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### **Women and Faith during the Soviet Famine of 1921-23**

The Soviet famine of 1921-23 has been explored from many angles – as a human tragedy, a site of political and ideological tension, an economic phenomenon, a point of comparison with the 1932-33 famine, and a founding moment in international human rights and humanitarianism (to name only a few). It has also been widely discussed as an important turning point for the Russian Orthodox Church in its ongoing conflict with the atheistic state. As is well known, Bolshevik authorities used the crisis to further its campaign against the Church, primarily by demanding the relinquishing of church valuables to fund famine relief – a clever and largely successful strategy to challenge clerical authority and deplete church resources by advancing moral claims that even the faithful found difficult to reject (even as these policies assaulted deeply held notions of the sacred). In line with recent efforts to highlight the diversity of local responses to the state’s actions during the famine, and to complicate the dominant binaries at work in existing scholarship (e.g. church/state, religious/secular, clergy/laity), this paper will revisit the religious dimensions of the famine through a gendered lens. Drawing on recent secondary literature as well as my own research, it will recover the voices of lay women in the era of the famine, with the aim of highlighting the dynamics of faith in everyday Soviet life as well as suggesting new lines of inquiry related to the lived experience of ordinary believers in the early 1920s.