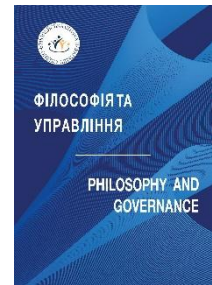




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Confession as a Healing Tool from Feelings of Guilt and Shame

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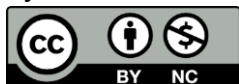
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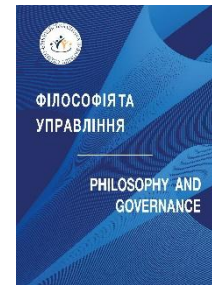
ABSTRACT

In modern conditions, marked by an existential crisis and the rupture of social ties, feelings of guilt and shame turn into destructive factors that destroy the integrity of the individual. Despite the current stage of development of psychotherapeutic practices, the phenomenon of confession as a spiritual, religious and philosophical category still needs to be understood as an effective mechanism for healing from emotional and, sometimes, physical wounds. The combination of a secular psychotherapeutic approach with the centuries-old Christian tradition of the sacrament of confession allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of transforming internal burdens into a resource for personal growth, which is extremely relevant for the modern post-traumatic community. The article aims to theoretically substantiate confession as an integrative tool for healing the individual, combining the psychological externalization of experience, the philosophical category of self-care, and the Christian understanding of metanoia (change of heart, according to Jesus Christ). The study is aimed at revealing the dynamics of the transition from alienation caused by shame to the ontological renewal of the individual. Special attention is paid to the phenomenological differentiation of guilt and shame as modes of human existence, as well as the search for ways to harmoniously combine spiritual discipline with psychological support for the traumatized individual. The methodological basis of the article is a comprehensive approach that combines phenomenological analysis with philosophical and anthropological discourse to reveal the internal experience of confession as an act of existential renewal. The integration of theological developments with modern psychological methods allows us to systematically describe the transformation of the individual in the conditions of spiritual work on oneself. Confession today is a complex process of metanoia, that is, an internal transformation that requires a person not just a formal recognition of actions, but a profound change in worldview. It has been established that guilt, having a rational ethical nature, requires an act of restitution, while shame is an ontological vulnerability that provokes existential isolation. It has been proven that confession acts as a tool for deconstructing shame through the verbalization of hidden pain before the Absolute. The role of the priest as a witness to a person's intimate dialogue with God has been analyzed and the importance of a systemic, procedural approach to caring for the soul in the same way that a person cares for his body, and perhaps even more, has been emphasized. The Christian category of metanoia gives the psychological process of therapy an eschatological perspective, hope that transforms guilt from a factor of stagnation into a responsibility for the future. The study demonstrates that confession effectively separates the act/sin and the personality, returning a person a sense of self-worth and the ability to continue living. Confession is a fundamental resource for overcoming the consequences of trauma, as it allows you to process both specific guilt and deep feelings of inferiority. The effectiveness of the sacrament of confession in modern conditions is achieved through the integration of professional self-knowledge, spiritual struggle and sincere reconciliation with others and with your own essence. The results obtained confirm the feasibility of integrating confessional elements into modern psychotherapeutic protocols for working with people experiencing moral crises.

KEYWORDS

soul hygiene, confessor, spiritual and psychological healing, existential integrity, person, guilt, shame, sacrament of repentance, sacrament of confession, metanoia.





Сповідь як інструмент зцілення від почуття провини та сорому

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СТАТТЯ	АНОТАЦІЯ
Дослідницька DOI: 10.70651/3041-248X/2026.5.05 Отримана: 27.03.2026 р. Прийнята: 01.05.2026 р. Опублікована: 05.05.2026 р. Авторське право © 2026 автора  Цей твір ліцензовано на умовах Ліцензії Creative Commons «Із Зазначенням Авторства – Некомерційна 4.0 Міжнародна» (CC BY-NC 4.0).	У сучасних умовах, позначених екзистенційною кризою та розривом соціальних зв'язків, почуття провини та сорому перетворюються на деструктивні чинники, що руйнують цілісність особистості. Попри сучасний етап розвитку психотерапевтичних практик, феномен сповіді як духовно-релігійна та філософська категорія все ще потребує осмислення як дієвий механізм зцілення від емоційних та, подеколи, й фізичних ран. Поєднання світського психотерапевтичного підходу з багатовіковою християнською традицією таїнства сповіді дозволяє глибше зрозуміти механізми перетворення внутрішнього тягаря на ресурс для особистісного зростання, що є надзвичайно актуальним для сучасної посттравматичної спільноти. Метою статті є теоретичне обґрунтування сповіді як інтегративного інструменту зцілення особистості, що поєднує психологічну екстерналізацію досвіду, філософську категорію турботи про себе та християнське розуміння metanoia (переміни серця, за словами Ісуса Христа). Дослідження спрямоване на розкриття динаміки переходу від відчуження, зумовленого соромом, до онтологічного оновлення особистості. Особлива увага приділяється феноменологічній диференціації провини та сорому як модусів буття людини, а також пошуку шляхів гармонійного поєднання духовної дисципліни з психологічним супроводом травмованої особистості. Методологічну основу статті становить комплексний підхід, що поєднує феноменологічний аналіз із філософсько-антропологічним дискурсом для розкриття внутрішнього досвіду сповіді як акту екзистенційного оновлення. Інтеграція теологічних напрацювань із сучасними психологічними методами дозволяє системно описати трансформацію особистості в умовах духовної праці над собою. Сповідь сьогодні є складним процесом metanoia, тобто внутрішнього перетворення, яке потребує від людини не просто формального визнання вчинків, а глибокої зміни світогляду. Встановлено, що провина, маючи раціональну етичну природу, вимагає акту реституції, натомість сором є онтологічною вразливістю, що провокує екзистенційну ізоляцію. Доведено, що сповідь діє як інструмент деконструкції сорому через вербалізацію прихованого болю перед Абсолютом. Проаналізовано роль священика як свідка інтимного діалогу людини з Богом та наголошено на важливості системного, процесуального підходу до піклування про душу так само як людина дбає про своє тіло, а, можливо, й більше. Християнська категорія metanoia надає психологічному процесу терапії есхатологічної перспективи, надії, яка перетворює провину з фактору стагнації на відповідальність за майбутнє. Дослідження демонструє, що сповідь ефективно розмежовує вчинок/гріх та особистість, повертаючи людині відчуття власної гідності та спроможності до подальшого життя. Сповідь є фундаментальним ресурсом для подолання наслідків травми, оскільки дозволяє опрацювати як конкретні провини, так і глибинні відчуття неповноцінності. Ефективність таїнства сповіді в сучасних умовах досягається через інтеграцію фахового самопізнання, духовної боротьби та щирого примирення з ближніми та зі своїм єством. Отримані результати підтверджують доцільність інтеграції сповідальних елементів у сучасні психотерапевтичні протоколи для роботи з людьми, які переживають моральні кризи.



КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

гігієна душі, духівник, духовно-психологічне зцілення, екзистенційна цілісність, людина, провина, сором, таїнство покаяття, таїнство сповіді, metanoia.

1. Introduction

The current realities of Ukrainian society require the search for new effective tools to overcome the consequences of traumatic experience. The psycho-emotional state of the individual today is under unprecedented pressure, where the leading destructive factors are feelings of guilt and shame, emotions that often prevent normal adaptation and post-traumatic growth. The rethinking of confession as a resource mechanism for spiritual and psychological recovery is taking on a new meaning. Religion is gradually going beyond the boundaries of a purely private faith, transforming into a significant social institution capable of integrating into the system of national stability. We focus on the analysis of confession not only as a liturgical action. Rather, we are talking about a tool of spiritual therapy that allows a person to verbalize hidden pain. We consider this process as an opportunity for the integration of traumatic experience and the transformation of personal meanings in crisis circumstances. An important aspect is the distinction between the phenomenological nature of guilt and shame, which is a necessary condition for effective healing of the soul. The combination of spiritual tradition with the achievements of modern psychology allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of inner freedom. Ultimately, confession appears as a way for the individual to return to integrity, where an authentic encounter with God becomes one of the keys to psycho-emotional harmony.

2. Literature Review

Currently, the attention of scientists is drawn to the study of the possibilities of religion and faith for improving the psycho-emotional state of people who have traumatic experiences as a result of war. N. Prorok, L. Tsarenko and S. Boyko examined religious practices through the prism of how they can become a support for people who have gone through traumatic events, helping them find new meanings and resources for personal recovery and post-traumatic growth. According to the researchers, faith helps strengthen psychological resilience, which makes it easier to adapt to new living conditions after what was experienced during the war [16]. N. Shabanova and A. Trofimov, studying the role of the religious factor in the lives of Ukrainian refugees, conclude that deep personal faith and regular religious practices are associated with significantly lower levels of anxiety and depression. However, in the multifactorial model, the main factors contributing to the development of depression remain loneliness, frustration, and rigidity. The protective effect of faith remains only a moderate tendency. Thus, as scientists note, religiosity can partially alleviate a negative mental state, but is not able to eliminate the influence of powerful socio-emotional stressors [20]. In general, religion in modern Ukrainian society is gradually going beyond the boundaries of a purely private faith, turning into a significant social institution. It actively influences the processes of forming national identity, civic unity, and social stability. Synergy between legislative, executive, educational, and public structures contributes to the integration of religion into the national security system, while ensuring its independent development and protection of citizens' rights. It is from this perspective that the religious sphere is considered in the article by S. Busyhyn and M. Shkribniak [4]. The article by N. Nikolyn is devoted to the analysis of the adaptation of Orthodox religious practice in Ukraine in the conditions of a full-scale war. The author examines how the Orthodox Church of Ukraine managed to respond to unprecedented challenges, remaining faithful to theological principles and church traditions, and at the same time expanding its practices beyond the boundaries of purely liturgical activity. In particular, attention is paid to the emergence of new liturgical forms and prayer texts that arose as a response to war circumstances, such as prayers for victory, defenders and victims, special formulas for burial, etc. [12].

It is worth mentioning separately the scientific works that are directly devoted to the history of the formation of confession as a component of Christian practice and theology in general. L. Mazur reviewed the history of the formation and development of confession from the stage of public repentance to the sacrament and confession as a text in postmodern times [11]. An interesting article is by O. Karlina, which discusses the interpretation of man by Augustine the Blessed using the example of the autobiographical work "Confessions". "Confessions" is a top example of the genre of autobiographical literature. The work raised the bar of the confessional genre so much that none of its followers could reach a similar level. Over the centuries, "Confessions" has inspired the writing of autobiographical works by such authors as Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrararch, Blaise Pascal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and many other writers and philosophers [8]. V. Grutsa's book is devoted to the study of confession as spiritual therapy. The importance of confession for healing as a sacrament of repentance

is particularly emphasized [7]. The phenomenon of forgiveness in religious concepts and medical and psychotherapeutic practices was studied by A. Parasei-Gocher and V. Shcherbaniuk. The researchers separately focused on the importance of studying scientific approaches to forgiveness in the conditions of Ukraine [15].

3. Problem Statement

Scientific interest in the psychological impact of religious practices has never lost its importance in academic discourse. However, the specificity of confession as a highly specialized healing tool remains insufficiently elucidated. Despite the existence of research on the protective or protective effect of faith on the psyche, the question of the effectiveness of the confessional act in the context of extreme war trauma remains relevant. The problem lies in the need for a scientific rethinking of how confession helps to overcome the gap between ethical responsibility and ontological feelings of shame. Traditional approaches to the pastoral care of souls often encounter the barriers of postmodern identity, where the individual is prone to self-isolation and justification of his own destructive actions. The contradiction between the formal performance of a religious rite and the person's need for holistic inner healing becomes obvious. The complexity of the situation is exacerbated by the fact that modern man lives in a state of constant internal deception, where emotions and desires do not correspond to declared ethical convictions [5].

The confessor, acting as a witness to this dialogue with God, does not always have the psychological tools to reveal the subconscious reasons for the destruction of the personality. However, the role of the priest in the confession process goes beyond simple presence and has three important components. The priest helps the person realize what exactly he should confess. He explains the wisdom of the Church regarding the concept of sin and internal painful experiences and acts as a witness to the word of God regarding sins, showing the power and willingness of God to forgive. Such a burden can exhaust the confessor and negatively affect his ministry. In addition, if the priest begins to identify himself with God, this threatens him with spiritual danger: arrogance, pride and an immature attitude towards his role. This confusion of functions can harm repentance and generate narcissism, which distances the believer from the process of true spiritual purification. The priest must strive to do everything possible so that his interaction with the believer during confession bears true spiritual fruits, contributing to internal changes in the person's life. This is a long-term process that continues throughout life and is not limited to short conversations before the liturgy or rare meetings [1]. There is a need for a synergy of theological experience and methods of modern psychology for the effective deconstruction of shame and guilt. It is necessary to find out whether confession is capable of transforming from a disciplinary practice into a space of authentic metaphysical liberation. The search for mechanisms through which confessional practice becomes a transitional bridge between traumatic experience and inner freedom is our task. Thus, scientific research is aimed at identifying how the integration of conscious repentance and psychological reflection contributes to the restoration of the integrity of the "I". Without solving this problem, confession risks remaining only a superficial action that does not touch the deeper layers of the human spiritual crisis and the search for answers to ontological and axiological questions.

4. Methods and Materials

When preparing the article, we were guided by a comprehensive approach in the application of methodological tools that allow us to integrate theological, philosophical-anthropological and psychological views on the phenomenon of confession. The basis of the work is the method of theoretical generalization, with the help of which modern scientific views on the influence of religiosity on the psycho-emotional state of a person who is in conditions of traumatic experience were systematized. Phenomenological analysis was used to reveal the internal experience of repentance, which allows us to consider confession not only as a liturgical act, but as a process of a person's existential breakthrough. The use of a philosophical-anthropological approach made it possible to deconstruct the historical evolution of confession, from the medieval model of the pastoral care of souls described by M. Foucault to the postmodern identity, characterized by internal polyphony and fragmentation. A differential method of analysis was also used, which helped to distinguish the psychological categories of guilt and shame, which is important for understanding the therapeutic potential of confession.

The material base of the article was formed based on a corpus of sources: works of modern theologians and religious scholars devoted to the history and theology of the sacrament of repentance [6; 11; 12; 18]; normative and didactic materials, in particular the Catechism of the UGCC, pastoral epistles of Andrey Sheptytsky and training courses on spiritual practice; results of modern psychological research that reveal the relationship between religious practices and processes of post-traumatic growth in conditions of war stressors [16; 20]. Such a choice of materials allowed ensuring the interdisciplinary nature of the study and substantiating the hypothesis about confession as a tool for psycho-spiritual healing of a person, especially in crises.

5. Results and Discussion

According to Archimandrite H. G. Timpas, among all the holy sacraments offered by the Christian Church, the sacrament of confession is probably the most closely intertwined with the inner challenges that a person faces. In the process of confession, the question of self-identification arises particularly acutely: who we are, how we understand ourselves, what our advantages and disadvantages are in the context of the absolute reality of Christ. The spiritual dimension of this process forces a person to turn to a deep analysis of his essence, which is often accompanied by difficulties that not every Christian is ready to overcome. The difficulty lies primarily in the need to realize and accept his psychological and spiritual reality, distancing himself from deceptive images of self-perception. Reconciliation with the true reality of one's own being presupposes a willingness to turn to the deepest levels of a person's inner life, those dimensions that are not accessible through simple intellectual or emotional experiences. In the modern world, such an approach often contradicts the lifestyle of the average person, for whom the external aspect of life often has a higher priority than the depths of the spirit [18]. For a postmodern person, such an approach poses a significant challenge for a number of reasons [19]. First of all, the subjective understanding of the world, which is inherent in modern man, differs significantly from the worldview of the medieval individual. The latter, as an integral part of society and the Christian Church, was based on faith in the objectivity of Divine truth. Religious, economic, geographical, climatic and social aspects had a significant impact on the medieval way of thinking. At that time, religion was a central component of life. Human existence was inextricably intertwined with Christian holidays, teachings and rituals. Everyday life was filled with symbols and signs that had a deep meaning for people. A word, a plant, a color, a material, a number, a gesture, or even facial expressions could act as carriers of symbolic meaning [2, p. 52].

In contrast, postmodern man often demonstrates indifference to ideas generally recognized by the majority as objective. His attention is focused on subjective experience and interpretation of symbols, which displace conservative value systems, including faith in God, characteristic of the pre-modern period, or the rationalism of modernity. Postmodern philosophy proposes to rethink the concept of human individuality, questioning our understanding of ourselves. According to its logic, we do not really know who we are. At best, we can only "fit" into a certain role. For example, a believer or an unbeliever, as depicted by J. Derrida. Modern individuality appears as a space of unified identities and voices that actively interact and conflict with each other. None of these voices is dominant or privileged. Postmodernism does not seek to impose simplified and unambiguous statements. Instead, it adds a new component to the internal dialogue. This is the voice of doubt, denial, and intellectual search. It provokes a return to one's own beliefs, stimulates critical thinking, and maintains openness to new perspectives. Openness to the other becomes possible due to the presence of a multi-voice within each person. Such an ability to listen to different points of view is important as an ethical category. If the voice of doubt and criticism is missing from the internal conversation, it is more difficult for us to accept or even simply hear other people's opinions. By ignoring internal dissent, we risk isolating ourselves from everything that differs from our own. Therefore, internal dialogue and constant discussion with oneself become necessary conditions for the formation and development of the human personality [17, p. 7].

Such shifts in personal perception affect the way in which modern man comprehends and experiences his connection with the transcendent and, in particular, with God. One of the important changes of modernity is that psychological aspects, details of everyday life, emotional moods and inclinations have become much more accessible to understanding. Modern psychology and other scientific disciplines allow us to more effectively and accurately analyze the entire spectrum of human mental experiences, from depression and trauma to feelings of guilt, hatred, aspirations and desires. In previous times, the psychological foundations of destructive actions were often ignored or considered

secondary for both society and religious communities. Preference was given mainly to the ethical dimension of actions. Confession in a spiritual context could be considered sufficient even without solving specific psychological problems. However, in modern conditions it is extremely important to realize that the roots of any sin or destructive behavior always have a certain psychological basis that requires research and analysis. However, a spiritual father cannot always identify these subconscious reasons. This complicates a deeper understanding of human life in the conditions of modernity. The role of a psychologist in this case becomes extremely important, because it is he who can help reveal the deep causes of a person's behavior, including the consequences of childhood traumas or suppressed desires. Thus, the process of repentance faces new challenges in the modern world. A large number of psychological factors in everyday life make the distinction between what is right and wrong less noticeable and obvious. Ultimately, it all depends on the level of spiritual maturity and awareness of a person, as well as on his priorities in the field of spiritual and psychological development [18]. Confession as an organic component of Christian practices is an important aspect of the concept of self-care. The sacrament of repentance not only emphasizes moral self-reflection. It primarily performs the function of spiritual renewal. Repentance is a metaphysical event in the process of which a believer realizes his sinfulness and recognizes himself as being in constant formation, in need of changes, purification and internal transformation necessary to achieve spiritual fullness and harmony. In the era of early Christianity, repentance was public in nature. However, from the 8th century onwards, the practice of private confession gradually became established. It was institutionalized as a form of spiritual care, directed at the actions and thoughts of the believer. In the act of confession, the central place was occupied by the parishioners' trust in the wisdom and spiritual authority of the priest. It was he who played the role of a doctor of the soul, capable not only of healing a person from the consequences of sin, but also of ensuring his faith in the possibility of salvation. The priest became a defining figure in the life of the church community, forming its spiritual identity and influencing the consciousness of parishioners. The Church granted him considerable power, which included the function of forgiveness and generally resolving complex moral and ethical issues. The priest was forced to evaluate a wide range of human experiences, ranging from motives and intentions to passions and hidden desires. Thus, it was about shaping not only the private destinies of individuals, but also the general moral climate in his community. The practices of self-care, widespread in those times, were described by M. Foucault as the phenomenon of pastoral care of souls. They contributed to the formation of an individual way of thinking in believers and their spiritual mentors. In the process of confession, a person voiced his most secret sinful intentions and desires. While the confessor played the role of a mediator, selecting appropriate means to overcome moral challenges. This approach contributed to the internalization of moral values and directed the personal development of a person. According to M. Foucault, modern European systems of political power adopted the model of the relationship between the shepherd and the flock, which arose within the medieval disciplinary structures of Catholicism [11, pp. 177–178].

In the contemporary existential discourse, the emphasis is shifting from the mechanisms of social discipline to the therapeutic potential of the sacrament. If in the past, the pastoral care of souls often involved external normative evaluation, today confession is being reinterpreted as an intimate space of freedom from the dictatorship of shame: "Confession is not a formality or a list of sins. It is a person's encounter with God in the truth about himself. In a world where we are used to justifying ourselves, explaining our actions by circumstances, and shifting responsibility onto others, the Sacrament of Penance becomes a path of inner freedom—a path of returning to the Father's house" (How to Prepare for Confession: Honesty Without Which There Is No Healing). Confession of one's sinful intentions before God and the mediator today loses its punitive connotation, instead becoming an act of honesty with oneself. Such a transformation allows modern man to go beyond the politics of control, which M. Foucault wrote about, and return to the original essence of confession as an instrument of psycho-spiritual healing, which frees the individual from the burden of guilt, returning to him the ability to authentic existence and inner integrity. Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky once emphasized in his pastoral message to the faithful the importance of careful preparation for confession. He noted that for a good and holy confession it is worth preparing with patience and diligence. Before this, it is necessary to turn to God through sincere and humble prayer, asking for the gift of repentance, heartfelt regret, and, perhaps, even fasting. Sincere repentance becomes the core of a worthy confession. It is manifested in the desire to change one's life, renounce sin, and live in God's grace. In particular, the UGCC catechism explains the essence of repentance as the awareness of oneself as a sinner who needs God's forgiveness.

In addition, an important step on the path to a worthy confession is reconciliation with one's neighbors. True reconciliation creates the basis for restoring spiritual harmony with God and people [13; 21].

To understand the dynamics of healing, it is important to distinguish between the emotional states that prompt a person to confess. Guilt is a reaction to an act that is perceived as a violation of the moral law. It has a rational basis and prompts correction, since "I did wrong." Shame, on the other hand, is a more intimate, ontological feeling of one's own inferiority, which affects the very structure of the "I". In the context of confession, the feeling of shame often becomes the main obstacle to openness, since it provokes self-isolation and the desire to hide something from God and the confessor. The sacrament of confession, therefore, is not only a platform for confessing guilt. It is a tool for deconstructing shame, which restores a sense of acceptance and wholeness to the individual. As noted in the RCC Bible course "Dabar", shame deeply affects our lives, our actions and our way of thinking, because its roots reach far inside. This feeling suggests the thought "You are bad". In contrast to guilt, which prompts reflections "What you did was wrong". However, shame can be overcome through sincere acceptance, accepting a person as he is, without judgment. Jesus knows our weaknesses, mistakes and infidelity well, but even before that, he assures us of his all-consuming love. He does not want us to lose ourselves, distance ourselves from him, or waste time deeply immersed in shame. On the contrary, Jesus desires that we forgive ourselves, just as He has already forgiven us [3; 14]. Confession is an extremely complex and multifaceted sacrament that requires a serious approach, and the concept of repentance should be understood as metanoia, that is, a process of internal transformation and renewal. Especially in the sphere of thoughts, beliefs, and worldviews. Repentance is not reduced to the desire for a complete reckoning with God or a simple calculation of the evil committed. It appeals to a proactive approach aimed at conscious and prudent planning of one's own spiritual growth. Important factors on this path are the ability to gain self-knowledge and correction through regular examination of conscience, which promotes self-reflection and inner improvement. In addition, one should not avoid contact with others. Before asking for reconciliation with God through the sacrament of confession, it is necessary to first make an effort to reconcile with those we may have offended or with whom we are in conflict. This emphasizes the inseparable connection between our relationship with God and our attitude towards other people [22].

Through the prism of the anthropological dimension of confession, it is necessary to distinguish the phenomenological nature of guilt and shame as modes of human existence. If guilt is articulated in the categories of ethical responsibility, appearing as a reaction to a violation of an objective moral law that requires an act of restitution, then shame is an ontological vulnerability: "Grief and forgiveness are like opposite polarities that cannot come together and harmoniously combine in me. And this is the everydayness of my Christian consciousness, which I live my entire conscious Christian life with and consider it normal – I forgive, because I do not respond with evil for evil! But my inner world – emotions, feelings, desires, etc. – does not correspond to my external Christian convictions of love and forgiveness. I live in constant deception and do not consider it a sin" [10]. Shame is a state in which the subject experiences a rupture in his own existential integrity, perceiving himself as an object for the gaze of the Other, in this case God or the community. In the postmodern perspective, shame becomes not just an ethical failure, but an existential isolation that locks a person in the hermetic space of his own imperfection. Thus, confession is transformed from a purely disciplinary practice into a space of metaphysical liberation. Through the act of verbalization, shame loses its destructive autonomy, as the person moves from a position of introspection of his worthlessness to a position of openness before the Absolute. It is this ontological shift, from being closed in his own shame to a dialogical acceptance of his own insufficiency, that constitutes the essence of metanoia, which returns to the subject his true, God-given identity. To truly feel and experience forgiveness, even temporarily, it is necessary to go through the process of internal conversion, the metanoia mentioned above. In the literal sense, this means changing the way of thinking, worldview and attitude towards the world. After becoming aware of individual sinful inclinations, it is worth reflecting on the general direction of your life. Church tradition offers a number of practical means for cultivating discipline in the sacrament of confession. First of all, it is about keeping a written list of sins committed for the period since the previous confession. For those who do not have the habit of regular confession and, accordingly, have not formed the ability to remember sins, this is an excellent tool for preparing for repentance. After completing confession, it is recommended to destroy the list. Some prayer books, as part of the evening rule, also contain a special prayer for daily repentance before God, which indicates the main types of sinful states and actions. It is necessary to strive for regularity in confession, carrying it out as often as possible. For those who have

not yet gained experience in repentance, it is important to constantly improve in this spiritual practice. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that the time between confessions is filled with inner work, spiritual struggle and efforts based on the achievements of the previous repentance and reinforced by the expectation of the next (Fundamentals of Faith. The Sacrament of Repentance). At the anthropological level, this involves a transition to a new state of consciousness, which is accompanied by a complete reassessment of the situation and a revision of life values. It is as if the brain begins to work according to a different program: everything is perceived, comprehended and evaluated in a completely different way. In this process, a deeper knowledge of oneself, one's thoughts and beliefs, and a certain transformation of them, simultaneously occurs [10].

A person often seeks opportunities for confession, although he does not always fully realize its true meaning. Priest P. Zuev notes that in many cases a person simply needs to talk it out, to share what he cannot confide in anyone else. But a confessor is neither a psychologist nor a psychoanalyst. And confession is not just a conversation to obtain human relief. A priest who receives a person's confession acts only as a witness to a deep, sometimes even extremely painful conversation between a person and God. He is only a witness, because true confession takes place before God. Millions of people who come to confession have never read the works of the Fathers of the Church, are not familiar with the decrees of the Trullo Council, and rarely think about theological details. They feel rather than realize that confession helps to reconcile with God, the Church, and, ultimately, with themselves. This is a kind of folk Christianity, which often turns out to be closer to the true teachings of Christ than volumes of complex theological literature [7]. Bishop Volodymyr (UGCC) aptly expressed the importance of confession in a person's life: "Tell me, how many resources do we invest in our own body? We eat, we take care of hygiene, our health... This is not bad, but on the contrary, it is even necessary. But the human body is something that passes. And the immortal soul remains. So, confession is a matter of the soul first of all. And this is a whole process, a certain sequence, and not a one-time action" [9]. Accordingly, confession requires the same investment of resources (attention, time, hygiene of the soul) as caring for the body. This emphasizes the need for a systematic, procedural approach to spiritual life, where intuition is combined with discipline and constant self-improvement of a person.

6. Conclusions

Confession is a unique tool for healing from guilt and shame, but its effectiveness in modern conditions directly depends on the integration of psychological and theological approaches. The transition from understanding confession as a normative ritual to perceiving it as a space of spiritual freedom opens the way to overcoming shame and restoring the integrity of the individual. The condition for the success of this process is a clear distinction between guilt, caused by ethical choice, and shame, which has an ontological nature and requires psycho-spiritual analysis. The act of verbalization, carried out in the space of trust in God and the confessor, helps to overcome the internal isolation that arises under the pressure of traumatic experience. Penance in the sense of metanoia appears as a conscious process of internal transformation, which requires constant work on oneself, regularity and a responsible attitude to one's own spiritual life.

Of particular importance is the awareness that confession is not a one-time action, but a long-term process of soul hygiene, which requires the same efforts as taking care of the body. The interaction between spiritual practice and professional understanding of psychic vulnerability is a necessary prerequisite for repentance to be effective. Thus, confession returns the individual to his true, God-given identity, transforming the disparate fragments of the postmodern "I" into a holistic image. As a result, the sacrament of confession becomes the foundation for psychological regeneration or spiritual rebirth and harmonization of a person's relationship with God, his neighbors, and himself.

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