]

And yet, the celebration of the sacrament was always preferred to the emergency methods forced by war and distance. In Songjiang in 1648, one of the teenage sons of Candida Xu 許 (1607-1680) – the granddaughter of Xu Guangqi – had not been able to confess for some time, since the nearest Jesuit in Shanghai had been prevented from visiting due to the Ming-Qing hostilities. During an agitated night, the boy dreamt of a white stone stele, inscribed with all the sins that he had committed since he had reached the age of reason up to his present age of 16. The youngster decided to make a written list of all his sins, and in a letter he asked the Father to assign to him corporal penances as satisfaction of his sins. He also considered his penances as a way to beg the Lord to allow the priest to reach in safety his town, and ritually confess him. When the Father received the letter, he was moved by the boy's devotion, although in fact the list of sins was merely "childlike matters and little more than nothing" ("ninherias e pouco mais de nada").<sup>160</sup> But the priest certainly got the message: he was eagerly expected by his Christians in Songjiang, so as to impart confession.

#### Positive Incentives for Confession

Fear and scruples, however, were not the only "incentives" for confession. Hope for a better life was another one. Confession opened the gates of salvation, and Christians imagined quite literally that the departed would be blessed with a better life filled with success, as an anecdote tells us. When a former Buddhist monk, Paul Li, who had become catechist in the Hangzhou mission, realized he was nearing his end, he confessed many times and received extreme unction. During that night, he passed away. Soon he appeared in a dream to a local Christian man, who had lapsed in his religious practice. In the dream, the former monk was wearing the robes of a high official, and was preceded by flag- and insignia-bearers. The sleeping man, who apparently failed to recognize him, asked the cortege who the official was, and he was told his identity: Paul! He awoke, and decided to change the course of his life. While the pious Jesuit António de Gouvea (1592-1677), compiler of this report, remarked on the role of the deceased as a kind of "catechist from the afterlife" urging fellow Christians to convert, we can notice that Paul appeared in the trappings of power reserved to men of

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heart for action, there is no way to know whether he will later on abruptly fall into evil." For lack of space, here I cannot expand on the practices of good death, on which I hope to do further research. On the topic, see e.g., chapter 12 in Delumeau 1990b.

<sup>160</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 391.



success in the examination system. Afterlife here was imagined as a step up in the ladder of success.<sup>161</sup>

Moreover, at times Christians saw the ritual of confession as a powerful way to heal their body as well as their souls. The metaphor of the confessor as a physician of the spirit became in these cases a rather literal reality. In Songjiang (Jiangnan), for example, a Christian man who had abandoned the Church after having gotten a concubine, became very ill in 1636. He then repented of his sin, asking for divine mercy and forgiveness, and scrupulously followed the instructions of the local Father, who ordered him to get rid of the concubine. After a "confession full of repentance" he re-acquired his health.<sup>162</sup> In Yanping (Fujian) in 1645, a sick man asked the visiting Jesuit to go to his home and confess him, before taking his medicine: "but the medicine of confession was effective not only for his soul, but also for his body, so that in brief he was healed."<sup>163</sup> Aleni experienced similar episodes in the mid-1640s in other Fujianese locales, such as Jianchang and Taining, where the efficacy of the sacrament of penance ("a efficacia do Sacramento da Penitencia") was proved by the speedy recovery of a moribund Christian, whose money had all been spent in vain on doctors.<sup>164</sup> Even people on the brink of death were healed through the administration of the last sacraments, usually including confession and extreme unction (not the Eucharist, which was given only rarely), as it was the case of an elderly woman in the region of Quanzhou (Fujian) in 1643.<sup>165</sup>

### Intercession of Mary and Confession

Anxiety surrounding confession could be soothed not only by hopes in its efficacy to gain a better life, and even to be healed, but also by the presence of intercessors in Heaven. Especially Mary, the mother of Christ, was seen as a maternal and merciful helper of sinners. Mary could assist sinners in reforming their life and obtaining forgiveness in two occasions at least: when they were ashamed or afraid to confess, and at the moment of death.

As mentioned earlier, shame was one of the most common impediments to full confession, and especially so in China. Missionary reports tell us that

Mary would appear in dreams to the faithful, and push individuals to reform and to request confession.<sup>166</sup> In a case reported in the 1643 *Littera Annua* from Hangzhou, for example, we see Our Lady appearing in a dream to a man who had become cold in his faith. She asked him to repent for his sins and not be afraid. He retorted that his sins were too great to be forgiven. She replied: "My rosary will take care of this, if you immediately emend your life." Once awake, the Christian confessed and started a new life.<sup>167</sup> In the same document, we see a woman fearful to confess her sins to the priest, and assailed by scruples. She fell ill, and Mary appeared to her, and encouraged her to confide in God's mercy, while she, the Mother of Christ, would pray for her. Then the Lady gave her an elixir to drink in a porcelain cup, and disappeared. After six days of illness, the woman recovered, confessed all her sins ("confessou-se com clareza"), including those she had failed to reveal earlier, and reformed her life.<sup>168</sup> In another rather dramatic episode, a merchant who had gone bankrupt, who was a member of the Confraternity of Our Lady in Shanghai, repeatedly tried to commit suicide. During his last attempt at drowning, Mary appeared to him, telling him that in order to escape a temporary trouble, he was going to gain eternal damnation. She ordered him to hasten to the church and confess, so as to become free from the temptation to kill himself. When he did so, with tears of repentance, he regained his balance.<sup>169</sup>

Mary was also an important intercessor at the moment of death, and her motherly presence was a soothing reassurance that salvation was at hand. Every Christian who had memorized the Hail Mary (and practically all learnt it by heart since childhood, and often recited it at night in choirs in the family) was aware that the Holy Mother could pray for them "in the hour of death."<sup>170</sup> When priests could not come for the final rites, including confession, Mary could be invoked as advocate in the tribunal of the afterlife, as the following case shows. In 1733, in the region of Zhangzhou (Fujian), an octogenarian Christian, who had spent years bed-ridden, reciting innumerable rounds of the rosary during his waking hours, fell mortally ill and became blind. Then he told his son that in a vision he had seen Jesus,

<sup>161</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 202.

<sup>162</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 77.

<sup>163</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 255.

<sup>164</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 259. See also the mention in the biography of the son of Zhang Geng, Michael Zhang Shi 張識, of his desire to confess with visiting Jesuits during his illness, see *Zhang Mi-ge-er yiji* 張彌格爾遺蹟 (*Deeds of Michael Zhang*), BnF 1016-VI/VII/VIII, f. 7b.

<sup>165</sup> Gouvea 1998, pp. 167-168.

<sup>166</sup> This phenomenon was also common in Europe; for examples of Mary ordering to visionaries to confess, or to request their villagers to confess as a sign of repentance in fifteenth-sixteenth century Spain, see Christian 1981, *passim*.

<sup>167</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 145.

<sup>168</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 145.

<sup>169</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 190.

<sup>170</sup> The Chinese text of the Hail Mary recites: 天主聖母瑪利亞。為我等罪人。今祈天主。及我等死候。 See Brunner 1964, p. 275.

who had announced to him his death within three days. On the third day, he could no longer talk, but asked for a brush, and wrote, in spite of his blindness "The most holy Mary is accompanying me in judgement." Soon after he passed away murmuring "Yawu Maliya 亞物瑪利亞" (*Ave Maria*).<sup>171</sup>

Faith in the intercession of the Holy Mother was nourished by Chinese-language hagiographic stories circulating among Christians. Vagnone's *Shengmu xingshi* 聖母行實 (*Life of the Holy Mother*; Jiangzhou [Shanxi], 1631) in particular, which seems to have been a popular reading among Christians, contained a series of episodes from the lives of saints under the rubric "The Holy Mother assists us during the difficult time of death." The last of these stories might have rung particularly appealing, given its almost contemporary nature. Alfonso Vagnone mentions that some decades earlier a "literate from north-western [Europe]" had shown strong devotion to the Holy Mother in his youth, and was contemplating a religious life as priest. But in spite of attempts by Mary to lead him to the good way, the devil succeeded in leading him astray. One day he fell gravely ill, started feeling repentance for his deeds, and called a priest to be confessed. During confession, he had a vision. The Lord of Heaven was sitting on a throne, and was about to judge his sins. At the right was the Holy Mother, and under them he saw St. Ignatius standing. Then he heard the Lord pronounce a severe judgement over the sins of his entire life. The Holy Mother explained to the Lord in detail her silent efforts at re-educating him, and his failure to do so. Thus the eternal punishment was pronounced as the only fair outcome possible. When the man heard that, he was speechless, and could only prostrate himself at the feet of St. Ignatius, asking for mercy and promising to never forget this grace. The saint then prayed to Our Lady, who again turned to the Lord, and was able to obtain mercy for him. Finally, St. Ignatius not only obtained for him sacramental absolution, but also made the man regain his health. The man's life, under the protection of these powerful intercessors, changed course thereafter.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>171</sup> González 1955-1967, vol. 2, p. 239, n. 6, citing De La Cruz, "Narracion historica," 1734.

<sup>172</sup> See *Shengmu xingshi*, juan 3, ff. 42b-43a (WXSJ, vol. 3, pp. 1514-15) of the 1680 Guangzhou reprint, reproduced in WXSJ, vol. 3, pp. 1273-1552. More examples of Mary's intercessions can be found in Arcadio del Rosario's O.P. *Renlei zhen'an* 人類真安 (*The True Peace of Humanity*), a collection of miracle stories of the rosary completed in the 1680s. Compare the similar story about Zhang Shi 張識, who at the moment of death apparently contemplated his own judgement in front of God, and was helped by two intercessors, the Apostle Matthew and Matteo Ricci himself; see Fang 1970, p. 263, referring to a passage in Aleni's *Daxi Xitai Li xiansheng xingji* 大西西泰利先生行跡 (*Life of Matteo Ricci*); cf. CCT ARSI, vol. 12, p. 222. See also Standaert 1993a, p. 58.

Here, the hagiographic episode presented together the spiritually and physically healing powers of confession, almost taking out of the hands of the priest the sacrament. The moment of confession had become a stage for the trial in heaven, complete with celestial defence attorneys. But in fact, in the reality of daily life, the faithful had still to face as their interlocutor the priest, mostly a foreign man, the only one who held the authority to absolve them.

### Confession and Priests: Discipline and Authority

Many scholars have examined confession as a technology of domination, and have unequivocally shown how it became a central mechanism in the disciplining of Catholic societies in Europe and the colonies at the hands of the Church and the state.<sup>173</sup> Liam Brockey explores in this volume missionary reports in Portuguese and looks at the Jesuit attempt to reform Chinese mores through a host of means, including sacramental confession.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, the sacrament of penance was the most direct tool available to the priest to control religious and social behaviour. The power of confession on the daily life of Chinese Christians, however, should not be overemphasized. Confession was usually celebrated once or twice a year, and while women were more assiduous in the practice, as a missionary observed, in some places "more than half of the [Christian] men reserved ... confession for the hour of their death."<sup>175</sup> Only the most devout Christians were encouraged to take communion frequently and thus confessed regularly, and monitored their moral life through examination of conscience.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, for the tiny Christian communities, drowned in a sea of people who followed different religious tenets, and whose social customs were at times in contrast with those of Christianity, the moral constraints of Christianity were clearly a choice that individuals and families accepted to follow, rather than a machinery imposed on them by the Inquisition or the state apparatus. Pre-existing ideas of sin and retribution in Chinese culture, as already observed by

<sup>173</sup> Recent summaries of the extensive historiography on Catholic confession can be found e.g., in Myers 1996; De Boer 2001; Rusconi 2002.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. also Brockey 2002.

<sup>175</sup> Royo 1733, p. 335.

<sup>176</sup> See the testimony of the *beata* Lucia Guo Xiaoshi 郭曉使, in Archives des Missions Étrangères de Paris, *Chine*, vol. 436, f. 137. Starting in the seventeenth century, some Spanish theologians encouraged frequent communion (and its corollary, frequent confession), arguing that this would shorten the time spent in purgatory by the soul. The sacrament of penance became "a part of popular culture, ... and women especially heeded the call for more frequent confession." See Haliczzer 1996, p. 35.

scholars (see article by Erik Zürcher in the present volume) without doubt eased the acceptance of ideas of Christian penance and of the sacrament itself.

We should search in the psychological realm, rather than in coercive Church policies, an explanation for the attraction to the practice of confession among Chinese Christians. Confession exerted a certain social and religious control over Christians, but, as I have suggested, it also was an important spiritual and psychological soothing device in the face of illness and death. The two interlocking dimensions of discipline and relief are poignantly illustrated in letters written in 1695 by the leader of the Zhangzhou Christian community, Yan Mo 嚴謨 (b. 1640?; *gongsheng* 1709; d. post 1718). At that time this ancient Jesuit community had been assigned to the care of the Dominicans. In previous years, Yan Mo had been involved in a series of debates on the topic of ritual, supporting with philological arguments based on the classics the Jesuit acceptance of certain Chinese ceremonies.<sup>177</sup> For that reason, the Dominicans ostracized him and most of the local Christians, and denied them the sacraments. When his nephew Michael was seriously ill, Yan Mo asked the Dominican priest Magino Ventallol (1647–1732) to confess the young man on his death-bed. The friar, however, agreed to perform the confession only on the condition that Yan Mo recanted in writing his previous theological treatises. Yan lamented the situation in letters to the Jesuits Monteiro and Rodrigues, asking them to travel to Zhangzhou to impart the needed sacraments. In the letters, Yan compared the hoped-for visit from the Jesuits to celebrate the sacraments to a case of “starved people finding food or the dead being revived.” He also wrote that denial of sacraments, and especially confession, was like being “under hot water and burning fire.”<sup>178</sup> The impassioned pleas of Yan Mo show that sacraments – and confession in particular – were indeed a coveted spiritual solace for converts, especially when illness forebode death and possible damnation without a clear conscience.

Rather than concentrate on the disciplinary effects of confession on Christians, here I would like to show the other face of the coin, and highlight the position of authority that rituals like confession and mass conferred on the priests. This aspect was apparent in a very candid exchange between the Jesuit Rui de Figueiredo (1594–1642) and Joseph Zhu Yupu 朱毓朴, a Ming imperial relative in the Kaifeng region in the 1630s. When asked why

<sup>177</sup> See Standaert 1995.

<sup>178</sup> Yan Mo's two letters are addressed to Joseph Monteiro (*ARSI Jap.-Sin.* I, 38/42, 41/2a), and to Simão Rodrigues (*ARSI Jap.-Sin.* I, 38/42, 41/4), see *CCT ARSI*, vol. 11, pp. 63–65 and 97. A summary of the letters can be found in Chan 1996, p. 436; cf. Chan 2002, pp. 64, 67.

there was the need of an intermediary to obtain God's forgiveness, the missionary expressly acknowledged to Zhu that one of the reasons for God's bestowal of the power of confession was to give the priest authority and standing *vis-à-vis* the community:

[One of the reasons why God gave the priest the power to confess is that] it protects the missionary. He thus will be respected and loved by the people, they will approach him, listen to his religious instruction, and follow his teachings. ... [He will be respected and loved because] he enjoys such great powers, and because all those who have sinned must ask him to confess, otherwise God does not give absolution. There is no form of respect higher than this in the world. The sovereign in the court and the officials have power and influence over people, but absolutely cannot rival [the power of the priest]. How could he not be respected and loved by the people? ... [People will approach and follow him] because, when they have sins, a priest must give them absolution, otherwise one cannot hope to avoid the pains of hell and enjoy heaven. These extremely important matters of the faithful are entrusted by God to the priest, how could people not approach and follow him?<sup>179</sup>

Clearly, Christians who had accepted the idea of sin and retribution also accepted the need of a priest to confess. Conversely, the priest needed confession to exert his authority in the community. But priests had to be vigilant in defending their prerogatives as ritual experts. Occasional incidents that threatened the position of supremacy of the priest reveal that the prestige of their position – also in their capacity as *confessors* – was coveted by Chinese religious leaders in local communities, leading to the creation of split groups, run by visionaries who interpreted rituals and doctrine in creative ways. This phenomenon was exacerbated by the lack of priests in the difficult times of suppression of Christianity in the eighteenth century. These alternative religious leaders, usually men, were sometimes catechists with a

<sup>179</sup> *CCT ARSI*, vol. 3, pp. 317–318. Zhu's extensive text is entitled *Shengjiao yuanliu* 聖教源流 (*The Source and Spreading of the Holy Teachings*). The preface is dated 1635. The author was one of the many members of the Ming imperial family scattered in the empire. He purposely composed the book in vernacular Chinese and in a popular style, probably taking down notes from his oral exchanges with the missionary Rui de Figueiredo over a period of nine months between November–December 1635 and August 1636 (cf. Chan 2002, pp. 186–189). The text is organized in four books, further subdivided in *juan*. The fourth *juan* in book four, which is dedicated to rituals (*liyi*, i.e., the seven sacraments), is about confession and entitled *Jieshuo jiezui liyi* 解說解罪禮儀 (in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 3, pp. 315–345). The chapter quite possibly reflects both the typical oral instruction on confession by a Jesuit missionary, as well as the way a convert understood the priest's explanations. Indeed, the tone is familiar and the language plain.

good knowledge of Christian practices and doctrine, or more rarely local mediums, or former sectarians who had converted to Christianity, and who simply decided to create a new cult combining their previous teachings with some of the new ones. These individuals, as it customarily happened among lay Buddhist groups, tried to use the new religious symbols and rituals to cement their authority over the local community of believers. Auricular confession, so clearly the preserve of ordained priests (mostly foreign), and an unknown practice among native sectarian groups, thus became a bone of contention with “heretical leaders,” who would act as priests and administer confession, or substitute it with similar practices.

The Jesuit Sambiasi reported an early case in the 1640s. A medium in the region of Changshu was possessed by a spirit talking through a brush. One day the spirit painted the image of a king. The local people hang it immediately on an altar to kowtow to it, but the brush of the medium wrote to them “Do not worship this image, but that of the *Da Zhu* 大主!” They were left in doubt until a local Christian told them that the spirit must have been referring to his *Tianzhu* 天主. The man then brought an image of the Saviour to the temple, and “idolaters and Christians, all mixed up, met once a week to make their reverences to it.” Then the spirit started “manipulating” the crowd, ordering them through numerous written scriptures (*con ispesse scrittura*, lit. “thick writings”) to wake up early in the morning and recite prayers, while rebuking them for their sins. The people involved started thinking that the spirit was an angel of the Christian God, and, kept the matter secret, believing that they had been elected by divine powers. One day, the spirit wrote to them:

Get ready for a full confession of all your sins. On such and such day, you will all gather, and from heaven the apostle Philippe will descend to listen to your sins. You will reveal them to him in secret, and he will absolve you.

They were delighted, commented Sambiasi, because that sort of absolution came directly from heaven, and cancelled not only the guilt, but also the punishment in the afterlife, like a jubilee. They prepared themselves, gathered, and confessed their sins. Then the brush of the medium wrote on the white page:

The apostle Philippe has come, has heard you and has absolved you from all your sins. You will not need to remember or re-tell these sins, since this confession is much better than the ones you usually do with the Father, as celestial things are better than earthly ones.

They were all pleased, and such spiritual communications continued to happen for some time. But when Sambiasi, during one of his customary pastoral visits, was informed by some Christians of the facts, he gathered all

faithful, and scolded them for their “useless mental confession” and for believing in a malignant spirit. The possessed medium then started to scream and to curse the missionary, promising retribution. But that was to no avail, and apparently the Jesuit regained his position of authority.<sup>180</sup> This episode reveals to us that some Christian practices, in particular confession, had caught the imagination of local religious experts, like this medium in Changshu. Existing rituals, like the Buddhist *chanhui* that Erik Zürcher describes in his article in this volume, or similar Daoist practices, may have been the model followed by the medium and the spirit that talked through him to design this syncretic rite of blanket absolution granted by a Christian divine being descending from heaven.<sup>181</sup> By eliminating the priestly face-to-face interaction, the medium was robbing the ordained priest of his authority in the community.

These phenomena possibly became more common after the mid-eighteenth century, when Chinese priests began to be ordained in some numbers, and Chinese “impersonators” would become credible. For example, in the early 1750s – a period of strict government surveillance against Christians in Fujian, following the arrest and execution of all foreign missionaries in the province in 1748 – a man in the territory of Fuan impersonated the only Dominican remaining in the province, the native Juan Feng de Santa Maria (alias Feng Shiming Wenzi 馮世明 — 文子, 1719–1755), and went about exorcising demons, celebrating mass, and confessing the faithful.<sup>182</sup> Usually, however, when it was not possible to take the garb of the obviously foreign priest, local lay leaders tried to bypass the clergy and create a direct connection with God, like the medium of Changshu had done. In Shanxi in the early 1730s a local catechist, for example, “preached a new way to confess and take communion, that is, to put an empty chair in front of a sacred image. Christians kneel in front of the chair, confess their sins, and after confession put a towel under the chin, and communicate.”<sup>183</sup>

In spite of these incidents, however, it appears that the strict monopoly of priests over auricular confession remained mostly unbroken. Priestly exclusive authority in the realm of sacraments was certainly enhanced by their unique connection with a distant hierarchy of religious power in the Far

<sup>180</sup> Summary of an original report by Sambiasi in Bartoli 1825, Book 4, pp. 531–533; cf. Pfister 1932–1934, pp. 139–140.

<sup>181</sup> On Daoist confessional practices, see Masaaki 2002.

<sup>182</sup> González 1955–1967, vol. 2, p. 462, note 40, quoting a letter of Juan Feng de Santa Maria O.P., dated Nov. 22, 1751.

<sup>183</sup> Margiotti 1958, p. 472, citing the 1734 “Memorie della Cina” by the Procurator of Propaganda Fide in Macao, Miralta, in APF, SOCP, 1732–34, f. 254.

West, their knowledge of rituals, and of a mysterious ritual language, Latin, used during the celebrations. So central was the priestly authority that even apparent linguistic deadlock did not obstruct the rite officiated by the priest and was overcome in creative ways. For example, Buglio's *Siduo dianyao* allowed the use of translators (*tongshi* 通事) during confession in case the missionary was ignorant of the local dialect (*tuyu* 土語). However, if the penitent did not wish to communicate his or her sins in this way, one could still write one's sins and give the list to the priest during the ritual.<sup>184</sup> An exceptional case happened in 1670, after the faithful had been deprived of sacraments for several years due to the expulsion of priests from the interior of China to Guangzhou in the wake of the Calendar Case (1664–1670). Francisco Pimentel (1629–1675), a Jesuit who accompanied as chaplain a Portuguese embassy to the Kangxi Emperor in that year so describes “how [he] could give confession, not knowing anything of the language”:

The system was as follows. Seeing myself pursued all along the route by Christians who came from very far to seek me out so that they could confess themselves, and that they were most disconsolate when they found that I did not know the language, I asked a Chinese learned man, whom the Fathers had placed at the service of the Lord Ambassador to prepare papers when necessary, to make for me a confessional register in Chinese letters, placing at the top what could be under each precept, and in a separate place the number of times up to five. Above that it was to be indicated by the fingers. Beside the Chinese letters I put the Portuguese. They confessed the kind of sin, and then quickly looked for the letters that stated the number of times, and in this way they made it clear.

Yet, some were not ashamed to ask an interpreter to convey in oral translation their sins to the priest:

Many were not content, but called my slave, and through him stated all they had on their consciences, even though I told them they were not obliged to do so. These confessions were of great importance for some, for when I returned from the court I found them already dead. [...]

So that the women also could take advantage of this opportunity, they gathered in a house and quickly sent for me, and there they said their confessions and then I said Mass for them and gave them Communion, but never did a single woman confess on paper, although many of them were literate, but all confessed through interpreters despite the declaration I made to them that they did not have that obligation except on the point of death; to which they replied that they did not want to miss this

<sup>184</sup> *Siduo dianyao*, j. 1, f. 51b. To send such a list to a priest outside of confession was never allowed.

opportunity because they did not know if they would have another in their lives.<sup>185</sup>

Although he was not their “parish priest” and could not even understand them, Pimentel was sought after by men and women as the only individual capable to cleanse them of sins, and thus prepare them to possible death. Elsewhere other ingenious methods were employed in case the confessor could not understand the penitent. In the Sichuan mission, for example, an interpreter would be asked to read a list of examination questions. Each time the penitent heard the sin he had committed, he would squeeze the hand of the confessor. Another way was to put a small rope between the hand of the confessor and that of the penitent: when the sin was read aloud by the interpreter, the penitent would pull the rope, as many times as he had committed the sin. In both cases, it was necessary for the interpreter to turn his back to the confessor, and leave time between interrogations to conduct the procedure in an orderly manner.<sup>186</sup>

In these instances of “mediated confession,” we clearly see re-affirmed the centrality of the priest in ritual life. And yet, we also realize that the ritual manifested its own efficacy not so much through a connection with a specific priest, and through an individualized spiritual dialogue, but rather through the correct performance of a minimal sequence of actions, culminating in absolution. This was the kind of religious service that many Christians expected of missionaries. The efficacy of the rites was intrinsic to their correct performance (orthopraxy), and the authority of the priest derived from his power to impart efficacious rituals. As I will show in the next section, most Christians, especially in the eighteenth century, prized this “efficacious” nature of rituality.

### From Moral Reform to Ritual Efficacy?

#### An Attempt at a Chronology of Confession: The Example of Indulgences

In the different parts of this essay so far, I have given a bird-eye view of the ritual prescriptions and practices related to confession. In the process, I have offered some sense of the chronological development of confession in the China mission, from a conception of the sacrament as a tool of moral self-reform in a “Confucian” vein, very much linked to Jesuit early spirituality (what I have called a “pastoral of perfection”), towards a more ritualis-

<sup>185</sup> See Francisco Pimentel S.J., “Brief Account of the Journey Made to the Court of Peking by Lord Manuel de Saldanha, Ambassador Extraordinary of the King of Portugal to the Emperor of China and Tartary (1667–1670),” in Wills 1994, Appendix A, pp. 233–234.

<sup>186</sup> Launay 1920, vol. 2, p. 326.

tic approach, once Christianity started expanding in the 1630s. This approach found powerful incentives in the "pastoral of fear" more suitable for the masses of Christians. With notable exceptions (such as some of the "Jansenist" spiritual practices in the M.E.P. mission of Sichuan), the trend appears to have intensified during the eighteenth century, partly as a result of the impoverishment of spiritual life determined by the government suppression of Christianity and the lack of priests. To draw a solid chronological history of the sacrament of penance in China would entail a study of the spiritual and theological discussions on penance in Europe between the Council of Trent and the early nineteenth century, and how they were transferred to China, a task that would take me too far. Rather, I will here concentrate on one of the practices that reflects a rise in a form of ritual privileging the aspect of efficacy and immediate spiritual benefits over concerns for moral reform of the self during the eighteenth century: indulgences.

Together with baptism and confession, indulgences were seen as another tool to diminish the impact of sins on one's life and on the afterlife. The word originally meant "kindness or favour," but acquired in late antiquity the meaning of "remission of a tax or debt." By the early modern period, most Catholic theologians defined it as an extra-sacramental remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, after the guilt had been forgiven. Baptism cancelled all sins committed previous to it, as well as all the penalties attached to those sins. Confession, on the other hand, removed the guilt and the eternal punishment for mortal sins, but not the so-called temporal punishments, that is penances both imposed by confessors in this life and to be expiated in purgatory. Indulgences, which were granted by the Church, allowed penitents to repay their debt in this life through alms, prayer, and minor forms of personal penance, thus avoiding harsh and unrealistic public penances, and diminishing the pains of purgatory as well. Moreover, starting in the fifteenth century, indulgences started also to be applied for the benefit of the dead, as a form of suffrage.<sup>187</sup>

The practice, however, soon lost its spiritual dimension, becoming a true money-making scheme for monarchs and popes to finance their building projects or their war campaigns. As it is well known, abuses in granting in-

<sup>187</sup> The theological subtleties, often rather sophistic, on indulgences are summarized in a number of studies. I have consulted the monumental, but somewhat dated and anti-Catholic opus by Lea 1895, vol. 3; *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 1913-1922, vol. 7, pp. 783-788, entry on "Indulgences" by W.H. Kent; *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 16, cols. 1718-1720, entry "Indulgences - Aperçu historique," by Pierre Adnès; Lacoste 1998, entry on "Indulgences," pp. 571-572; *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (2003), entry "Indulgences" by P.F. Palmer and A. Tavard, pp. 436-441.

dulgences were one of the targets of attack by Martin Luther (1483-1546), and as a consequence, the practice lost some of its attraction even in the Catholic camp in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the Council of Trent, in its anti-Protestant spirit, reaffirmed their orthodoxy and "salutary nature for the Christian people." While initially Pius V abolished monetary indulgences, curtailing their importance and appeal, the establishment by Clement IX in 1669 of a Congregation to tightly control the granting of indulgences reflected resurgence in interest for indulgences as opportunities for spiritual benefit among the laity. After they ceased to be monetary, indulgences were increasingly used as a stimulus directed at the laity to perform spiritual exercises and engage in new devotions. The Church bestowal of indulgences, and the laity's enthusiastic reception of them, produced an inflationary phenomenon, with people asking more and more spiritual benefits in exchange for their prayers and penances.

This attitude reverberated in the China mission only starting in the very late seventeenth century. The Jesuits apparently did not give great importance to indulgences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in China. This reflected the climate in Europe, as well as the spirituality of the Order, interested in moral reform, rather than in a more "mechanical" kind of ritual. This may also help explain why the Jesuits promoted the public penances described above in cases of particular gravity, somehow resuscitating the Christian practices of public penance of late antiquity. However, starting in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, after the arrival of other religious orders and congregations, sources start mentioning indulgences more frequently, and texts in Chinese on indulgences appeared.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>188</sup> See *HCC*, p. 625, for early references to indulgences in the China mission. Here I quote the description of various kinds of indulgences that I will mention in this section, as found in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 1913-1922, vol. 7, entry on "Indulgences": "An indulgence that may be gained in any part of the world is *universal*, while one that can be gained only in a specified place (Rome, Jerusalem, etc.) is *local*. A further distinction is that between *perpetual* indulgences, which may be gained at any time, and *temporary*, which are available on certain days only, or within certain periods. *Real* indulgences are attached to the use of certain objects (crucifix, rosary, medal); *personal* are those which do not require the use of any such material thing, or which are granted only to a certain class of individuals, e.g., members of an order or confraternity. The most important distinction, however, is that between *plenary* indulgences and *partial*. By a plenary indulgence is meant the remission of the entire temporal punishment due to sin so that no further expiation is required in Purgatory. A partial indulgence commutes only a certain portion of the penalty; and this portion is determined in accordance with the penitential discipline of the early Church. To say that an indulgence of so many days or years is granted means that it cancels an amount of purgatorial punishment equivalent to that which would have been remitted, in the sight of God, by the performance of so many days or years of

One of the oldest and most famous indulgences was that of the Porziuncola, originally to be gained through a pilgrimage to the Franciscan sites in Assisi (Italy). It is no wonder that this and other indulgences were first presented in a systematic way in Chinese by a Franciscan, Pedro de la Piñuela (1650–1704) in his work *Dashe jielüe* 大赦解略 (*A Short Explanation of Plenary Indulgences*, BnF, *Chinois* 7275-I).<sup>189</sup> In his 1689 preface to Piñuela's work, the Christian literatus Liu Ning 劉凝 (ca. 1625 – ca. 1715) from Jianchang 建昌 (Jiangxi) explained to Chinese readers the connection of the other forms of remissions of sins, baptism and confession, with plenary indulgences. Liu praised

the Supreme Lord for his love, since he has given us baptism to cleanse the root of our original sin, and then again confession to eliminate the filth of one's sins. Even if we cannot avoid spending time in purgatory, we have the hope to go to heaven. Pitying people's weakness, however, God has also given us the great grace of plenary indulgences (*dashe* 大赦).<sup>190</sup>

He continued hinting that he had learnt about this practice from the Western literatus Piñuela, who had obviously explained to him that the Holy Mother and the saints had a treasury of merits at their disposal, that they could share with the faithful to free them from the pains of purgatory. Also the Franciscan opened his own explanation of the matter unambiguously connecting the rituals of baptism and confession to indulgences, calling them all "regulations" of Christianity (*lingxi zhi gui* 領洗之規; *jiezui zhi gui* 解罪之規; *dashe zhi gui* 大赦之規). Moreover, it appeared clearly from the friar's illustration of the necessary steps to obtain them, that plenary indulgences were a way to push the faithful to confession, mass attendance and prayer (especially the rosary).<sup>191</sup>

the ancient canonical penance. Here, evidently, the reckoning makes no claim to absolute exactness; it has only a relative value. God alone knows what penalty remains to be paid and what its precise amount is in severity and duration. Finally, some indulgences are granted on behalf of the living only, while others may be applied on behalf of the souls departed. It should be noted, however, that the application has not the same significance in both cases. The Church in granting an indulgence to the living exercises her jurisdiction; over the dead she has no jurisdiction and therefore makes the indulgence available for them by way of suffrage (*per modum suffragii*), i.e., she petitions God to accept these works of satisfaction and in consideration thereof to mitigate or shorten the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory."

<sup>189</sup> Rosso 1948a, pp. 266–267.

<sup>190</sup> Preface by Liu Ning, October 13, 1689, in Piñuela 1689, ff. 1a–2b.

<sup>191</sup> Piñuela 1689, f. 6a, describes the steps to get an indulgence as follows: repent, recite prayers, attend mass, receive communion, and chant the rosary and *Angelus*.

The popularity of indulgences in eighteenth-century Chinese Catholic communities was mainly boosted by the diffusion of confraternities and the concern for the salvation of oneself and the deceased. Initially established mainly in urban centres in Jiangnan by the Jesuits in the 1640s to conduct religious activities in absence of priests, confraternities were later also established by other congregations. One of the attractions of a confraternity was the opportunity to earn merits for oneself and the souls in purgatory through the common prayer of the members.<sup>192</sup> Let us examine an example from Fujian.

Dominicans established devotional confraternities such as the Confraternity of the Rosary, the Confraternity of the Girdle of St. Thomas, and the Confraternity of the Name of Jesus by the late Kangxi period (1680s–1720s) in Fujian.<sup>193</sup> These groups were eminently devotional, and their aim was the accumulation of merits for the individual members, the earning of indulgences for the souls of purgatory, and the organization of processions and special functions. Confraternities of the Rosary (*Meiguijinghui* 玫瑰經會) were also endowed with a printed statute at the initiative of the Dominican

<sup>192</sup> For a summary of research about confraternities in China (and their different kinds, i.e., associations, congregations and sodalities), see *HCC*, pp. 456–461. The popularity of indulgences is also reflected in the publication in the 1780s of the Chinese translation of a short treatise on indulgences originally written by the Secretary of Propaganda Fide Stefano Borgia, entitled *Enshe lüeshuo* 恩赦略說 (*A Short Explanation of Indulgences*). In the Archives of Propaganda Fide, SOCP, vol. 67 (1791–1792), ff. 247–266, 267–285, 286–304, there are three copies of the Beijing edition of this small booklet in Chinese, sent to Rome by Procurator Giambattista Marchini in 1790. In ff. 233v–234r–v, Marchini explains that this booklet is the translation of Borgia's Instruction on Indulgences originally given to the Congregato della Sacra Famiglia Giuseppe Cian [Zhang]. It was first translated into Chinese by the Bishop Cadradense Jean-Didier de St. Martin M.E.P. in 1787 with some other decrees. The manuscript was sent to the Bishop of Beijing Alexandre de Gouvea to be printed. Once this was done, copies were sent back to Macao, but de St. Martin discovered that some literati had corrected the text, and made it more concise and stylistically beautiful to them, but had ruined the original and orthodox meaning. Thus this book was never distributed. Marchini mentions a plan by Jean-Didier de St. Martin to later publish a corrected version again in Sichuan, and indeed a copy of the Sichuan edition can be found in the Bibliothèque Asiatique M.E.P., Paris (thanks to Ad Dudink for pointing the BAMEP copy to me). On this text, see Margiotti 1968, pp. 455–456, "Appendice: Piccola aggiunta alla bibliografia del Card. Stefano Borgia"; D'Arelli 2001.

<sup>193</sup> References to such confraternities can be found in González 1955–1967, vol. 2, p. 296, quoting a letter by Fr. Matheu (1721) and another by Fr. Hoscote (1731); p. 441, referring to a letter by Fr. Teradillos (1756).

Vicar Apostolic of Fujian, Magino Ventallol in the early years of the eighteenth century, and thus we know most about their structure.<sup>194</sup>

Membership in the Confraternity of the Rosary was obtained by application to a Dominican priest, and only members could accrue benefits. Everybody, "rich and poor, man and woman, old and young, disabled or sick" was allowed to join. Even dead people could be enlisted, as others could pray on their behalf. Merit was gained through recitation of the rosary, and the practice was usually done privately. On the first Sunday of the month members were called to gather for common prayer. Also, special masses were celebrated for the souls of dead members on a series of Marian feast days. The only public activity of the Confraternity was a communal "welcoming" of the Holy Mother (*yuying Shengmu* 與迎聖母), that is a procession with her statue. The procession entailed special rituals and indulgences. The statute suggested as a meritorious deed the encouragement given to sick members to confess, and the escort of the holy sacrament to the house of the sick, or at least, if that was impossible, kneeling at the sound of the bell accompanying the sacrament. In case of death of a member, merit could be gained by paying for the celebration of masses, as well for a funerary ceremony at which a banner of Our Lady proper to the Confraternity could be brought.<sup>195</sup>

But, as clearly stated in the preface to the rules, the main purpose of the Confraternity was to obtain the remission of one's sins in order to "ascend the path of Heaven," and to gain indulgences for the souls of the dead in purgatory (*lianyu* 煉獄):

All those who recite this prayer [i.e., the rosary] will be bestowed with grace by the Lord of Heaven, and through the remission of sins they will ascend the path of Heaven. From the beginnings [of its establishment in Europe] until today, many in the whole world have entered this confraternity, and many have recited this prayer, many have received the merciful spiritual benefits of the Holy Mother who has performed numerous miracles. Over time many popes have granted great [i.e., plenary] and small [i.e., partial] indulgences to this confraternity. ... If one desires to obtain such grace, one must fully repent, confess, and take communion without being in sinful state. Otherwise, the state of sinfulness will hamper the indulgence, and how will it then be possible to have the penalty for the sins [to be expiated in] purgatory (*lianzui* 煉罪) remitted?<sup>196</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Ventallol (post 1718).

<sup>195</sup> Ventallol (post 1718), f. 17a.

<sup>196</sup> Ventallol post-1718, "Preface." Gentili, a successor of Ventallol in Fujian in the mid-19th century, describes the procession of the Virgin's statue for the feast of the Rosary in Zhangzhou, precisely the community where Ventallol resided most of his

Invariably, plenary indulgences were conditional to full contrition, sacramental confession, and communion. The confraternity's aim, however, was not simply indulgence-earning for oneself, but also for one's departed. This derived from the Catholic tradition but fit well with Chinese concerns for the deceased ancestors. Indulgences in the Catholic tradition were formally granted by the pope and consisted of a diminishing or cancelling of the punishment that God meted out at the time of the particular judgment over the souls in purgatory, while the souls in hell had no recourse. Living people could obtain this relief in form of "suffrage" from the Church due to their meritorious deeds or their prayers. The Virgin Mary and the saints were considered powerful intercessors in this process. Given the importance of filial piety in China, the Catholic system of indulgences could be quite attractive to Christians, who could gain through their merits and prayers the salvation of their baptized ancestors.<sup>197</sup> In fact, most of the Confraternity's statute was a dry list of special indulgences bestowed on members and of the popes who had granted them, a sort of bureaucratic ledger or a mechanical device to obtain the suffrage and the subsequent earning of mercy in the afterlife. But such process was predicated upon contrition and confession first, if one wanted the most coveted plenary indulgences.<sup>198</sup>

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latter years. Gentili mentions that one of the main aims for the members of the Confraternity during the feast was to obtain copious indulgences; see Gentili 1888, vol. 3, pp. 215-216.

<sup>197</sup> The description of the "communication of merits among saints" (communion of the saints; *shengshen xiangtong gong* 聖神相通功), under which indulgences were subsumed, was explained to Chinese Christians in catechisms like the *Jiaoyao jielue* 教要解略 (see *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, pp. 203-204), which compared the concept with the imperial bestowal of privileges on deceased ancestors; cf. Dudink 2004, p. 30, note 121. So-called "forms for the transmission of merit to the souls in purgatory" (*tong-gong lianling dan* 通功煉靈單 or simply *tonggong dan* 通功單) were circulated at the time of death of Christians, carrying their names and a request that all Christians pray for the deceased; for eighteenth-century examples, see *Qing zhong qianqi Xi-yang Tianzhujiao zai Hua huodong dang'an shiliao* 2003, vol. 1, pp. 287 and 421 (reproduction of a form confiscated by authorities in Sichuan).

<sup>198</sup> These Fujianese confraternities survived the suppression of the Yongzheng period. Looking retrospectively at the history of his Vicariate in 1773, a successor of Ventallol, the Spanish Dominican and Vicar Apostolic of Fujian Francisco Pallas, observed that at that date "in the Vicariate there are several places where, although none of the churches that stood there before the general destruction [of 1724] exist any longer, nevertheless we find Confraternities of the Rosary, established [in the past]." He did not know if they had been founded with the due solemnity, but he petitioned the Pope to forgive all defects, and "allow members to enjoy all the indulgences that members of similar Confraternities, men and women, enjoy elsewhere." This confirms that earning of indulgences was indeed a central and permanent feature of the Confrater-



Other Confraternities, such as the Jesuit-sponsored Confraternity of the Annunciation of Our Lady in Beijing, worked in similar ways. The 1734 rules stipulated that complete contrition, sacramental confession and communion were the conditions for members to earn a plenary indulgence. This was also true of moribund members, who needed to be contrite, to confess, and to invoke the name of Jesus and Mary at their death-bed to be saved.<sup>199</sup> Once again, the Confraternity's activities aimed at inculcating among members the importance of regular confession to attain the purity to either communicate or be saved in the afterlife. Similar provisions could also be found in the statutes of another confraternity in Beijing, sponsored by the Carmelites in the Qianlong period, the Association of the Scapular of Mary.<sup>200</sup> This picture is confirmed in a 1788 letter by the Propaganda missionary in Beijing Giacomo Ferretti (ca. 1754–1824). In mentioning the devotional activities of a number of confraternities in the capital, such as his own Confraternity of the Seven Sorrows, the Confraternity of the Carmel in Haidian district, the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament at the French Jesuit church, the Confraternity of the Annunciation of Mary at the Cathedral, and the Confraternity of Good Death at the Dongtang church, he found that they were very useful since they encouraged Christians to meet at least monthly, to confess and to communicate.

Excesses, however, were not lacking, as Ferretti acknowledged. For example, in the Chinese language manual of his own confraternity he found written that “the Virgin goes down every Saturday to Purgatory to free souls of deceased confreres.” Members had also a wrong concept of sin, since they considered a mortal sin to miss fast on Wednesday, but not on Friday and Saturday, which were the canonical days for abstinence. Finally, like “some rascals in Naples” (“alcuni lazaroni napolitani”), Beijing Christians sometimes tended to “trust more Saint Gennaro than Jesus himself,” that is to rely on the intercession of saints more than on God's mercy.<sup>201</sup> These behaviours indicate that Christians were very much concerned with the efficacy of their devotional activities and rituals, and in particular with the indulgences for the dead, and this seem to be a second important factor that encouraged their diffusion.

ities. See APF, Acta CP, Vol. 13, Jan. 13-16, 1776, ff. 68r-v, summary of a letter by Pallas, dated Sept. 14, 1773.

<sup>199</sup> See the statutes of the Confraternity, section *Shengmu lingbaohui dashe guitiao* 聖母領報會大赦規條 (*Regulations of the Plenary Indulgences of the Confraternity of the Annunciation of Our Lady*), in Soares 1694, f. 7a.

<sup>200</sup> See the statutes on indulgences in Pruggmayer 1759, ff. 45a-49b.

<sup>201</sup> See APF, SOCP, vol. 66 (1789–1790), ff. 307v-308r; cf. Margiotti 1963, p. 122.

The desire for efficacy, compounded by rivalry among missionaries, probably encouraged a sort of inflationary phenomenon of indulgences. In Hu-guang, for example, the Portuguese Jesuit João Duarte (1671–1752), in competition with the Vicar Apostolic Johannes Müllener C.M. (1673–1742), issued in the late 1730s printed fliers with formulas of partial indulgences so outrageous, that the Vicar asked Rome whether they were authentic. The indulgence stipulated that “with contrition and the recitation of seven *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* on any day of Lent, except on Sundays and other days of the year, one earns 154,000 years of indulgences. Moreover, without confessing and taking communion, it is enough to repent and recite these seven *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* to earn plenary indulgence and the liberation of a soul from purgatory, ... as it would be for the special indulgence of the Seven Churches of Rome.”<sup>202</sup> The earning of partial indulgences without confession and communion made it particularly easy to intervene in favour of one's deceased relatives. Other indulgences required some more effort, although their authenticity was also doubted by Müllener: those who recited 34,000 *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*, or attended 34 masses, or fasted for 34 times, or mortified themselves for 34 times, or did 34 deeds of mercy, would free 34 souls from Purgatory and convert 34 sinners ... and so on.<sup>203</sup> Yet, most indulgences were simply attached to medals and rosaries distributed by missionaries (so-called “real indulgences”). Their possession, together with prayer, was sufficient for the earning of the benefits. When imported medals were lacking, missionaries resorted to small paper images in the form of medals, as Duarte did with stamps of the Immaculate.<sup>204</sup> Thus in these cases contrition, confession, and communion were not always necessary.

<sup>202</sup> Letter of Müllener to Propaganda Fide, Aug. 30, 1737, in APF, SOCP, vol. 47 (1738), f. 146r. The Chinese-language transcript of this flier can be found in APF, SOCP, vol. 47 (1738), f. 150r-v, *Lingbaohui huodongzhanli dashe dan* 領報會活動瞻禮大赦單 (*Table of the Plenary Indulgences on Moveable Feasts of the Confraternity of the Annunciation of Our Lady*).

<sup>203</sup> See APF, SOCP, vol. 47 (1738), f. 154r: “教皇新頒大赦。一件念天主經三萬四千遍，念聖母經三萬四千遍，一件聽彌撒三十四臺，一件守大齋三十四日，一件克己三十四次，一件行形神哀矜三十四次，每行一件得救煉靈三十四個升天，三十四個改惡行善。此要專心向耶穌聖心所求。”

<sup>204</sup> See APF, SOCP, vol. 47 (1738), f. 155r. This document contains a series of indulgences for those who pray the Rosary or part of it in front of an image of the Immaculate Mary. At the back of the letter is glued a small image of Mary made with a black ink stamp of poor quality. The oval stamp seems to be of Chinese manufacture, with an image of the Virgin surrounded by the kind of clouds typically found in Chinese paintings.

In sum, indulgences were not only a way to encourage confession and communion, but also a system that allowed Christians to eliminate the consequences of sins through personal devotion and a rituality sustained by recitational prayer, fasting, sacramentals, and the like. Although they trusted the power of relics and prayer, Ricci and Aleni would have probably found the eighteenth century penances shallow and of little consequence for moral growth. But for many Christians, they provided a method of accountability to deal with sin and its consequences in their life, and offered a personal way to enhance the efficacy of sacramental confession.

### CONCLUSION Confession and Salvation

In 1683, the Sicilian Jesuit Prospero Intorcetta wrote back home, describing the work he had been doing in the previous five years on the beautiful church of Hangzhou, built in baroque style by his confrere Martino Martini. The church's interior had been all covered in colors and Chinese varnish, but, Intorcetta proudly observed "what attracts an infinite multitude of people of all conditions and of both sexes to see and admire [the building] is the large number of sacred images."<sup>205</sup>

The paintings, eighty-four in total and some very large indeed, were placed in different parts of the church, and organized in different groups by themes. On the main altar, besides an image of the Saviour, one could see the genealogy of Christ starting with Abraham, some episodes of the early life of Christ and of the Virgin, the Evangelists and some Fathers of the Church. The two side altars, dedicated to St. Paul and St. Peter and closed by grilles, contained more images of male and female saints and two baptismal scenes (of Christ, and emperor Constantine, possibly a reference to hopes of conversion for the Chinese emperor), among others. The frontispiece of the choir contained images about the latter part of the life of Jesus, including the Last Supper and the Resurrection. At the entrance gates were

<sup>205</sup> See the transcript of a letter by Prospero Intorcetta to his brother Francesco Intorcetta S.J., Hangzhou, August 18, 1683, in ARSI *Jap.-Sin.* 163, ff. 223r-224v, as transcribed in Capizzi 1989, p. 19, where Intorcetta adds that "they are painted in such an excellent brush that they cannot be distinguished from the good printed European images that circulate in the world. This Chinese Christian painter of mine has been gifted by heaven with the perfect ability to paint images *al vivo*, with shadows and foreshortenings and other lively features of European painting." Intorcetta hints here that the model for the paintings were "printed European images," i.e., copperplate prints of the kind produced by the Wierix brothers and by other printers later on in Italy and elsewhere. Cf. also the discussion in Mungello 1994, pp. 48-51.

four paintings of the Four Ends (death, judgment, paradise and hell). On the walls of the naves, the paintings were divided in upper and lower levels: on top were images of Apostles and saints, whereas in the lower level, covered by "golden grilles to defend them from the touch of the people" (*con suoi cancelli dorati avanti che li diffendono dal tocco delle mani del popolo*) were ten images of Christ's miracles, including the exorcism of a possessed man and the resurrection of Lazarus. All images had an explanation in Chinese characters attached to them.

One can imagine the missionary or the catechists explaining the pictures to visitors, using the vivid images to proselytize, or even individuals wandering by themselves in the temple. While literati could read the Chinese inscriptions, illiterate could enjoy the figures and the stories as explained to them. As Charles Le Gobien S.J. (1653-1708) put it, in describing the paintings at a later date, "every painting was like a preacher, who announced to all onlookers the truth of the Gospel, in a way accommodated to the capabilities of each, and to their intelligence. Each would get some teaching: the rustic people (*il popolo rozzo*) from the figures that they saw, and the literati from the explanations attached."<sup>206</sup>

Upon entering the gates, the first images encountered by a visitor were the most shocking: the Four Ends, presenting the themes of death and the afterlife.<sup>207</sup> Then, followed a cycle of sensational depictions of the kind of efficacious miracles that attracted many Chinese to Christianity (Intorcetta called them *popolo*): exorcism of evil spirits and healing. The cycle also contained a depiction of the remission of sins: Christ saves the adulterous woman from stoning, and forgives her. On the other hand, the higher level of the church and the altars carried glorious images of Christ and his life, and dignified portraits of saints. This was a gallery of exemplary figures, and of the majestic, almost imperial images of Christ.

I find highly suggestive that the Jesuits who planned the paintings were keenly aware of the different levels of readings involved. Literati may have been more attracted to the pictures in the altars and the upper fringe of the

<sup>206</sup> See Capizzi 1989, p. 10, quoting from Le Gobien's *Istoria dell'Editto dell'imperatore della Cina in favore della religione Cristiana*, Turin, 1699.

<sup>207</sup> Couplet's depictions in his *Simo zhenlun* and the Wierix's prints can give us an idea of what the paintings in Hangzhou may have represented. A very good summary of the historical development of the idea of the Four Ends can be found in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vols. 23-24, entry "Fins derniers" by Paul Tihon, cols. 356-382. On images of the Four Ends in early modern Europe, see e.g., Martins 1997. On images of Christian hell and paradise in China, see Standaert 1994; cf. Civil 1996, especially pp. 393-399, "L'enfer dans les 'Imágenes de la Historia Evangélica'," i.e., the work of Jeronimo Nadal S.J., reproduced in China by Aleni.

naves. The *popolo* may have found more enticing the miracle stories and the *Novissima*, so close to their touch and eyes. Yet, all visitors alike were aware of the two levels, and Christians experienced the two dimensions as closely intertwined in their catechetical instruction and ritual practices.<sup>208</sup> In the perspective of my essay, the Hangzhou cycle of paintings seems to bring together the complex interaction of the pastorals of perfection and of fear which underpinned sacramental confession.

At the beginning of his mission Ricci spent notable efforts in introducing the ideas of sin and self-examination. This reflected the Jesuit spiritual style, so concerned with moral betterment (e.g., through the *Spiritual Exercises*), fitting well with the Confucian discourse of self-cultivation. However, the meditation practices also prepared the ground for the sacrament of penance. Moreover, as I have shown, the sacraments of baptism and confession were both firmly linked to the idea of salvation, and – especially confession – to the themes of the passing of time and of *memento mori* presented by Ricci.

Starting in the 1630s, Aleni's prescriptive texts fully illustrated the ritual elements of confession within the context of the early Jesuit spiritual emphasis for self-cultivation, paying great attention to examination and contrition, and to disinterested love for God as motivation for repentance, as contemporary writings by Christian literati also confirm. Yet, the search for perfection was never separated from fear and scruples, and the practices of the purgative way. As Part Two has suggested, the daily experience of confession was powerfully connected with the Christians' concern for salvation in the afterlife. The kind of audiences that increasingly occupied the missionaries, as well as their growing numbers, determined a growing neglect of individualized spiritual direction through confession (with the exceptions, of course, of the most devout sectors of the communities, or of the most scrupulous priests, like the M.E.P. missionaries in Sichuan), and a rise in a penitential rituality concerned with efficaciousness, that found its climax in the phenomenon of indulgences in the eighteenth century. Although annual confession and confession in *articulo mortis* remained paramount concerns, indulgences allowed Chinese Christians who had little chances to see a priest, especially in time of persecution, to earn "salvation credit" in the af-

<sup>208</sup> Andrius Rudamina, for example, showed prints of the souls in hell, purgatory and paradise to his Fujianese followers in the early 1630s, and converts mentioned that missionaries carried prints of the Last Judgment; see *Kouduo richao*, j. 1, pp. 16b-17b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 12, pp. 68-70); see Standaert 1993a, p. 57, note 14, for reference to other such pictures mentioned in *Kouduo richao*.

terlife for themselves and their beloved, supplementing the efficacy of the sacrament of penance.<sup>209</sup>

It would be an error to think, however, that literati and commoners held different feelings towards the eternal consequences of their sins. One of Aleni's followers, Li Sixuan 李嗣玄 (d. after 1661), expressed his fears rather clearly. When "confession and absolution had fallen into abeyance" due to the disruptions of the Ming-Qing war in his native Jianning (Fujian) in 1646, Li was overwhelmed with horror for his sins, and yet felt also consoled at the remembrance of the spiritual guidance and the sacramental absolution that Aleni had given him the previous year:

Sin and crime were piled up like mountains – thinking of that made one perspire [with fear]. But just because I was so afraid [of the consequences] of my own sins, I was even more grateful for the favours received from my teacher Aleni, and I could not help weeping, tears running down and across [my face].<sup>210</sup>

In those perilous times, death was a daily matter, and the piling up of sins, as it had been the case for Miao Shixiang in Fuan, created enormous anxiety. Even in times of peace, however, apprehension over sins and death never abated. This poem by the prominent Hangzhou Christian Zhang Xingyao 張星曜 (1633 – post 1715), entitled *Sihou ming* 死候銘 (On Death) and belonging to a set of four poems, *Simo ming* 四末銘 (The Four Ends), was possibly inspired in the 1680s by the first painting of the *Novissima* commissioned by Intorcetta for the local church, the one on death. It eerily echoes the *canzone* translated by Ricci into Chinese that opened my essay, but with an even stronger sense of urgency:

The time of your death,  
is so sudden that it cannot be known.  
The good and evil of your life,  
at this point cannot be altered.  
Wife and children all encircle you,

<sup>209</sup> The Jesuit Gottfried Xaver von Laimbeckhoven (1707-1787) thought that even the most ignorant Christians in the eighteenth century retained at least the idea of salvation, and "believed that if they received the Holy Oils on their deathbed, they would go straight to heaven." However, these people usually cared little for confession and communion on the point of death, a further confirmation of an increase in mechanistic rituality during periods of suppression and diminished priestly control; see Krahl 1964, p. 141.

<sup>210</sup> Erik Zürcher's translation of the biography of Giulio Aleni by Li Sixuan, in Zürcher 1997, p. 115 (see Chinese text in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 12, p. 256). The main task of Aleni's tours at this time of civil war, apparently, was precisely to administer confession; see Zürcher 1997, p. 113, and *CCT ARSI*, vol. 12, p. 255.

as their love and longing seek to hold you,  
 But sickness and pain oppress your body,  
 while the fear and dread are unbearable.  
 If the Lord does not protect you,  
 you will surely be bound by Satan.  
 Convert to good and correct your faults,  
 guarding against danger hour by hour.  
 Do not indulge the desires of your flesh,  
 nor departs from thoughts of the Way.  
 Time is a galloping colt,  
 and you still must be unwearied in your efforts.<sup>211</sup>

Only “converting to good and correcting one’s faults” could free the dying from the bounds of Satan. Only sacramental confession could make the fear and dread of one’s sins bearable. Confession, it appears, had truly become one of the central rituals of Chinese Christianity, a ritual that offered relief and hope of salvation, as a community of believers and as individual sinners.

<sup>211</sup> I have adopted Mungello’s translation (Mungello 1994, p. 169), but modified it in two points: *qianshan gaiguo* 遷善改過 “Move toward the good and away from evil” I rendered as “Convert to good and correct your faults”; and *shangwu zizi* 尚務孳孳 “and it you must urgently heed” as “and you still must be unwearied in your efforts,” where *zizi* 孳孳 means “diligent, hardworking,” and alludes to the expression *zizi/zizi wei shan* 孜孜為善 “persevere in doing good”; see Zhang, *Shengjiao zanming* 聖教贊銘 (*Inscriptions in Praise of the Holy Teachings*), BnF, Chinois 7067, f. 11b.

### Appendix 1 Comparison of Tables of Contents: *Dizui zhenggui lue* and *Dizui zhenggui*

Aleni, 滌罪正規略 *Dizui zhenggui lue* (Abridged Rules for the Purification of Sins), in *Tongku jingji* 痛苦經蹟, in *WXSJ*, vol. 3, pp. 1195-1272.

Aleni, 滌罪正規 *Dizui zhenggui* (Rules for the Purification of Sins) in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 337-579.

滌罪正規略 <i>Dizui zhenggui lue</i> Table of Contents	滌罪正規 <i>Dizui zhenggui</i> Table of Contents
	Preface by Yang Tingyun 1a-5a (pp. 341-349)
General Introduction 1a (p. 1197)	<i>j. 1 Examination</i> General Introduction 1a (p. 357)
Examination of conscience 2b (p. 1200)	Examination 2b (p. 360)
Examination item list, arranged according to all the sins infringing upon the Commandments, as to facilitate self-examination 5a (p. 1205)	Examining thoughts 3a (p. 361)
	Examining words 5a (p. 365)
	Examining actions 6a (p. 367)
	Examining omissions 8a (p. 371)
	Avoid forgetting 8b (p. 372)
Ten Commandments and infringements, 5a-15a (pp. 1205-1225)	Ten Commandments 10a (p. 375)
	Infringements upon the Commandments 10b (p. 376)
Seven Capital Sins 15b-20a (p. 1226)	Seven Capital Sins 25a (p. 405)
	Method of daily examination 30b (p. 416)
	Method of monthly examination 30b
	Method of yearly examination 31a-31b (pp. 417-418)
Contrition 21a (p. 1237)	<i>j. 2 Contrition</i> General Introduction 1a (p. 419)
	Full meaning of contrition 2a (p. 421)
	When contrition is incomplete 3b (p. 424)
	On mortal and venial sins 6a (p. 429)
	The effects of contrition 7a (p. 431)
	To develop true contrition 10a (p. 437)

Act of Contrition (version A addressed to God the Father) 25a (p. 1245)	Act of Contrition (version B addressed to Jesus) 12a-b (pp. 441-442)
	Questions and answers on contrition 12b
	Good rules for moral conversion 17a (p. 451)
	Chastity and avoidance of lust 20a (p. 457)
	Twelve Thoughts for Meditation 21a (p. 459)
	Seven Steps 25b-28b (pp. 468-474)
<b>Confession 26a (p. 1247)</b>	<b>j. 3 Confession</b>
	Meaning of confession 1a (p. 477)
	Explaining doubts on sin 3a (p. 481)
	Basic steps to confession 7b (p. 490)
	Attitude to confession 12a (p. 499)
	Repeating and improving a confession 21a (p. 517)
	The secrecy of confession 21b (p. 518)
	Ritual rules of confession 22b-24a (pp. 520-523)
<b>Satisfaction 28b (p. 1252)</b>	<b>j. 4 Satisfaction</b>
	Meaning of satisfaction 1a (p. 525)
	Three meritorious acts of satisfaction 2b
	First: Alms 4a (p. 531)
	Second: Fasting 13b (p. 550)
	Third: Prayer 20a (p. 563)
	To give satisfaction, rely on grace 23b
	Resolution of doubtful points 24a-25b (pp. 571-574)
[Appendix] Penances of earlier Christians to expiate past sins 30a (p. 1255)	[Appendix] Penances of earlier Christians 25b-28a (p. 574-579)
	[This section, compared with that in <i>Dizui zhenggui lue</i> , is much longer and contains additions and modifications, including a discussion of good death.]
False confession is an even greater sin 31b (p. 1258) Sin is shameful, but it is not shameful to confess it 34b (p. 1264) A pious and sincere confession turns all pollution into cleanliness 35b (p. 1266) Evil not confessed is never forgiven 37b-38b (pp. 1270-1272)	

## Appendix 2 Confiteor and Act of Contrition

### Confiteor 解罪經

See Brunner 1964, pp. 275-276.

我重罪人。多履錯者。籲告吾主全能天主。卒世童貞聖母瑪利亞。聖彌額爾亞而甘若。聖若翰保弟斯大。聖伯多祿。聖保祿。聖多默。一切天朝聖人聖女。及爾罷德肋代天主位者。我今稽首。自訟自承。凡思。言。行得罪至極。多能為善而未之為。多能戒惡。而弗之戒。此罪之故。咸歸於我。天主臺前痛心慘悔。我罪[拊心]。我罪[拊心]。告我大罪[拊心]。望吾恩保聖母瑪利亞。望諸聖人。及諸聖女。為祈吾主耶穌赦我諸罪。今者。昔者。解者。忘者。自今而後。賜以聖寵。免我陷惡。佑我興善。擊我升天。享無量福。亞孟。

### Act of Contrition 悔罪經

Version A (addressed to God the Father) in *WXSB*, vol. 3, p. 1246-1247:

至仁至慈者。天地大君。統一普生無上真主。我重罪人。為主所生。今因愛慕吾主至切之情超於萬物。哀誠深悔。以前種種罪惡。寧願失天下萬福。盡罹天下萬苦。不願稍獲罪於吾至尊至善之主。以後決定堅守主命。一切棄遠陷罪之端。至死無敢復犯。敢望吾主。念爾聖子耶穌。既為我等罪人。甘心受難。贖我重罪。必允我祈求。滿所冀願。全然賜赦。全然佑改。如是恒守。以至死後。得享吾主無限真福。亞孟。

Version B (addressed to Jesus) in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 441-442:

吾主耶穌基利斯督。爾乃是真天主。與罷德肋。及斯彼利多三多。始造天地萬物。而常為之主宰。爾又統是真人。生于瑪利亞之童身。自致受難受死。救贖我眾。我今為爾是爾。又且愛爾萬物之上。一心痛悔我曾獲最於爾。自後決定毋敢為非。併悉棄遠犯命之端。以時恭請撒責而鐸德。自願告解我罪。而承所令罪罰。我諸生命功行苦勞。俱獻吾主臺前。補我從前所有罪過。亦望允我祈求。滿所冀願。特特無限仁慈。念爾聖血寶死莫大恩功。全然賜赦。全然佑改。如是恒守。以至死候。亞孟。

## Appendix 3

*Gaojie si yao* 告解四要 (*The Four Essentials of Confession*)Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, *Chinois* 7276-VIII

Printed at the Yiyi 翼翼 Hall, Hengpu 横浦, alternative name for Nan'an Prefecture 南安府, Jiangxi 江西. The text is printed on a single long page (59 x 21 cm.), clearly prepared for distribution as a quick reference for penitents and people receiving catechization.

The Franciscans established a mission in Nan'an starting in 1686, thanks to the assistance of a local "mandarin" called "John Li Pe-ming." Augustin de S. Pascual O.F.M. and Pedro de la Piñuela O.F.M. (especially the second) were the founders of this community. There were one main church (St. Joseph) and two chapels for women *intra muros* (one dedicated to Our Lady). The community was very fervent, according to the *Lettres édifiantes*. In the surrounding countryside there were at least another three churches by the early eighteenth century. Although the resident Franciscans were expelled in 1724, Christian communities might have continued to exist, since one is mentioned in 1748 (see Dehergne 1967, pp. 238-240).

## Translation

In His boundless mercy the Lord of Heaven has established the ritual of baptism, so that we may be forgiven the sins [committed] before becoming Christians. He has also instituted the ritual of confession, so that we may receive forgiveness [lit. amnesty] for the sins [committed] after baptism. Those who after conversion still unfortunately commit sins in front of the Lord, depending on [His] grace and protection, must do their duty (i.e., take responsibility for their sins) and engage in the ritual of confession, and only then can they receive the grace of forgiveness of sin. If people are slow and do not do their duty, then they reject the love of the Lord of Heaven for humankind. Therefore I have now composed these few sentences to give guidance to the Christians, and help them in receiving absolution from sin. There are four essentials in confession:

1. Examination (*xing* 省);
  2. Repentance (*hui* 悔);
  3. Confession (*gao* 告);
  4. Satisfaction (*bu* 補).
1. The **examination** must be detailed, and one must examine thoughts, words, actions and omissions. There are three types of evil **thoughts**: in the first case, evil thoughts arise, and we are quick to suppress them; in this case not only no sin is committed, but one also acquires merit. In the second case, evil thoughts arise, and they come and go, and are not extinguished. Certainly there is sin here. In the third case, evil thoughts arise, and not only they are not suppressed but they linger on in the heart, so that one enjoys

them and desires to put them into practice. Even if they are not realised outside, sin is generated inside, and this is not far from actually committing the sin. The three must obviously be differentiated, and in considering the gravity of a fault we must distinguish the venial (lit. light) and the mortal (lit. heavy) sins. As to faults in **words**, among the venial ones are idle talk or nonsense etc., which do not wound people too much, but still are sinful. Among the mortal ones are making empty oaths, giving false testimony and cursing, as well as expose the secret faults of others, and this inevitably harm others and oneself, and thus must be examined. In making examination of one's **actions**, one should examine the Ten Commandments, the Four Precepts [of the Church],<sup>212</sup> and the Seven Capital Sins, and for each consider if he did something evil. Even in the good actions one should consider whether there is something not good mixed within, such as when one becomes Christian and gives alms, but does not think of the Lord, and rather is moved by the search for wealth or fame. To examine **omissions** one must check if one should have done good and did not do it, and then examine whether the transgressions of others are due to you. If the head of a family does not take charge of those under him, and sits idle looking at them breaking the Commandments, while instead he should teach them, and he does not do it, the sin is on him. Thus all who want to confess must first recall all the places frequented, the actions done, the people met either in the time after baptism, or from the moment of one's last confession. Then they have [to ascertain] if in thoughts, words, actions and omissions they have sinned towards the Lord, towards others or towards themselves. If they have committed [such sins], then they have to specify how many times. Those who do not first engage in this examination as a preparation should not lightly ask to be confessed. Because if one does not do examination, and as a consequence does not confess a mortal sin, then not only the [confessed] sins are not absolved, but rather one adds another mortal sin. If one uses of this examination [system] but does not recall all, although there is a sin which is not confessed, there is no harm in this.

2. **Contrition** must be sincere. Human repentance is not difficult, but true repentance is. In measuring the weaknesses of people, how is it possible to be truly repentant by oneself? Only the Lord can move people to repentance. But if we sincerely pray the Lord for this, we will be always given the full and true gift of contrition. True contrition comprises several principles. First: **love for the Lord**. Through faith we know that the Lord is the highest and most excellent, and that he has by his own volition created us and preserves

<sup>212</sup> 1. To hear mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and to refrain from servile work; 2. To confess one's sins at least once a year; 3. To receive the Holy Eucharist during the Easter season. 4. To fast and abstain on the days appointed. See Brancati, *Shengjiao sigui* 聖教四規, in *CCT ARSI*, vol. 5, pp. 257-300.

us. He became incarnated for us to help us to go to Heaven, and continuously bestows graces on us. In our hearts we shall love the Lord above the creation, mankind and ourselves. Due to our sins we fail to live up to this duty, which is a most hateful and evil thing to do. Second: **betterment of oneself**. In repenting for previous sins we shall set our will so that we may never again dare to go against the will of the Lord in the future. We should also decide to extinguish the reasons that cause one to sin. We should also agree to give satisfaction by either returning money or goods to people, or by restoring their name. Even if we were to lose all the things of the world, be despised by others and be harmed, we shall never infringe upon the Commandments and the [Four] Precepts. Third: **willingness to confess**. The Lord has established the ritual of confession to absolve humans of sins. All those who feel contrition for their sins should then confess. It may be that to confess is felt as unpleasant, and yet one must set one's will in going in front of a priest and confess all the sins committed. Then one will be careful in respecting the rituals instituted by the Lord. Otherwise repentance is untrue and sins cannot be forgiven. Fourth: **hope of absolution**. Once a sinner has firmly decided to reform with true contrition, he will have to hope for the Lord's mercy. If one relies on the boundless merits of our Lord Jesus in saving the world, and accepts his responsibility, no matter how many and how serious his sins, he will no doubt be forgiven. But all those who lose hope will just add a sin. Some ask: "We through faith clearly know that the Lord punishes sinners with the eternal pain of Hell, and denies them ascent to Paradise. If one repents for fear of the eternal pain or for shame for one's sins, can he obtain forgiveness?" I respond: In the religion of the Lord the basis is love, and fear is the last factor. Even if to fear the Lord is good, it is better to love the Lord. If repentance comes from love, those who reform, wish to confess and hope for forgiveness, will be forgiven by the Lord even if they are unable to confess [sacramentally]. But if one repents out of fear, even if one decides to reform, is willing to confess and hopes for forgiveness, he will certainly not be forgiven by the Lord, if he actually does not confess. But if one confesses out of fear for the severe punishment of the Lord, one will obtain the grace of forgiveness of sins by the Lord.

3. **Confession** must be full. Those who wish to confess must make an examination of conscience and show feelings of repentance. Then they shall go in front of a priest, take off their cap and kneel, and recite the *Confiteor* (*Jie-zuijing* 解罪經) up to the point [where it says] "I confess my most grave sin etc. (*mea maxima culpa*)," and then confess to the priest as if they were in front of the Lord. First one should explain how long elapsed either since the time one converted or since the time one last confessed. If one did not fulfil the works of satisfaction prescribed in the previous confession, or there is something he neglected to mention [in previous confessions], he shall first declare it. One shall confess the sins committed, one by one, following the

order of the Ten Commandments, the Four Precepts and the Seven Capital Sins, in thoughts, words, works or omissions. One should not talk about irrelevant or unimportant matters, nor the bad behaviour of others. However, of each sin one should clearly enumerate the number of times committed. If one does not remember every instance, he should at least describe the sin in general, and that will be sufficient. If one engages in a faulty examination, or by purpose hides a sin out of shame or fear, even if he has hidden only one sin and all the others have been confessed, nevertheless, together with the omitted sin, even the other confessed sins will not receive forgiveness, but he rather will be committing a mortal sin of deception. [In such cases], those who want to obtain forgiveness must again confess all in detail, as if one had not confessed yet, and they should also confess their sin of deception. If one forgets a sin, there is no consequence. But if one remembers the sin the next time he confesses, he must confess also that forgotten sin. All penitents must acknowledge that they are sinners, humbly meditate on one's faults and on the orders of the most respectful and good Lord of Mercy, feeling ashamed and blaming themselves for their faults. If they do not dare to hide their sins in this way, then they will have made a full confession. Once the sins are disclosed all, one shall recite [the remaining part of] the *Confiteor* until the end.

4. **Satisfaction** must be swift. After having confessed and obtained the grace of absolution, one must soon fulfil what the priest has ordered. Of the utmost importance is to eliminate the occasions of temptation into sins, such as the presence of a concubine at home, or some hatred in one's heart, or unfair business practices etc. If one does not heed to the advice of the priest, he will never be forgiven. If one owes people money or damages someone's name, one should make reparations. If one does not do it, his sins will not be forgiven. If one's substances are insufficient, one should agree to repay once he has enough money. Moreover, one should not delay the penance set by the priest. Be it recitation of prayers, fasting or giving of alms, one should take the initiative by himself in accordance with [what] the priest [has said]. How can those who do not take action and are lazy be without sin? The instructions of the priests do not represent himself, but the orders of the Lord, so as to be forgiven. Once the works of satisfaction are done, one should also thank the Lord for his grace and ask his protection to avoid sin in the future.

**Appendix 4**  
**Examination List from *Dizui zhenggui lüe*, ff. 5a-7b**  
 (WXS<sub>B</sub>, vol. 3, pp. 1205-1210)

**“First Commandment:**

**I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.”**

[5a] “Those who, right after conversion, still harbour in their heart lingering doubts, either for some reason or because they have not repented for their own sins yet, and have not set their will on reforming, but still receive baptism in a superficial way, commit a sin.

Those who, after conversion, are assailed by doubts regarding God, or, if the catechism is not clear, do not ask for explanations, but on the contrary continue to take their time and discuss [matters of faith], commit a sin. [...]

[5b] Those who believe in portents regarding the future, look for oracles, use the services of diviners, trust hemerology or have faith in *fengshui* practices or in astrology, commit a sin.

Those who celebrate false rituals in temples dedicated to gods and Buddhas, or chant sutras and incantations, or pay common dues in order to have a *jiao* ceremony, or pray to the gods for favours, collaborate to the production of [pagan] paintings or heterodox images, burn paper money, and hold such false beliefs for the sake of getting rich easily, commit a sin.

Those who write charms and recite incantations and have apparitions of strange phenomena commit a sin.

Those who hide heterodox books and images, or in order to get rid of them, donate them to others, commit a sin.

[6a] Those who secretly congregate with Buddhist monks, Daoist priests and other sorcerers, and do not avoid their subtle influence, or allow to mix in heterodox things, following the world and the [opinion] of men, without distinguishing true from false, or without exercising self-judgement and being deceitful in matters of duty commit a sin.

Those who believe in the books of the eclectics (*baijia*) or of the sorcerers and numerologists, take some words that are similar [to those found in those texts] and expound them to others, confounding their minds, commit a sin.

Those who, if they have fallen into sin, lose hope in the Lord’s mercy, and as a consequence become discouraged and suppose they are destined for damnation in hell, commit a sin.

[6b] Those who at will commit sins and evil, counting on the mercy of the Lord, or falsely engage in things that should not be done expecting to be absolved in confession and to go to heaven without any merit, only increase their sins.

Those who, when in poverty, sickness or difficult times do not self-examine their sins, but on the contrary blame the Lord for not helping and protecting them, or curse themselves, commit a sin.

Those who hope that the Lord will do miracles and thus try the Lord, commit a sin.

Those who have sinned, but falsely say that it is unnecessary to go to confession, and that they can get absolution by themselves, or when the opportunity [to confess] is there [7a] do not exert themselves in seeking confession and do not ask for confession, commit a sin.

Those who have sinned and ask for confession, but do not first examine their faults, and get to the point of forgetting to confess grave sins, or are not contrite towards the Lord and do not set their will towards a swift reform, or hide and do not confess completely their sins, make their sins even more egregious; those who do not fulfil the penance meted out by the priest, commit a sin.

Those who have more attachment to the things of the world than to the Lord, or because of worldly occupations neglect religious works and do not treasure the grace of the Lord commit a sin.

[7b] Those who are preoccupied by the judgement of others and do not engage in dutiful good deeds or are ashamed in front of others to profess [Christianity], and in fear of officials, when asked about it, do not directly acknowledge that they are Christians, commit a sin.”

**Appendix 5**  
**Statistical Analysis and Tables**

Here I offer a preliminary statistical assessment of the practice of sacramental confession. I mainly rely on eighteenth and early nineteenth century figures, since it was only in the eighteenth century that ecclesiastical authorities apparently started asking missionaries for some precise accounting of their pastoral work, including the number of confessions. The statistics I have examined so far show notable difference in the relationship between the number of confessions and the number of communions depending on the religious order. This indicates that there were different opinions on the role of communion, either considered by the more lenient missionaries as an obligation to be fulfilled at the time of confession, or rather seen by the more rigorous priests as a rare reward, of which only the best Christians were worthy. Theological debates in Europe on frequent communion, the personal background of single missionaries, as well as their pastoral experience in China, had a bearing on the attitude of the clergy on this matter, and this also accounts for changes over time.

The Jesuits and the M.E.P. missionaries, apparently, were much more reluctant to administer communion than other orders. In Changshu, for example, the number of people who confessed in 1644 was around 2,000, but those who communicated were only 500 (25%). The source comments that “this is already a large number, considered the severity with which the Fathers behave in this



matter with the neophytes."<sup>213</sup> In the 1670s in the same region of Changshu, François de Rougemont was also reluctant to allow frequent communion.<sup>214</sup> In general it appears that in Jesuit communities confession far exceeded communions (this may also be due to the fact that children received their first communion only at age 14). Yet, a large portion of Christians may have at least confessed yearly, as Antoine Gaubil S.J. (1689–1759) seemed to imply in 1726, at the beginning of the period of suppression, when he said that “based on the number of confessions and communions, here [in Beijing] there are 3,000 Christians who receive the sacraments, out of a total of over 4,000 Christians.”<sup>215</sup> Similarly, in the M.E.P. communities of Sichuan in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a growing percentage of Christians confessed (oscillating between 43.7% and 61%, with a steady progression from 1792 to 1813), although only less than half would also receive communion (see table below on M.E.P. activities).

Relatively high percentages of yearly confession attendance are found also in Dominican and Lazarist sources. An almost equal proportion between number of yearly confessions and communions can be seen by the late eighteenth century in the Dominican mission, showing that, unlike in the Jesuit and M.E.P. communities, the eucharist automatically followed confession. According to a detailed report by Fr. Juan Garcés signed in Muyang on November 10, 1795, in the Dominican mission of Fujian there were then 14,312 Christians, served by seven priests, both Spanish and Chinese. 6,326 persons received confession/communion, that is around 44% of the total Christian population. The tables below indicate that the percentage of Christians receiving the sacraments oscillated in different regions of Fujian between 40 and 50%. An isolated statistic from 1792 shows that attendance could go up to 67%.<sup>216</sup> In the Lazarist community of the Beitang church in the capital in 1788 (i.e., after the Lazarists substituted the Society of Jesus), there were around 2,190 communions (specifying “non-repeated”), which probably entailed a slightly higher number of annual confessions. In the five Christian communities located in the countryside of Bei Zhili which the Lazarists also took over, that same year they administered another 2,000 yearly confessions, out of an estimated number of 3,000 Christians. In all these cases, we see that around two thirds of the faithful confessed at least annually, and that, unlike in Jesuit communities, in the Lazarist community around 70% of penitents would also receive communion. The statistics of the Lazarists in 1794 show an increase: at the Beitang they administered 2,994 communions, and another 1,864 in the women’s congregations. No mention was

<sup>213</sup> Gouvea 1998, p. 198.

<sup>214</sup> Golvers 1999, p. 407.

<sup>215</sup> Quoted in Thomas 1923–1933, vol. 1, p. 391.

<sup>216</sup> See González 1955–1967, vol. 2, p. 587, Juan Garcés O.P. (1744–1797), year 1792: 3,420 Christians, 2,300 confession-communions administered.

made of confession, and I suspect this was due to the fact that confessors were available all year round in the urban setting of the Beitang. On the contrary, the number of yearly confessions and communions is given for the rural communities of Bei Zhili, for an aggregate of 3,621 and 2,668 respectively, possibly because those community were only occasionally visited by itinerant priests.<sup>217</sup>

Overall, we see a relatively high percentage of Christians (around 50% – 60%) being confessed yearly in Jesuit, M.E.P., Dominican and Lazarist communities. In this percentage, I suspect that a higher portion was made up of women and children rather than men, since sources lamented that male attendance of the sacraments was often a problem.

#### Dominican Mission of Fujian, 1730s–1740s

Year	Locale and missionary	Yearly Confessions	Source
1734	Fuan and neighbouring villages (Serrano)	670	GH II, p. 257
1735	Muyang (Alcober)	300 (out of Christian population of 600 adults + 300 children, i.e., 30%)	GH II, p. 257
1736	Muyang	587 (528 communions)	
1738	Fuan (Serrano)	Adults (with communion): 985 Children (no communion): 78	GM II, p. 111
1739	Fuan and neighbouring villages (Serrano)	Adults (with communion): 1007 Children (no communion): 78	GM II, p. 113
1740	Fuan (Serrano)	585	GM II, p. 116
	Fuan’s neighbouring villages (Serrano)	658	GM II, p. 116
	Fuan and neighbouring villages (Serrano)	Children (no communion): 149	GM II, p. 117
1742	Fuan (Serrano)	800	GM II, p. 471
	Qidong (Noval)	710	<i>id.</i>
	Qitian (Royo)	300	<i>id.</i>
	Dingtou (Diaz)	382	<i>id.</i>
	Ganjiapan (?) (Alcober)	1,100	<i>id.</i>
1745	Muyang and vicinity (Sanz)	1,056	GM II, pp. 136–137.
	Qitian and vicinity (Royo)	1,497	<i>id.</i>
	Dingtou and vicinity (Alcober)	1,100	<i>id.</i>

<sup>217</sup> See Thomas 1923–33, vol. 2, pp. 26–28.

	Guanpu and vicinity (F. Díaz)	751	<i>id.</i>
	Qidong and Fuan (Serrano)	1,357	<i>id.</i>

Sources: GH = González 1955-1967, vol. 2; GM = González 1952-1958, vol. 2.

### Dominican Mission of Fujian, 1760s: Fuan mission

Year	Number of confessions
1760	1,150 (Teradillos) 2,356 (Feliú) 700 (Miao de S. Rosa)
1761	1,282 (Teradillos) 2,936 (Feliú)
1762	1,624 (Teradillos) 1,434 (Loranco) 1,889 (Miao de S. Rosa) 1,113 (Huy de S. Tomás)
1764	1,321 (Teradillos) 350 (Miao de S. Rosa) 857 (Huy de S. Tomás) 1,500 (Nien)

Source: González 1955-1967, vol. 2, p. 503.

### Dominican Mission of Fujian, 1795

Region and priest	Number of Christians	Confessions/Communions	Percentage of faithful receiving yearly confession/communion
Zhangzhou (Benito de S. Vicente, Chinese)	1,514	639	42.2%
Fuzhou (Felix del Rosario, Chinese)	2,112	913	43.22%
Dingtou (Roque Carpena, Spanish)	2,041	803	39.34%
Luojia and Kesen (Julian de la Peña, Spanish)	1,289 + 803 = 2,092	987	47.17%

Muyang (Juan Garcés, Spanish)	4,098	1,837	44.82%
Keteng (Pablo Domingo Nien, Chinese)	2,255	1,147	50.86%

Source: González 1955-1967, vol. 2, pp. 588-591.

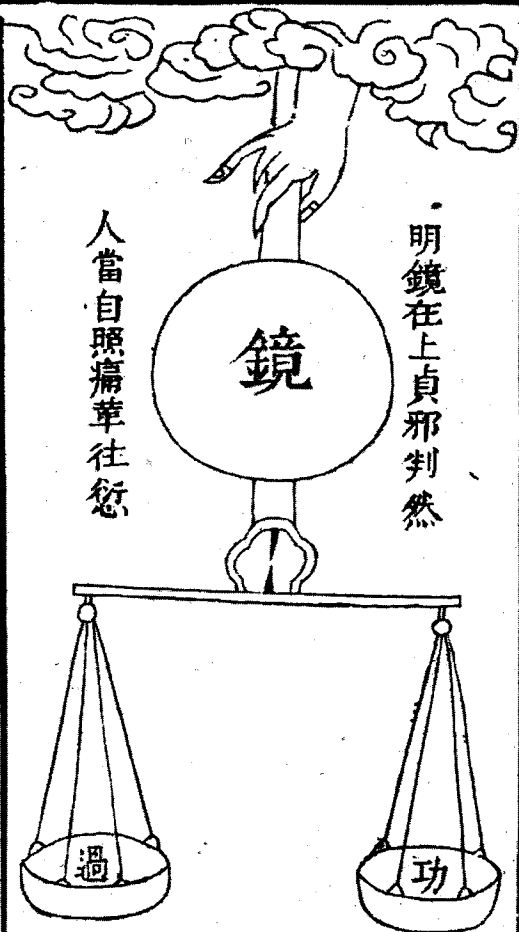
### M.E.P. Mission in Sichuan

Year	Yearly confessions	Yearly communions	Number of Christians
1758	1,338	487	
1767	2,056		
1769	3,040		
1770	2,996	1,984	5,000
1771	2,564	1,710	
1773	2,155	1,384	
1775	3,647	2,697	
1777	5,010	3,100	
1778	4,800	2,965	
1780	5,940	2,841	
1781	6,366	2,328	
1786	6,000		[in 1784: 15,000]
1787	6,580	1,938	
1790	11,053		[in 1789: 20,000]
1792	13,963	5,227	25,000
1796	14,660	6,265	[in 1795: 30,000]
1801	17,485 (23,490 ?)	8,225	40,000
1804	1,832 do not confess (?)		47,867
1810	34,215	14,598	[in 1809: 56,165]
1812	34,562	14,038	
1813	34,723 (3,382 do not confess ?)	13,805	55,000- 60,000

Source: Launay 1920, vol. 2, pp. 23 and 312, Tables XVI and XVII, Appendice, pp. 98-100.

逃 難 判 審

功過準定繼悉維嚴



衡平兩盤輕重不偏

衡 定 過 功

The Second of the Four Last Things: Judgment  
Philippe Couplet, *Simo zhenlun* 四末真論 (1676),  
BAV: Borg. cin. 345.7, f. 5b.

比 難 樂 永

天福至永無慮得失



世福至暫患得患失

賞 不 善 無

The Third of the Four Last Things: Heaven  
Philippe Couplet, *Simo zhenlun* 四末真論 (1676),  
BAV: Borg. cin. 345.7, f. 9b.



The Fourth of the Four Last Things: Hell  
Philippe Couplet, *Simo zhenlun* 四末真論 (1676),  
BAV: Borg. cin. 345.7, f. 13b.

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CCT ZKW [Standaert, Nicolas] 鐘鳴旦, [Adrian Dudink] 杜鼎克, [Huang Yi-long] 黃一農, and [Chu Ping-yi] 祝平一, eds. 1996. *Xujiahui cangshulou Ming-Qing Tianzhujiào wenxian* 徐家匯藏書樓明清天主教文獻 - *Chinese Catholic Texts from the Zikawei Library*. 5 vols. Taipei: Fangji chubanshe.

BAV Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

BA JA Lisbon, Biblioteca da Ajuda, Jesuítas na Ásia Collection.

BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

FR D'Elia, Pasquale, ed. 1942-1949. *Fonti Ricciane. Documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime relazioni tra l'Europa e la Cina (1579-1615)*. Roma: La Libreria dello Stato.

HCC Standaert, Nicolas, ed. 2001. *Handbook of Christianity in China. Volume One: 635-1800*. Leiden: Brill.

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TV Tacchi-Venturi, Pietro. 1911-1913. *Opere storiche del p. Matteo Ricci, S.I. / edite a cura del Comitato per le onoranze nazionali, con prolegomeni, note e tavole dal p. Pietro Tacchi Venturi*. Vol. 1. *I commentarj della Cina, dall'autografo inedito*. Vol. 2. *Le lettere dalla Cina (1580-1610) con appendice di documenti inediti*. Macerata: Giorgetti.

TXCH *Tianxue chuhan* 天學初函 (First Collection of [Texts on] Heavenly Studies). Comp. by Li Zhizao 李之藻, first ed. 1626; repr. 1965

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