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## The Psychological Value Of Confession In Mahayana Buddhism And Christianity

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### Abstract

The act of confessing can be described as the act of acknowledging that one did something wrong or even criminal. In the religious aspect, he/she will be able to witness a Christian telling God, or rather a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, that he/she has done right or wrong to be granted forgiveness. It is also evident among the Buddhist followers who practice confession. All people in the Mahayana Buddhism carry in them the picture of enlightenment (Bodhicitta), but this is claimed to be in the state of sleep. To excite it, preparatory worship to it has been completed eight times (anuttarapūjā), and one of the latter is confession of sins (pāpadesanā) in the presence of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. With the grace of Christian doctrine and mostly to the Catholic doctrine, the Sacrament of Penance is the Church sacrament that provides individual men and women with confessing their sins committed after baptism and gaining their repentance before God with the assistance of a Priest. Simultaneously, the Bible urges believers to confess their sins. The present research attempt is a scientific investigation of the extent to which confession is possible as a practice to meet the social problems of the current society. Besides that, it concerns literature-based qualitative research. Besides this, the outcomes were also interpreted philosophically to establish the value of confession regarding psychology. It is conducive to ascertaining a just society in a situation where the human beings of the society are ready to classify their unjust actions as crimes.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, Christianity, Confession, Pāpadesanā, Psychological Value

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### INTRODUCTION

Many religions and ethical traditions consider confession as one of the significant elements of the religious and moral life, as it is strongly connected with moral cleansing and inner reformation. Confession in this research is viewed as a deliberate and reflective act wherein people voluntarily confess their moral or ethical vices, take responsibility for them and commit themselves to moral correction. In some cases, it can be through personal introspection, oral confession, ritual, or societal recognition, as per the religious background. In most traditions, confession is not only a religious or ethical requirement but also a practice with a strong psychological interpretation, particularly regarding emotional control, self-perception, and harmonious relations with others.

Both Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity see confession as having spiritual and psychological depths. Such confession is not merely a means of eliminating moral impurity in these traditions, but rather a therapeutic process that determines the person's emotional state and attitude towards others. The psychological worth of confession, which is used in this paper, can be defined as the ability of the confessional practices to produce positive cognitive states like relief of guilt, decrease of inner conflict, enhancement of moral clarity and emotional resilience contributing to the

psychological well-being and self-regulation of the ethical practice.

Confession is also a significant aspect of spiritual growth in Mahayana Buddhism. The awakening of bodhicitta, the saving wish to achieve the state of enlightenment, is achieved through a set of inner purifications that must start with the identification and repentance of the unwholesome conduct that was done in the past. One of the primary foundational Mahayana texts is *Bodhicaryavatara* by Śāntideva, which offers confession as a practice in the bodhisattva path. The second chapter of the text is designed as a confessional reflection where the practitioner openly confesses the harmful things done knowingly or unknowingly with serious regrets and determination to be morally better. This is not just perceived as a ritual repentance but as a psychological process that extinguishes remorse, dissipates unhealthy mental inclinations and develops compassion and moral sensitivity (Śāntideva, 2011).

The confession in Mahayana Buddhism is not limited to the monastic practice, but it is accepted by lay practitioners as a part of the everyday ethical discipline. By the people acknowledging their indecent behaviour and undertaking honest confessions, they design wholesome psychological environments that enable morality, awareness and spiritual growth. In Buddhist psychology, this cleansing is necessary to overcome karmic impairments and



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to advance to emancipation (nirvana) in the cycle of rebecoming (samsara). In this case, confession is used as a way of moral responsibility and psychological cleansing instead of calling on a divine power.

Confession has been best institutionalised in Christianity in the Roman Catholic tradition as the Sacrament of Penance, or Reconciliation, or Confession. This sacrament is comprised of four major components, including contrition, verbal confession, absolution, or interpreted as divine forgiveness through Christ by a priest, and penance, which is moral reparation. In Christian theology, sin is perceived as a disruption of the relationship between the individual and the ecclesial community with God, and the confession is the mechanism of reinforcing this relationship. In addition to being sacramental, the meaning of confession has psychological implications, specifically concerning guilt, the formation of conscience, and moral renewal.

Christian confession has its theological basis, which is entrenched in scripture. The verses 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16 focus on confession as a therapy, healing, and reconciliation of people. Such a dual focus of orientation, both to personal redemption and to the healing of communal harmony, highlights the moral and psychological aspects of confession in Christianity. It places emphasis on confession as a doctrinal obligation as well as a form of practice

in personal unrest and relationship dissolution.

Such Christian philosophers as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Luther made a lot of contributions to the formation of the perception of the confession as a spiritual and psychological practice. The Confessions of Augustine serve as a perfect example of confession as an insightful and transformational experience when moral examination of self-results in spiritual awakening. Aquinas also focused on confession as a process of cleansing of the soul and moral reorganisation, whereas Luther, even though he criticised sacramental confession, still maintained the importance of confession as an individual means of repentance and renewal of the spirit. These views suggest a tacit acknowledgment of the psychological usefulness of confession way before the advent of psychological discourse.

In the contemporary environment, the two traditions are challenged by factors related to secularisation, individualism, and doubts about religious habits. As it is, confession has been seen as redundant or old-fashioned, but recent psychological studies have shown the value of accepting the wrong, responsibility and remorse. Mental health research indicates that the practices may help lessen guilt, anxiety, and emotional distress, and lead to self-integration and emotional healing. Confession is thus a process of facing inner conflict,



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taking moral responsibility, and is the process of emotional resolution (Pargament, 2007; Tangney et al., 2005).

This overlapping of religious and psychological explanations shows that confession remains relevant. Confusion stands at the crossroads of spirituality and psychology, as well as the individual and the community, humility, accountability, and ethical dedication, which are important to personal growth and societal welfare.

This paper is, therefore, an exploration of the nature of confession in Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity, in that it looks at the way both traditions conceptualise and practise confession, and how this practice is effective in solving spiritual issues as well as promoting psychological well-being. The research examines the concept of confession using primary sources and modern scholarship to analyse the concept of confession doctrinally, textually, and ethically as a regenerative process that can restore people and build stronger communities. Combining Mahayana Buddhism and Christian views, the paper contends that confession is still a living tradition that is very relevant to the modern world for addressing moral, emotional, and ethical issues.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars in both Buddhism and Christianity have written a lot about the idea of confession, and many have

pointed out the spiritual, ethical, and psychological aspects related to it. In Mahayana Buddhism, penance is closely related to the procedure of bodhicitta development and the purification of morality. A preparatory process to the unfolding of compassion and wisdom has been described by the Bodhicaryāvatāra by Śāntideva with regard to the significance of confession. The critical scholars like Dayal (1999) state clearly that confession in Buddhism is not a simple recognition of a mistake; such a procedure is the essential act of inner purification with a focus on curbing karmic obligations. Śāntideva (1971) also treats confession as a type of psychological and emotional relief that helps practitioners alleviate a sense of guilt and delusion, facilitating their spiritual progress.

Confession forms a major part of both the spiritual and moral life of Christians. Its significance is emphasised by the Bible in such verses as 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16, where the confession is correlated with divine forgiveness and emotional healing. Tozer (2013) and other Christian philosophers state that confession is not merely a sacramental requirement that is needed, but it is also a crucial aspect of spiritual revival and psychological health. The works of Fathers of the church like Augustine, and theological scholars like Thomas Aquinas, have further defined the thought of Christians about confession as the act of cleansing of sins and the source of divine grace.



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In addition to theology, contemporary psychological research proves the therapeutic use of confession. It has been shown that anxiety, guilt, and emotional suppression can be eased by confessing and taking responsibility for the bad deeds, and this ensures that one leads a healthier mind. Confession of either religious or secular nature promotes emotional integrity, introspection and responsibility, which is a critical feature in building psychological resiliency. In this way, both traditions have a structure with which we can interpret the role of confession as both an inner and outer mechanism by which we extend our emotional and social health.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper will integrate a qualitative research approach based on textual analysis and systematic comparison. The two texts, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by Śāntideva and the Holy Bible, are the main sources of analysis since these are the textual foundations of Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity, respectively. These readings are reviewed to determine the conceptualisation, justification and practice of confession in the two traditions. The textual analysis is placed in a context and provided with the help of the secondary literature, such as the works of Dayal (1999), (Śāntideva, 1971), and Tozer (2013), who offer some historical, theological, and philosophical points of view.

The study has a comparative framework that is thematic and conceptual, not historical or genealogical. The confession is a common ethical-spiritual category that is compared and organised according to systematically defined dimensions of analysis, that is, (i) the doctrinal concept of confession, (ii) the ritual or practical form of confession, (iii) the moral and ethical role of confession, and (iv) the psychological meaning of confession on an individual and social level. This framework can be used to identify convergences and divergences without assuming the doctrinal similarity of the two traditions.

The methodology is an integration of the textual analytical approach and the psychological perspective of religion. The important passages concerning the subject of confession are viewed through the lens of close reading and doctrinal analysis, whereas the modern literature in the field of psychology is utilised to study the therapeutic aspects of confession, especially its impact on the feeling of guilt and emotional control, moral responsibility, and ethical self-formation. In this way, this study can get out of the plan of mere doctrinal comparison and just assess confession as a practice that has psychological and ethical implications.

In summary, this multidisciplinary approach encompasses religious, philosophical, and psychological perspectives to analyse confession, providing a reasonable and consistent approach to the analysis of confession



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as a transformational practice. Through the expression of an explicit comparative paradigm and analytic plan, the proposed work is intended to make a promising input to the comparative religion and the psychology of religion, without neglecting the differences between the internal logics of Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Confession in Buddhism

In Buddhist philosophy, notably that of the Mahayana school, confession is one of the fundamental spiritual disciplines whose purpose is to purify the mind of the one who is confessing and transform the character. It is regarded as important in developing bodhicitta, the compassionate intention to become enlightened to benefit all beings. Unlike in Christianity, where confession is typically directed towards a divine figure or representative such as a priest, Buddhist confession is primarily a self-reflective and karmic act, directed towards awakened beings, such as the Buddha, bodhisattvas, or towards one's inner moral consciousness.

### Confession as Preliminary Process in Mahayana Buddhism

Confession is among the eight anuttarapūja, or supreme forms of worship, practiced in Mahayana Buddhism, especially within devotion-related and meditation-based practices

that act as preliminary to the bodhisattva path. In the traditional sastra (text) and texts of spiritual instruction, it is claimed that to truly generate bodhicitta, an individual must go through a process of inner purification, which involves confession of unwholesome deeds done in the past (akuśala-karmāni) (Śāntideva, 2011, pp. 19–23). In the absence of such purification, the practitioner would be hindered by karmic residues, impeding spiritual progress.

Confession here is a matter of moral courage, besides being a race? of ethical purification. It does not aim to evoke fear or guilt but rather rouses explicit remorse (hiri) and refined shame (ottappa), two healthy mind states necessary for ethical action in the psychology of Buddhist teachings.

### Bodhicaryāvatāra and Confession

A large and influential source of Mahayana teaching on confession is the Bodhicaryāvatāra (Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life) of Śāntideva. Confession of Evil Deeds is dedicated to the second chapter, the source of the Gospel, and a strongly emotional Buddhist confession. The practitioner confesses in a model given by the framework:

Acknowledges all harmful actions of body, speech, and mind,

Recognizes their roots in ignorance and delusion,



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Offers remorse before the Buddhas and bodhisattvas,

Resolves not to repeat such actions,

Dedicates future merits to the alleviation of suffering for all beings.

Śāntideva writes:

“All the evil I, a sinner, have committed

By force of ignorance and blindness,

Whether in deed, in word, or in thought,

I confess it all to the Protectors.”

The novelty of this confession is not just a healing process, but it is considered karmically important in a way that it helps to weaken the seeds of future misery and unhappiness. The approach indicates profound interdependence between the aspects of moral self-understanding and liberative performance, according to which the practitioner can effectively change ignorance in the perception of wisdom because of the recognition and sense of remorse.

### Ritual and Liturgical Aspects

Confession rituals, which are vital in the maintenance of moral discipline (śīla) are held both in monasteries as well as among the lay population. Monastics regularly participate in the Upoṣadha ceremony (also known as Upoṣatha in Pali), during which they confess infractions of the Vinaya rules

before their fellow monks or nuns (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2013, pp. 63–69). This is not an act of punishment, but rehabilitation makes one pure and quiet in the sangha community.

To the lay practitioners, confession is deeply ingrained within devotional activities like prostration, recitation of a repentance text, and placating Buddha. East Asian Mahayana traditions have their confession literature, which describes a systematic way to confess different karma-wrongs, individual and social, such as the Samantabhadra Repentance Ceremony (typical in Chan/Zen and Pure Land temples). Karmic interdependence entails a communal approach to practice, and these rituals emphasise the sense of sharing and the social collective responsibility in building a peaceful world.

### Psychological Foundations: Confession and Cetanā (Intention)

Intention or cetanā is one of the most important psychological principles of confession in Buddhism. Arguably, the main factor that determines karma is cetanā according to the Nibbedhika Sutta (“Cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā.”): “Volition, monks, is what I call karma; having volition, one acts through the body, speech, and mind” (The numerical discourses of the Buddha: Aṅguttara Nikāya, 2012, SN 6:63).



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From this standpoint, confession is less about the objective act and more about the subjective recognition of one's motivation and volition behind unwholesome actions. Buddhist confession is therefore a mental and moral reboot through which the person can recall their inner intentions and amend them. This is in line with the current cognitive-behavioral theories that highlight thought patterns and motivation as the area of focus in changing behaviours.

### Bālavagga of the Dhammapada and Emotional Insight into Guilt and Joy

Bālavagga (Chapter on Fools) of Dhammapada offers profound psychological insights into the nature of guilt and ethical discernment. Verses such as:

“The evildoer grieves here and hereafter. He grieves and suffers seeing his impure deeds” (Dhammapada, 1997, SN15).

“The virtuous one rejoices here and hereafter. He rejoices and is happy seeing his pure deeds. (Dhammapada, 1997, SN 16).

demonstrate that ethical behaviour is directly related to emotions. Psychological duress in dissatisfaction experienced as the causal result of a misdeed is not a violence of God but an assignment of nature, a possibility of the karmic repercussion of the mind. Confession itself acts as a safety valve

to minimise this cognitive dissonance and create inner balance.

### Samyuttanikaya: Reflection, Remorse as Preventive Practice

According to the Buddha, individual wholesome deeds and merit (puñña) can be developed by repetition of reflection, generosity, and mindfulness, in Chapter 28 of the Vanaropa Sutta of the Samyutta Nikāya. The aspect of confession is a major part of this reflective process. The recollection of previous mistakes with real regret also helps to remind the practitioner that he does not have to accumulate new evil and forms the mind to make such an action in any way (The connected discourses of the Buddha, 2000, pp. 104–105).

This is an active, preventionist conception of confession in line with prospective moral psychology. Contrary to expecting people to focus on their previous mistakes, Buddhist confession focuses on rectifying such mistakes and cultivating merit in the present. Therefore, in a sense, it is positive and subversive.

### Hiri in Buddhist Moral Psychology

The Buddhist fundamental teaching has two mental factors that have an important role in confession, namely, Hiri (moral shame) and Ottappa (moral dread or conscience). Hiri is the inner feeling of self-respect and sense of morality, and Ottappa is the fear of punishment arising out of immoral



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actions in the form of social rejection or karmic fate (The numerical discourses of the Buddha: *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 2012, SN 2:9; The *Itivuttaka*, 1997, SN 42).

All these are conditions that form emotional and ethical preconditions to the act of confession. They enable the practitioner not to see wrongdoing in terms of self-hatred, but instead with moral clarity. The teachings in Buddhism promote the growth of this set of mental forces by making a confession, thus strengthening moral self-regulation.

### Clinical Application in the Modern World

Nowadays, in modern Buddhism, such as Western and global Buddhism, confession has been transformed into mindfulness practices, journaling, and guided meditations programmes such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and compassion-focused therapy do not replicate the old framework practices but incorporate related values: the recognition of suffering produced in oneself as well as others, the agreement to take responsibility, and the practice of transformation.

Meditation on karma and purification is also promoted by some Buddhist teachers, wherein they encourage visual imagery to recite the Vajrasattva mantra, during which they promise to confess and undo the negative karmic imprint. Such rituals are directed toward profound emotional

purification and moral reorientation, in the same measure as therapeutic confession, as is currently practiced in psychology.

### The Social and Ethical Half of Confessing

It is essential to understand that confession in Buddhism is not a matter of personal development only; confession is a social experience, as well. The confession can be done by two Hither Ordained Buddhist monks during the upoṣatha or any time when an offence is committed, or the mass confession services help to strengthen the communal ethical standards and ensure responsibility. Within a society ever more characterised by ethical vagueness, Buddhist confession becomes a counter-model founded upon self-knowledge, openness and responsibilities of compassion.

Buddhist confession creates a non-punitive moral atmosphere by inducing people to accept their mistakes without fear of rebuke. This enables resolution, and it is effective in terms of reconciling people, building recipient-victim confidence, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and the social harmony of people in society.

To conclude, the Buddhist doctrine of confession offers a holistic paradigm that integrates doctrinal understanding, psychological self-awareness, and moral responsibility. Buddhist confession lies in wisdom (*prajña*) and compassion (*karuna*),



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unlike confession built through fear of punishment or being bound by a feeling of guilt. It is also considered an act of moral and spiritual maturity to engage in confronting personal flaws to promote clarity, calmness and moral uprightness.

### Christianity Doctrines on Confession

The confession of sins is a very serious moral and spiritual act that can be deeply found in the context of the fall of man and the sinless grace in Christian theology. Confession as a psychological and religious practice plays a leading role in the Christian life, both singularly and communally, and its key emphases are on repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It acts as an instrument of spiritual healing and recovery of the divine relation, as well as personal moral renewal. The aim of the different Christian faiths, as well as the approaches to the problem and the interpretations of the doctrine, can be diverse, but the general cause is uniting with God, oneself, and other people (Augustine, 1991; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994; Worthington, 2006, pp. 1–29).

### The Biblical background of Confession

The confession in Christianity has the earliest and most authoritative defence in the scripture. In the New Testament, numerous calls and instances emphasise the importance of owning what one has sinned against God and

others. Some of the most important lines were:

John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (The Holy Bible, 2011).

James 5:16 – “Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (The Holy Bible, 2011).

Proverbs 28:13 – “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (The Holy Bible, 2011).

As revealed by these verses, confession is not just a legalistic procedure, but it is relational and therapeutic. It confirms the importance of honest inner-self-analysis, righteousness, and spiritual renewal, all the main themes throughout the Christian scripture.

In the Gospels, Jesus often pardons sin, which usually implied divine authority to forgive sin (e.g., Mark 2:5-12; John 8:1-11), and commands sinners to repent and go no more into sin. By doing so, Jesus not only demonstrates the fact that such a forgiveness is possible but also how it should take place: it should start with recognition and repentance.



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### Catholic Sacrament of Confession

In Roman Catholicism, confessionalism is institutionalised in the form of a sacrament, or, technically, in the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation, or Confession. It is among the seven sacraments and is important in that it helps the baptized faithful to recover a state of grace once they commit a mortal sin.

This sacrament consists of four essential elements:

Contrition – sincere sorrow for sin and resolve to amend one's life.

Confession – verbal admission of sins to a priest.

Absolution – the priest's pronouncement of forgiveness, acting in persona Christi (in the person of Christ).

Penance – an assigned act (prayer, fasting, or service) to express repentance and restore justice.

This sacrament has deep theology that is based on how the church interprets John 20:22-23 when Jesus breathed on his apostles and commanded them to receive the Holy Spirit. Whenever you forgive men their trespasses, their trespasses have forgiven them: but whenever you do not forgive them their trespasses, they have not forgiven them. This scripture has been regarded as the scriptural justification of the Church's authority to forgive sins.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) emphasises that confession restores the sinner to the grace of God and, with the Church community, renews the grace of baptism and equips the sinner with spiritual strength to overcome temptation in the future (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994).

### Patristic and Early Church Foundations

Early Christianity used to practice the confession publicly and communally. During the initial centuries, serious offences were most often expressed in the presence of all church members and would be accompanied by a period of penitence. Later, with the spread of the Church, the practice was modified to include the possibility of confession in privacy, particularly promoted by monastic societies.

One of the first people to express the interior dimensions of confession was St. Augustine (354-430). His *Confessions* is both an individual spiritual autobiography and a theological insight into personal memory, sin, and grace (Augustine, 1991). To Augustine, the essence of confession is the process of removing self-deception layer after layer and exposing the whole life of a person to the truth of God. It is not only a spiritual compliment, but a self-exploration process of healing.

Further systematisation of the theology of confession was developed by St.



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Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who established it on the theme of justice and moral law. To Aquinas, confession was something that had to be done to establish order in the soul first, between humanity and God, and amongst other believers.

### Confession Eastern Orthodox

Confession is also a sacrament (known as Holy Mystery) in the Eastern Orthodox Church, which normally happens in front of a spiritual father or a priest, sometimes with confession of prayers of repentance and blessing of absolution. Orthodoxy has a more pastoral and relational rather than juridical focus, however, especially since the prevalent method of approaching the legitimacy of conducting religious activities occurred. In contrast to the judge, the priest is not visualised as the other judge, but as a spiritual mentor and a sufferer. The process is not so much about whether one is legally guilty or not, but more about the restoration of the soul by a process called metanoia, which means a consistent and profound conversion of heart and mind.

Through Orthodox confession, the discussion of the sins usually takes place; however, the cause of the sin, also called an examination of the cause of passions, habits, and inner wounds, is also pursued. It focuses on the spiritual and healing aspect of confession as essentially an aspect of

the greater phenomenon of thesis, or unification with God.

### Reformation of the Views: Protestant Protestants' Sense of Confession

The Protestant Reformation brought a lot of changes in the practice as well as the understanding of confession. Such reformers as Martin Luther and John Calvin denied sacramental priesthood and priestly mediation in forgiveness (Luther, 1960). Rather, they focused on the direct confession to God, with a foundation on personal faith and sincere repentance.

Although Luther criticised the abuse of institutions, he nevertheless considered the personal confession spiritually useful. He did not abandon the practice in Lutheranism, though; however, he rejected that absolution was affected by any kind of human intermediary. Confession is also an important aspect of the Christian life for Protestants in general (and especially the Anglican, Methodist, and Reformed churches), but not with a formal sacrament.

Corporate confession. Many Protestant churches follow this tradition by making the congregation repeat confessional prayers during worship, involving a confession of sin and repentance. This form involves the aspect of confession, having been communal and reflective, but in a simplified form of the ritual.



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### Psychological Spiritual Aspects of Confession

Psychologically, one may argue that confession is a form of healing that helps one feel better after going through the ordeal of reconciliation and assurance of moral certainty. The act of naming one's wrongdoings, especially in a safe and structured context, can reduce guilt, anxiety, and inner conflict. Confession in the Christian tradition (either individual or collective) is a discourse through which the reconciliation of conscience and personal harmony is released (Exline & Baumeister, 2000, pp. 133–155).

As an example, in Catholic spiritual direction, the priests tend to use a moral inventory that will not only guide the penitents to regret, but also to reflection and adoption of new behaviors. A systematic guide to aid one in the examination of his action, desires, and spiritual concerns, the Examination of Conscience is commonly invoked before confession. Upon such reflection, self-awareness, humility, and virtue grow.

The school of thought of pastoral counseling and clinical psychology has also emphasised the similarities of confession to the contemporary therapeutic process. Self-expression of regret, being forgiven, and intending to change are cited as critical elements of cognitive-emotional processing, just like in suggested psychotherapy.

### Confession and Social Ethics

Other than personal healing, confession has a social impact. The existence of sin is not only in the realm of the Christian individual; it is a source of disunity, either within a person or among people involved in relationships with others. It is therefore one means of rebuilding unity in the body of believers and healing broken trust, through confession.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation assists in the moral dynamics of the Church as it builds honesty, responsibility, and reconciliation. When societal or moral scandals occur, Christian groups frequently respond by appealing to communal repentance and confession, in which group immorality is acutely felt.

The use of liturgy, like Ash Wednesday or the General Confession in the Book of Common Prayer, is rituals that show repentance and the acknowledgement of sins, both personal and as a community. This awareness of mutual moral accountability goes hand in hand with the teaching of social justice, and it emphasises accountability, humility and restorative action.

### Modern Problems and Change

In contemporary contexts, many Christian communities attribute less value to the practice of confession, particularly the sacramental form, because of the forces of secularisation, individualism, and a low sense of sin.



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Interest in spiritual direction, spiritual retreats, and restorative models consisting of confession-like activities of emotional and moral regeneration has revived, nevertheless.

Catholic and Orthodox religions still promote frequent confession, especially during the Lent period and preparation towards the Eucharist. Most of them provide penance services consisting of scripture, personal meditation, and personal confession.

Accountability groups, prayer partners, and public testimonies are more methods of evangelical communities that work the same way to resemble general principles of accountability, progressive morality, and support. In secular contexts, confession also finds its way, e.g., in 12-step programs (e.g., in Alcoholics Anonymous): admit that you are wrong, make amends, and spiritual renewal takes place.

The confession is more than a legal requirement accepted by Christians because it is a sacrament of mercy, a way of restoration, and an experience of grace. Confession, whether in the sacramental form of Catholics, in the form of the spiritual companionship of the Orthodox, or the form of the passionate praying of the Protestants, has deeply rooted itself into the Christian perception of human realities and the redemptive love of God (Worthington, 2006, pp. 1–29).

It does not challenge believers to hide in shame, but rather to fight to overcome the sin with hope, which is based on the promise of being forgiven and transformed. It fosters humility, moral acumen, and spiritual honesty and is as much a source of psychic relief and emotional healing as it is a source of divine reconciliation.

Christian confession is an effective way of not only healing the inner man but also the society at large, as we live in a world full of not only moral ambiguity but also isolation and emotional distress. It supports the principles of truth, mercy, and justice, which offer holy language to maintain moral life and character development in the contemporary world.

### Crossovers of Buddhism and Christianity on Confession: Psyche and Ethic Perspectives

Although doctrine and practice distinguish Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity, both religions focus on confession as a process of change that is based on inner purification, moral responsibility, and spiritual cure. In both confessional systems, it is not just about recognising a wrongdoing; it is an action, planned and sometimes even a sacred action, that encourages self-examination, moral focus, and psychological freedom. It is an instrument that helps mankind do justice to its flaws, rebalance the moral compass, and pursue peace and



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harmony both individually and collectively.

The admission of moral frailty and the acceptance of this understanding are at the centre of both traditions, whether through ignorance, attachment, or willful disobedience; it is through this admission that enlightenment is true and begins with recognition of these errors. This is transposed in Mahayana Buddhism into the frequent exhortation to cleanse the mind of the impurities (*kleśas*) and their meditation, as in the case with *pāpadesana* (confession of sins) to an enlightened being, such as the Buddha or the Bodhisattvas. By so doing, it is said to dissolve karmic hindrances and help develop the sanity needed to develop *bodhicitta* and escape *saṃsāra*. Likewise, in Christianity, especially those following the Catholic and the Orthodox religions, confession is required to be reconciled to the community and to God. It replaces the lost grace by committing sins, and the believer can lead a more virtuous and grace-filled life.

Both traditions emphasise the purification of the inner being. Furthermore, this process does not simply entail a confession of sins on the outside, but it must entail a regeneration of the soul and a rearrangement of priorities. In Mahayana Buddhism, the practitioner is advised to be mindful and ponder over the intentions (*cetanā*) that motivate his/her actions. This self-

reflective emphasis guarantees that confession will never be a mere formality since self-examination should be considered an earnest effort to eliminate mental impurities. In Christianity, particularly as explained by theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas, inner contrition is of primary importance. The sacrament of penance is regarded as ineffective without any sincere sorrow over sin and the firm intent of amendment. These religions, therefore, hold a belief that confession must be boosted by a will to be morally upright.

Besides the spiritual components, confession has great psychological implications. The contemporary models of therapy, especially in psychoanalysis, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and mindfulness-based therapies, have witnessed the need to honestly admit imperfections, transgressions, and untreated guilt. The clinical research shows that speaking of guilt and remorse may help a person to release tension, repressed emotions, and psychosomatic stress. This therapeutic approach reflects has the reflection of ancient religious insights. Confession is part of both Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity to purge the mind, solve the loop of self-deception, and provide distance and distance to emotional healing and self-compassion.

Confession is also a means of addressing wrongdoings in an individual in a positive manner and



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instills the necessary moral and psychological virtues. Self-awareness is one of them. The last Buddhist practice is confession of unwholesome deeds that requires close attention (sati) and self-reflection that enables a practitioner to obtain a clearer understanding of the habits and negative tendencies. Penitents can also contemplate their relation to God, other people, and even themselves in the process of Christian practice, and specifically through analysis of conscience. Practice promotes spiritual discernment, thereby causing the person to be sensitive to the fine differences and moral obligations.

Along with self-awareness, empathy and humility were also developed closely. Both traditions teach that acknowledging one's sins or negative karma fosters a greater sense of compassion toward others. In Buddhism, the awareness of personal suffering and ignorance births karuna (compassion) in fellow beings in the same state of struggle. To be forgiven in Christianity is the same as it correlates to the aspect of someone having a merciful heart that leads to the urge of the penitent to forgive others. This view of confession turns it not only into a very personal action but also into a relational, communal act, creating feelings of emotional closeness, understanding, and shared humanity.

Lastly, the Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity imply that confession helps in the maintenance of social

equilibrium and moral unity. Confession as a counter-practice in a morally relativistic, individualistic, and emotionally distanced world invites people to take responsibility, promote ethical thinking, and restore broken relationships. When promoting people to overcome their faults and reconcile, the two customs affirm the prospect of restoring trust and dignity to the community at large. Regardless of the Buddhist ritual of repentance or the Christian rite of confession, emphasis on humility and change has always provided the means of creating ethical societies based on mutual respect and compassion.

To sum up, although the language and the forms are different, Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity share their psychological understanding and moral richness on the topic of confession. Both identify the significant human interest of fighting evil, repenting, and working towards inner and outer peace. With the confession, the burdened mind obtains reprieve, the hardened heart a softer one, and the lost self a restored one into the community first with the self, with others, and with the divine.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the psychological and spiritual usefulness of confession in both Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity, disclosing its changing power in both religions. Although the systems are different in



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terms of their theological expression, both consider confession as being fundamental to inner purification, moral responsibility, and healing of the emotions.

Confession, in Mahayana Buddhism, has been a way of purifying negative karma and working on the awakening mind called *bodhicitta* (the compassionate mind carrying out to have enlightenment). Grounded in books, such as *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, written by Ven. Śāntideva, confession is regarded as a moral cleansing and self-examination. The Buddhists want to get rid of defilement and promote the sense of compassion through devotional practices and personal repentance.

To Christianity, confession, particularly in the Sacrament of Penance, renews the ties or the bond between an individual and God as well as the Church. Confession can be done either individually or collectively, and it includes penitence, spoken confession, absolution, as well as penance, resulting in religious and mental reconciliation. The tradition lays stress on grace, mercy, and change through forgiveness.

The two religions emphasise confession to face personal misdoings and minimise the feeling of guilt as a way of developing morality. Modern psychology reconciles these claims and understands confession capacity and releasing the emotional burden and encouraging self-awareness and

empathy. Therefore, confession is a tool that serves not only as a spiritual discipline but also as a process of treatment with long-lasting application.

Confession represents one of the ways to recovery, conscience, and social calm in the environment of moral ambiguity and emotional fracture in a modern world. There is no difference whether it is being used in a temple, in a church, or in silent meditation; it encourages people to embrace responsibility, seek renewal, and live more consciously. Confession is therefore an important practice, straddling the threshold between the sacred and the psychological, personal and community, and through both Buddhism and Christianity.

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