

## PART ONE

### Chapter 1. The Doctrine of Repentance in the Theology of John Calvin

#### 1. 1. The Necessity of Repentance in Soteriology

##### 1. 1. 1. The Nature and Importance of Repentance

Following the growth of the Church in the last decade it is an appropriate time to subject a term such as repentance to fresh scrutiny because, as Calvin said, “repentance and forgiveness of sin are the sum of the Gospel”<sup>16</sup> and there is no faith in Christ without repentance and without regeneration.<sup>17</sup> Actually, repentance is the basis of Church revival and spiritual awakening. So first of all repentance is necessary in the contemporary Church;<sup>18</sup> as it is through repentance<sup>19</sup> that God cleanses the elected of all sin before He saves His people. Even though, through regeneration (which gives new life), the elected Christians are freed from the sway of sin and God has abolished their guilt and sin ceases to reign over them, it does not stop sin from dwelling in Christians.<sup>20</sup> Repentance thus becomes an event that needs to have repercussions upon our sinful way of life when God seeks to have fellowship with

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16 Inst., 3.3.1. Repentance is a very important idea in Calvin’s soteriology. He always presents the doctrine of repentance with the doctrine of forgiveness of sins. Calvin prefers to use the term repentance rather than the term sanctification in his soteriology. This implies that forgiveness of sins plays a pivotal role in his theology. Comm. on Mt. 3 :2.

17 J. K. S. Reid, ed. Art. 29 of Geneva Catechism (1537) in *Theological Treatises, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXII* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 88-139.

18 David C. Steinmetz, op. cit., 25-26.

19 Pete Wilcox, “Conversion in the Thought and Experience of John Calvin,” 113.

20 Inst., 3.3.11.

Christians in Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Calvin defined repentance as an inclination and justification as a purpose; the former aims at newness of life and the latter at free reconciliation with God.<sup>22</sup> The inclination of repentance is newness of life to God as a process but the purpose of justification is free reconciliation with God once-and-for-all. He also draws parallels with repentance and forgiveness of sins where repentance is called conversion, newness of life, rebirth and sanctification, whereas forgiveness of sin is called free reconciliation, justification and faith. Therefore repentance and faith can be called the sum of the Gospel and the heart of Calvin's teachings.

I will write about repentance and faith and their relationship in Calvin's *Commentaries* and *Institutes* in my thesis because Calvin's works rests on these two main writings and Calvin himself distinguished between in *Scripturae expositione* (exegesis) and in *Dogmatibus* (doctrine): the exposition of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, in the comprehensive commentaries and the systematic principal work, *Institutes of Christian Religion*.<sup>23</sup>

Calvin abandons the medieval term *poenitentia agite* (do penance), instead of it he takes up the Greek words 'μετάνοια' and 'ἐπιστρέφειν', which signify the conversion of the mind that the whole man may be renewed and made another man.<sup>24</sup>

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21 W. Niesel, op. cit., 126.

22 Inst., 3.3.1.

23 Hans J. Kraus, "The Contemporary Relevance of Calvin's Theology," *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, ed. by David Willis & Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.:WM. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 325.

24 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

In the New Testament, the terms ἐπιστρέφειν and μετανοεῖν, according to the apostles and evangelists, have a twofold theological meaning: they are directed “to God” and accomplished “by God.” Basically, conversion is not detachment (disgust, refusal, and break) but rather a positive position of attachment (a higher love, acceptance, and commitment).<sup>25</sup> But medieval scholasticism used the terms *convertere* and *conversio* as often in a secular or philosophical sense as in a strictly religious way. Medieval commentators frequently insist that the will of man cooperates with “assisting grace” like a Semi-Pelagian tendency. According to this perspective, the subjective conditions of conversion were ‘right will,’ ‘humility’ and ‘fidelity to grace’, but its objective conditions included believing certain truths, observing moral precepts, receiving the sacraments and obeying ecclesiastical authority. In this view, the work of the converted was stressed more than the work of God, and the juridical and ecclesiastical aspects were stressed more than the spiritual and biblical elements.<sup>26</sup>

Contrary to the medieval idea of repentance, Calvin tries to reevaluate the concept of repentance in spiritual and biblical terms. He upholds the concept of repentance instead of penance of the Roman Catholic Church because he follows the idea of Erasmus who especially opposed some scholastics who wanted to find the sacramental triad of contrition, confession, and satisfaction in some way in the biblical idea of μετάνοια. For this reason, Erasmus preferred to translate μετάνοια into ‘repentance’ rather than ‘penitence.’<sup>27</sup> Differing with him, Luther eagerly takes up the

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25 Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, tr. by D. Foxgrover and W. Provo (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 243.

26 Ibid., 244.

27 Erasmus, Op 6, 773 F (2 Cor. 11); cited from Alexandre Ganoczy. Ibid. footnote 15. The intention of Erasmus is: Repent, μετανοεῖτε.... But our commoners think that doing penance means to atone by a

biblical concept of repentance wherein repentance comes about through the experience of one's own evil and through trusting faith in the infinite mercy of God. In other words, for Luther, the turning of man to God presupposes the turning of God to man; and that the "true conversion of peace" can only be the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> Luther criticised Erasmus's free will in the doctrine of repentance and instead of the sacramental penance of the Roman Catholic Church he presented biblical terms. In the same way that man "by his own power" is incapable of loving God above everything else, he can do nothing to convert himself to God. Calvin, like Luther, preferred "turn to me and I will turn to you (Zechariah 1:3)" which contains the position of two sides:

Here conversion is undoubtedly twofold. One conversion is ours toward God; the other is God's toward us...But God demands conversion from us, not because we can fulfill it in our own strength, but so that in acknowledging our weakness we may implore the help of the Spirit, by whose agency we can be converted.<sup>29</sup>

Like all Reformers of the mid-sixteenth century, he arrived at his definition of the concept in reaction to the prevailing sacrament of penance in the Roman Catholic Church. In an annotated edition of the Greek New Testament published in 1516, Erasmus had questioned the translation of Mk 1:15 which had been adopted in the Vulgate where the Vulgate had "Do penance (*poenitemini*) for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," but Erasmus proposed that the Greek 'μετάνοια' is rendered

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prescribed punishment for (sin) committed;... a serious error in certain theologians who distort what Augustine wrote about penance, that is, public satisfaction for the anguish of the soul which they call contribution...The Greek word ... is derived not from 'punishment'...but from 'recovering one's senses,' which changes the meaning.

28 Alexandre Ganoczy, op. cit., 244.

29 M. Luther, *Werke*, Weimar, 1883 ff. 13, 551.

“repent (*resipiscimini*).”<sup>30</sup> The Hebrew word for “repentance” is derived from conversion for return; the Greek words are derived from change of mind and intention. The issue stills vexed scholars forty years later and Calvin’s treatment of repentance in the context of the doctrine of sanctification<sup>31</sup> reflects this controversy concerning the doctrine of repentance.<sup>32</sup>

Calvin regarded the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic Church as a perversion of biblical doctrine as he believed that it had completely externalised *Poenitentia* or *Conversione*.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, he based his teaching on what he considered to be the original meaning in the New Testament of μετάνοια. He clarified it in his *Institutes* that the Hebrew term for *poenitentia* means a conversion and the Greek word means a change of mind. Terms aptly express what *poenitentia* really is, viz., a putting off the old mind and turning to God. Hence he would define *poenitentia* as true conversion of a life to God, which arises from a sincere fear of Him and which consists in putting aside the old man and vivification of the spirit.<sup>34</sup> This is what both the Prophets<sup>35</sup> and the Apostles preached; all used such terms as *converti*, *reverti ad Dominum*, *resipiscere* promiscuously as synonyms to designate this *poenitentia* or

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30 P. Wilcox, “Conversion” op. cit., 117. Comm. on Mk 1:15; *et dicens quoniam impletum est tempus et adpropinquavit regnum Dei poenitemini et credite evangelio*; καὶ λέγων ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

31 In Calvin, repentance includes conversion, rebirth, renewal, and even sanctification. In contradistinction to the modern connotation of these terms repentance in Calvin works is a wider concept than sanctification. So sometimes I will translate sanctification as repentance in considering this line of thought.

32 *Inst.*, 3.3.5.

33 See. Comm. Acts 2: 38.

34 *Inst.*, 3.3.5. CO. I, Col. 688.

35 Comm. on Amos 5: 4-6.

*conversione*.<sup>36</sup> But as a matter of fact Calvin continually uses repentance, *repentir*, amendment, *s'amender* as the French equivalents of *μετάνοια* and never uses the term penitence to mean sacramental penance.<sup>37</sup> And a part of Beza's *Novum Testamentum* reveals that he consistently translates *μετάνοια* into *resipiscentia* and *μετανοεῖν* into *resipiscere*. The translators of Zurich and Geneva and individual translators such as Diodati and Castalio, all reject the exact equivalents of the Vulgate poenitentia in their respective languages.<sup>38</sup> In this fashion the term repentance came into prominence as rendering for *μετάνοια* in Calvin.

Calvin did not see his works in the context of a great history of philosophy but in a fairly relative realistic context.<sup>39</sup> So the doctrine of repentance in the theology of Calvin also started from an endeavor to solve a realistic problem. Calvin's theology had the purpose of edifying human beings and the Church. This emphasis upon edification was carried forward in Calvin's persistent belief in the transformation of mankind to correspond to the image of God. The Christian life, for Calvin, is neither simply being, nor simply believing, but also doing.<sup>40</sup> To conform to the *Imago Dei* is not a theological hypothesis but specific restoration of the image of God. Although

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36 Inst., 3.3.5.

37 CO, XXIX, Col. 366; XLVII, Col.462; XLV, Col.747; XXX, Col. 109; and XXVII where he uses the text of the Geneva Translation, edition of 1546 and gives the variants of other editions of the text, and of his commentary in the footnote.

38 Beza writes as follows in his note to Mt3: 2; "*Ceterum quum est verbum absolutum, proprie significat Post factum sapere, & de errore admissio ita dolere ut corrigas: quod Latinis proprie significat Resipiscere.*" *Testamentum Nuvum* with the annotations, fourth edition, 1588, 10

39 Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 22.

40 John Leith, *Calvin's Theological Realism in Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, ed. David Willis & Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.:WM. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 344.

Calvin was a logical man it is difficult to easily understand his doctrine of repentance in his logical thought because Calvin deliberately and intentionally rejected speculation and logic in his theological works.<sup>41</sup> He placed the doctrine of repentance in the praxis of the Christian himself. Calvin insisted that theology must deal with the concrete reality of human life in the language of ordinary human experience. His theology is addressed to concrete human beings with relation to quite specific human experiences.<sup>42</sup> In Calvin's theology, repentance is not matter of theory but praxis of Christians. His doctrine of repentance is not an object of study but one of reality in the religious life of Christians. He wanted to place his doctrine on a practical level so he clarified the definition of the doctrine of repentance in his *Form of Prayer for the Church* that

Effacing our faults, and washing away all our pollutions, daily increase to us the gifts of thy Holy Spirit, that we from our inmost hearts acknowledging our iniquity, may be more and more displeasing to ourselves, and so stimulated to the repentance, and that he mortifying us with all our sins, may produce in us the fruits of righteousness and holiness pleasing to thee.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, knowledge of God is not a theory but a practical experience: that of trust and obedience and of life under God and His will. Just as the knowledge of God has a practical dimension or application so, too, is it a theology as charismatic praxis because, according to Calvin, doctrine of repentance stands with accepted practice in a threefold definition: when executed correctly, it works *aedificatio* (the

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41 Ibid., 340.

42 Ibid., 343.

43 T. F. Torrance, ed. *Form of Prayer for the Church: Tract and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*, Vol. II tr. by the original Latin and French by Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1958), 100.

establishment of the unity and the life of the Christian), bears *fructio* (fruit), and is characterised by *utilitas* (usefulness).<sup>44</sup> Calvin's doctrine of repentance starts from this cognition and understanding of his context.

Calvin believed that the doctrine of repentance is a most serious matter in the Christian life because when we know this doctrine rightly, "we should most certainly know that forgiveness of sins may be obtained in it."<sup>45</sup> But in spite of being a serious matter, he considered it as "not very complicated"<sup>46</sup>; he believed that it was not only serious but simple because it stands not on speculative ground but is based on concrete ground. Nevertheless he treated it importantly because "unless this knowledge remains clear and sure, the conscience can have no rest at all, no peace with God, no assurance or security; and it continuously trembles, wavers, tosses, is tormented and vexed, shakes, hates, and flees the sight of God."<sup>47</sup> Thus, true repentance is regarded as that which offers rest to the conscience and peace with God.<sup>48</sup> This belief is found in his *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*. In Article XXIV of *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* he rejects meritorious things to which aid forgiveness and salvation, auricular confession and indulgences and so on because these impose a yoke upon the human conscience.<sup>49</sup> Calvin rejects the notion that Christians confess their sins in the manner which the Catholic Church requires. The requirement of

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44 Hans J. Kraus. op. cit., 327.

45 Inst., 3.4.2.

46 Inst., 3.4.1.

47 Inst., 3.4.2

48 Ibid.

49 Philip Schaff, ed. *Confessio Fidei Gallicana: The Creed of Christendom*, Vol. III Reprinted (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 374. Article XXIV.



complete confession, Calvin asserts, diminishes the rest of man's soul because he does not know all of his sins against God.<sup>50</sup> Calvin asserts that the only condition of absolution is God's mercy through Christ's sacrifice. The sinner can, indeed, embrace true and clear absolution when that simple condition is applied; that of embracing the grace of Christ according to the general rule of the Lord himself.<sup>51</sup>

God, by way of free favour, pardons our sins, but that is only when we renounce them. And more, God accomplishes in us one thing but through two avenues: being renewed by repentance, which we are delivered from "the bondage of our sins"; and, being justified by faith, we are delivered also from "the curse of our sins." Calvin regards them as inseparable fruits of grace. And consequently, due to their invariable connection, repentance may with fitness and propriety be represented as an introduction to salvation, but in this manner of speaking it is represented as an effect rather than as a cause.<sup>52</sup> For Calvin, repentance is never a cause but rather an effect of salvation and of grace. The only cause of salvation is the grace of God whether it is repentance or faith. So the hope and assurance of salvation rests upon the free mercy of God alone and the forgiveness of sins shall, notwithstanding, be any cause of sluggish security.<sup>53</sup> For that reason to separate the grace of Christ from repentance is a perversion of the Gospel.<sup>54</sup> The meaning of repentance was a matter of the utmost importance for Calvin. When a man repents, in which he puts off the old man and lives in newness of life, he tastes salvation prepared for him in Christ. But we can

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50 Inst., 3.4.17.

51 Inst., 3.4.23.

52 Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:10.

53 Comm. on Eph. 4:22; Acts. 11:18.

54 Comm. on Acts. 26:19-20.

never obtain forgiveness of sins without repentance; it is presented, in a variety of passages, as the mercy of God alone that forms the grounds for our obtaining it.<sup>55</sup> He continues that even though the Lord's mercy alone brings about forgiveness of sins, and that repentance is not the cause of forgiveness of sins, nonetheless, forgiveness of sins can never come about without man's repentance.<sup>56</sup>

The design of God's benevolence is to convert sinners to him<sup>57</sup> and repentance is a fatherly invitation for sinners.<sup>58</sup> Because of this connection with a fatherly invitation, this presupposes a benevolent God and paternal goodness. So, we can come to before his countenance bravely. Calvin prefers rendering the word 'leads' rather than 'invites' and he does not take repentance in the sense of 'driving,' but 'leading' as it were by the hand.<sup>59</sup> This presents that though at first Calvin's doctrine of repentance comes from the grace of God, at the same time God wants voluntary repentance of sinners following God's grace in faith.<sup>60</sup>

True repentance, Calvin announces, always comes from the grace of God. And he alludes to the fact that repentance might apply to salvation equally. Nonetheless he prefers the term repentance.<sup>61</sup> He appears to make repentance the grounds of salvation. Nevertheless he does not regard repentance as the ground of salvation but simply commends repentance as the fruit that it produces. He says, that "it is a way by which

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55 Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:10.

56 Inst., 3.4.3.

57 Comm. on Rom. 2:4.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Comm. on Acts 2:38.

61 Comm. on Rom. 2:5.

we arrive at salvation. Nor is it without good reason; for Christ calls us by way of free favor, but it is to repentance.”<sup>62</sup> And when we become hardened against the admonition of the Lord, impenitence follows; and those who are not anxious about repentance openly provoke the Lord.<sup>63</sup> Calvin states that “the ungodly not only accumulate for themselves a heavier weight of God’s judgments daily, as long as they live, but also that the gifts of God also, which they continually enjoy, shall increase their condemnation.”<sup>64</sup>

Repentance is, by reference, the expression of the love of God; because “God even defers his coming to invite all mankind to repentance and to give all time to repent” and God would have all, “who had been before wandering and scattered, to be gathered or come together to repentance.”<sup>65</sup> God leads his chosen people to salvation with great love:

So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost. But the order is to be noticed, that God is ready to receive all to repentance, so that none may perish; for in these words the way and manner of obtaining salvation is pointed out. Every one of us, therefore, who is desirous of salvation, must learn to enter in by this way.<sup>66</sup>

Calvin, in his *Institutes*, contrasts between “sorrow according to God” and

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62 Comm. on Rom. 2:5.

63 Comm. on Rom. 2:5. What follows in the text, according to Calvin, is this, “*et Corinthians pœni tere nescium* — and a heart that knows not to repent; “ἀμετανόητον καρδίαν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργήν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς,” which Schleusner renders thus, “*animus, qui omnem emendationem respuit* — a mind which rejects every improvement.” It is “an impenitible” rather than “an impenitent heart,” that is, a heart incapable of repenting.

64 Comm. on Rom. 2:5.

65 Comm. on 2Pet. 3:9.

66 Comm. on 2Pet. 3:9.

“sorrow of the world,” and between “the joy of the world” and “the joy that is according to God” to make clear the definition of repentance. These, “sorrow according to God” and “the joy that is according to God,” are caused by fear of His judgment and mourning over our sins. This sorrow, as Calvin calls it, is the cause and beginning of repentance. In as much as repentance begins with dread and hatred of sin,<sup>67</sup> godly sorrow works repentance to salvation but the sorrow of the world works death.<sup>68</sup> In Calvin’s theses sorrows are classified; the former is the beginning of true repentance, which is our initial act of becoming wholly converted to God in the elected but the latter is nothing but the pricks of conscience in the unelected. But it is impossible for a man to experience a sorrow of the former kind without its giving birth to a new heart.<sup>69</sup> He notes the double fruits of repentance; first, that we are touched with the feeling of sorrow; and, secondly, that we are obedient to the preacher’s counsel. This is the beginning of repentance; this is the entrance into godliness, to be sorry for our sins, and to be wounded with the feeling of our miseries. And Calvin adds that surely a contrite spirit and a humble heart are a sacrifice acceptable to God.<sup>70</sup>

The correlation between regeneration, repentance and conversion is implicated in the title of *Institutes* III. iii, where Calvin introduces his discussion of the subject: “Our regeneration by faith; a discourse on repentance.”<sup>71</sup> Calvin explicitly interprets

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67 Calvin sees fear of God and hatred of sins as the same. Inst., 3.3.7.

68 Comm. on 2 Cor 7:10.

69 Comm. on 2Cor. 7:9.

70 Comm. on Acts. 2:37.

71 Inst., 3.3. Chapter heading

repentance as regeneration.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, when he proceeds to define repentance in *Institutes* III.iii.5, it emerges that one further term, which is conversion, is related to these others. The final association of repentance with conversion is as significant for Calvin's theology as those that have been identified already.<sup>73</sup> Calvin identifies ἐπιστρέφειν (*convertere*) and μετανοεῖν (*resipiscere*), it is condensed as accurately as possible in Calvin's text.<sup>74</sup> Calvin treats the doctrine of regeneration and doctrine of conversion within the doctrine of repentance. In the *Institutes* as well as in Calvin's expositions of the prophets the concept of conversion stands alongside the themes of repentance, sanctification and regeneration, except that there it is more usual to find him introducing repentance, regeneration, and sanctification, having taken 'conversion' as his starting point.<sup>75</sup> It is more common in these expositions to find Calvin defining conversion in terms of repentance and regeneration than the other way around.<sup>76</sup>

Calvin does equate conversion with the inner change viz., "regeneration by his spirit."<sup>77</sup> Many people have their eyes fixed on the outward fruits of repentance alone, but conversion refers to the renovation of the mind and heart.<sup>78</sup> Calvin defines conversion as the giving of the entire heart to the Lord and concerning the ridding not of garments, but of the heart.<sup>79</sup> Therefore repentance consists of *mortificatio* of the

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72 Inst., 3.3.9.

73 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 245-246.

74 Inst., 3.3.21.

75 Comm. on Ezek. 18:24.

76 Comm. on Dan. 2:47, Ezek 7:13; 18:24, Hos. 2:7.

77 Comm. on Lam. 5:21, Mal.5:21.

78 Comm. on Ezek. 18:30.

79 Inst., 3.3.17.

flesh and *vivificatio* of the spirit.<sup>80</sup> The meaning of *mortificatio* of the flesh demands the destruction of the whole flesh and the denial of ourselves.<sup>81</sup> Calvin made a distinction between two forms of repentance with *mortificatio* and *vivificatio* according to Melanchthon.<sup>82</sup> *Mortificatio* means that sorrow of the soul and dread conceived from the recognition of sin and the awareness of divine judgment, whereas *vivificatio* means that consolation that arises out of faith.<sup>83</sup> Calvin calls the former contrition and the latter desire arising from rebirth or faith. Luther also calls the former contrition, but the latter only faith.<sup>84</sup> Article XII of *Augsburg Confession*, which was authored by Lutheran Reformers, states that “repentance consists of two parts: one is contrition, that is, terror smiting the conscience with a knowledge of sin, and the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, believes that sins

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80 Both things happen to us by participation in Christ. Inst 3.3.9

" *poenitentiae nomen hebraeis a conversione, graccis a mentis consilii que mutatione deductam est. Nec utrique etymologicae res ipsa male respondit; cuius summa est, ut a nonis demigrantes ad Deum convertamur, et deposita pristina menta novan induamus. Quamobrem non male eo quidem iudicio, sic poenitentia definiri poterit; esse veram ad Deum vitae nostrae conversionem, a sincero serioque Dei timore profectam, quae carnis nostrae veterisque hominis mortificatione et spiritus vivificatione constet.*"

81 Inst., 3.3.8

82 Philip Melanchthon, *THE LOCI COMMUNES of PHILIP MELANCHTHON*, tr. by Hill C L. (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1944), 249-258. This expression Augustine used, too. See The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First series, Vol. V; Anti Pelagian Writings. Ch 7-9 ed. Philip Schaff. Especially ch.9 ... to the wholesome mortification of repentance by...; NPNF. First series, Vol. VIII: Exposition on the Psalms. 119: 49-56 ed. Philip Schaff... each man humbles himself by confessing his sin, and by not arrogating righteousness to himself; but when each man is humbled by some tribulation or mortification which his pride deserved;...

83 Inst., 3.3.3.

84 Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, tr. by John H. Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 134.

are forgiven for Christ's sake, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terror."<sup>85</sup> For repentance is that one died to sins and lives to God through Jesus.<sup>86</sup> For in that He died, he dies unto sin once: but in that He lives, he lives unto God. Likewise "reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>87</sup>

Yet repentance is, for Calvin, one of the most significant and profound dimensions of the Gospel.<sup>88</sup> For in this way we flee from God who calls us to himself through repentance. God calls us to Himself through repentance.<sup>89</sup> So repentance is a means of calling,<sup>90</sup> and without which there is naturally no election as a prerequisite.<sup>91</sup>

Calvin considers repentance and faith as a progression through the whole course of our life.<sup>92</sup> But he classifies the first repentance and general repentance; the former is repentance from dead works and the latter is part of our whole lives for though "every sin is a dead work, either as it leads to death, or as it proceeds from the spiritual death of the soul; yet the faithful, already born again of the Spirit of God, cannot be said properly to repent from dead works." The beginning of repentance,

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85 Ibid.

86 Comm. on 1 Pet. 2:24

87 Inst., 3.3.5: Repentance is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit.

88 John Witvliet, "Baptism as a Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Thought of John Calvin," *Studia Liturgica* 27/2 (1997): 152.

89 Inst., 3.3.15.

90 Ibid.

91 Inst., 2.3.11.

92 Comm. on Heb. 6:1.

which he refers to, is the first time that one is consecrated to the faith and commences a new life.<sup>93</sup> Thus Calvin treats repentance, which is repentance as regeneration, as not indeed made perfect in us but we have the seed of new life through it.<sup>94</sup>

In *Confessio Belgica* (1561) it avers, “we are regenerated by the hearing of the word of God and operation of the Holy Spirit and made a new life”<sup>95</sup> but it is difficult to find the dialectic tension in it, unlike Calvin’s doctrine of repentance. Calvin emphasised faith and grace as a *cause* of repentance but he did not neglect the role of repentance in salvation to such an extent that it sometimes even seems that he presents repentance as conditional to salvation.

The repentance, which Calvin speaks of, is not a duty but a privilege of the elected. Calvin summarises the characteristics of repentance very well in *Form of Prayer for the Church*, by stating we may “be ashamed and grieved at our conduct, and turning to the Lord with unfeigned repentance and a better life, suppliantly and submissively beg pardon of him.”<sup>96</sup> And in *Second Defense of the Sacraments*, in *Answer to the Calumnies of Westphal*, he advocates that,

If he denies that they were members of the Church before baptism, then faith and repentance have no effect. If those whom God has regenerated by his word, whom he has formed again after his image, whom he has honored with the celestial light of faith, whom he has enriched with the gifts of his Spirit, belong to the body of the Church.<sup>97</sup>

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93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 Philip Schaff, ed. “*Confessio Belgica*,”: *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. III Reprinted (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 410. Article XXIV.

96 *Form of Prayer for the Church*, 106.

97 J. Calvin, *Second Defense of the Sacraments*, in *Answer to the Calumnies of Westphal : Tract and*



Contrary to Pighius' belief in the universality of grace, which is God's will that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and that God does not will the death of the sinner (Ezek. 18:23; 33:11), Calvin asserts that "this has conditions" and especially the latter, "exhorts the people to repentance."<sup>98</sup> Calvin does not contradict the harmony between the universality of grace and conditional salvation in his thought. He says that

It is no wonder that he (Ezekiel) proclaims God's willingness that all be saved. But we must also consider the mutual relation between threats and promises, and then we realize that such forms of speech are conditional... Ninevites... king of Gerar and Egypt ... But because of their repentance the punishment was not fulfilled.<sup>99</sup>

In all fairness to Calvin, the threats and promises should be read together. God wills that man should turn back to Him and that man should live. He wills not only that he should live but also demands a turning from evil, because He leads all to repentance by His word. Wherever He finds conversion, He gives the promised life. This is not contradictory to His hidden counsel, "by which He has determined to convert none but the elected. Neither is there any variation in God, for in the first instance He is acting as Lawgiver, illuminating all by the external preaching of the Gospel and calling them to life, and in the second instance He is acting as Father in regenerating His elected by the Spirit."<sup>100</sup>

Norman Geisler blames extreme Calvinists for monergism, that the very first moment of conversion is totally a result of God's operation, without any cooperation

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*Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*, Vol. II, 337.

98 L. F. Schulze, *Calvin's Reply to Pighius*, Diss., D. Rs., University of Strasbourg (1968), (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Press, 1971), 105.

99 Comm. on Ezek. 18:23; 33:11

100 L. F. Schulze, *op. cit.*, 105.

on man's part. He says "this is sometimes called operative grace, as opposed to cooperative grace but it is just a monergistic act. And man is purely passive with regard to the beginning of his salvation, but is active with God's grace after that point."<sup>101</sup> But principally Calvin's doctrine of repentance corresponds to the opinion of extreme Calvinists as Norman Geisler has asserted. Conversion and repentance according to Calvin are solely God's work even though sometimes Calvin's doctrine of repentance seems synergic. In fact it is not synergism but God's work only. For Barth, the most serious problem with Calvin is the concept that repentance can be a single act that effects forgiveness of sins.<sup>102</sup> But on the contrary, Calvin says repeatedly "men are not converted to God of their own accord, nor is the gift of conversion common to all."<sup>103</sup> Calvin insists on both the presupposed responsibility of man in the exhortation, and the free, powerful and effective power of God's grace, and he says that the Lord does indeed frequently "exhort us to repentance, but He himself is asserted to be the author of conversion."<sup>104</sup> God's law is said to convert souls<sup>105</sup> and this office is elsewhere transferred to the ministers of the word.<sup>106</sup> But while we labor by praying, sowing and watering, it is God alone that gives the increase. So it is no wonder that it is ascribed to Him to open the heart of his own, so "they may attend to the word they hear."<sup>107</sup> So Calvin concludes, therefore, that the

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101 Norman, Geisler, *Chosen But Free*, A Balanced View of Divine Election, 2nd edition (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2001), 241.

102 Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 190-191.

103 Comm. on 2Tim. 2:25.

104 Comm. on 2Tim. 2:25.

105 Comm. on Ps. 19:18ff.

106 Comm. on Lk. 1:17.

107 J. Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, translated with an introduction by J. K. s.

will of God to salvation is no other than the will that appears in the external preaching of the Gospel. God wills the salvation of all whom He mercifully invites (by preaching) to Christ.<sup>108</sup>

Although beyond human logic, Calvin's intention is that in identifying the will to save all by the invitation of the Gospel he gives it a conditional character which safeguards the responsibility of living fully with human beings; on a deeper level he sees the efficacious grace of God, giving to the elect those gifts with which they can comply with the conditions given by God.<sup>109</sup> Predestination is, for Calvin, primarily not a matter of God's wrath<sup>110</sup> but the grace of God as it was revealed in Christ. It stimulates preaching and at the same time humiliates the faithful.<sup>111</sup> In repentance God changes our hearts and gives us a new disposition and a new inclination. He plants a desire for Christ in our hearts. So "we can never trust Christ for our salvation unless we first desire him"<sup>112</sup> by the grace of God.

The purpose of God's punishment, in the thoughts of Calvin, is only an admonition for His children to lead them to repentance but not as a punishment for sin: "The children are beaten with rods, not to pay the penalty for their sins to God but in order thereby to be led to repentance and the sole purpose of God in punishing his

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Reid (London, 1961), 107; L. F. Schulze, op. cit., 106.

108 L. F. Schulze, *Ibid.*, 107.

109 *Ibid.*

110 Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 117-118: This is the heart of Calvin's doctrine of predestination. Briefly, those who are obedient should never forget for a moment that they are not the recipients of grace because they are obedient, but obedient because they are the recipients of grace.

111 L. F. Schulze, op. cit., 117.

112 R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1986), 118.

Church is that the Church may be brought low and repent.”<sup>113</sup> And he continues, “God inflicts punishment on this account that He may call those who persevere in evil doing to repentance after repentance has been shown, penalties will already be superfluous.”<sup>114</sup>

All these things (earnestness, carefulness, excuse, indignation, fear, longing, zeal) are under all circumstances attendant upon repentance, but there is a difference in the case of an individual sin secretly before God, or openly before the Church. Concerning the confession of repentance Calvin distinguishes between personal sins and public sins. And they have different treatments: on the one hand, “if a personal sin is secret, it is enough if he has this disposition (that of repentance) in the sight of God. On the other hand, where the sin is open, an open manifestation of repentance is required besides.”<sup>115</sup> Calvin states that one who had sinned must openly give evidence of his repentance by this token.<sup>116</sup> Calvin’s doctrine of repentance is connected to the relationship with one’s neighbor and the Christian community. So, Calvin requires public confession of sins that were committed openly or sins against congregations and reconciliation with the Church in the face of the congregation. Because he insists on public confession it should lead to a just estimation of oneself and for the love, which was broken by our offense, to thus be repaired by our acknowledging the wrong we have committed and asking pardon for it.<sup>117</sup>

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113 Inst., 3.4.32.

114 Inst., 3.4.35.

115 Comm. on 2Cor. 7:11.

116 Comm. on 2Cor. 7:11.

117 Inst., 3.4.10-13.

Contrary to the penance of the Roman Catholic Church, he presents two phases of the doctrine of true repentance, which are negative and positive; the first is that of falling down before Him with a troubled and humbled heart; wholeheartedly accusing and condemning ourselves before Him and the latter is that of seeking to be acquitted by his goodness and mercy.<sup>118</sup> In Article XXII of *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* as well as in Article XII of the *Augsburg Confession* repentance has various attributes, which are faith, the Gospel, the Holy Spirit, good works, and newness of life; thus involving all the attributes of repentance.<sup>119</sup> This indicates that these authors treat repentance, faith, the Gospel, the Holy Spirit, good works, and newness of life cohesively.<sup>120</sup> In the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* as well as in Article XXII of *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*, Calvin defines repentance as: “Dissatisfaction with and a hatred of sin and a love of righteousness, proceeding from the fear of God, which lead to self-denial and *mortificatio* of the flesh, so that we give ourselves up to the guidance of the Spirit of God, and frame all the actions of our life to the obedience of the Divine will.”<sup>121</sup> Even though Calvin does not treat faith in repentance in the same way as the *Augsburg Confession* does, he puts faith and repentance in the grace of God and he never forgets both sides of repentance.

### **1. 1. 2. Sin and Repentance**

Forgiveness of sins and repentance were the principal issues in Calvin’s

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118 Inst., 3.4.9.

119 According to relationship between these elements of repentance in this confession I will argue the importance and the role of repentance in soteriology.

120 Philip Schaff, ed. *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*, 371. Article XXII.

121 T. F. Torrance, ed. *Catechism of the Church of Geneva: Tract and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*, Vol. II, 56.

soteriology and in the whole Scripture, and they are shown to mankind through certain visible gifts of Christ, which are Scripture and baptism.<sup>122</sup> Without Christ a human being cannot know himself, nor have the assurance of salvation through forgiveness of sins and repentance. So Calvin said “our understanding is so smitten with blindness, our heart in its motions so evil and corrupt, in fact our whole nature so depraved, that we can do nothing else but sin until God himself creates in us a new will.”<sup>123</sup> It is noteworthy that in a mild debate with Augustine Calvin does not consider the pride of man to be the real ground of all evil.<sup>124</sup> According to Calvin’s view, the root of the trouble lies much deeper. The defection of man is grounded in something purely negative; in the fact that he no longer cleaves to the word of God in his radical unbelief and disobedience.<sup>125</sup>

Sin is, for Calvin, a product of our own will and we commit sins freely because sin would not be sin if it did not happen in freedom of will but we are so given over to sin that we can voluntarily do nothing else but sin because the evil that reigns in us constantly impels us to do so.<sup>126</sup> And this unbelief engenders and is indeed itself separation from God and furthermore it spells the loss of the divine likeness and is the root of sin in man. Sin can only be described as a surrender of man’s right relation to his Creator.<sup>127</sup>

Sin is not confined to one part of man’s being but completely embraces body and

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122 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

123 CR 14, 35. Cited from W. Niesel, *op. cit.*, 80-81.

124 *Inst.*, 2.1.4.

125 *Ibid.*

126 W. Niesel, *op. cit.*, 87.

127 *Ibid.*, 81.

soul.<sup>128</sup> According to Calvin, “the whole man from head to foot is thus, as it were, drenched in a flood of wickedness so that no part remains without sin and so everything which springs from him is counted as sin.”<sup>129</sup> In the whole of his nature no element of integrity remains and he affirms this through using of the biblical expression that the entire man in this fallen condition is ‘flesh’<sup>130</sup> and every part of us is “saturated in evil.”<sup>131</sup> Calvin understands its seriousness and solution on the basis of Christ.

If it is undisputed that the righteousness of Christ is appropriated by us through our fellowship with Him, as is also eternal life, then it follows that both were lost in Adam and restored to us in Christ; hence sin and death entered in through the fall of Adam and have been destroyed by the work of Christ.<sup>132</sup>

As noted above, a correct awareness of sin must incline to a glory of the merits of Christ.<sup>133</sup> Calvin removes fatalistic features from the doctrine of sin. So “if we sin, it does not happen from compulsion, as though we were constrained to do so by an alien power, but all sin results from our own will and inclination.”<sup>134</sup>

Forgiveness of sins cannot be dissevered from repentance and therefore, for Calvin, repentance is a necessary part of forgiveness of sins.<sup>135</sup> Calvin goes on to

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128 Ibid., 82.

129 Inst., 2.1.9.

130 Inst., 2.3.1.

131 CR 33. 728.

132 Inst., 2.1.6.

133 W. Niesel, op. cit., 85.

134 CR 28, 560 ; W. Niesel, op. cit., 86.

135 *Antidote to the sixth session on Acts of Council of Trent in Tract and Treatises in defence of the reformed faith*, Vol. III, 118.

deem as appropriate the Augustinian-Lombardian notion of original sin as concupiscence as long as it is understood that the whole man is nothing but concupiscence.<sup>136</sup> According to Luther's notion of sin, sins which are committed after baptism remain and sin is active in believers. Calvin upholds that baptism does not free one from original sin and sin acts in the life of the believers. But baptism promises believers that sin will not overcome them, but as long as they live, traces of sin (*reliquia peccati*) will dwell within.<sup>137</sup>

On the basis of the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:29, Tertullianus regarded idolatry, fornication and the shedding of blood as “unforgivable” sins. And Origen condemned ill-qualified priests who remitted sinners that had committed these sins.<sup>138</sup>

But Calvin presented some kinds of unforgivable sins in a different dimension.<sup>139</sup> Even though this view seems inconsistent with other parts of Scripture, where God's mercy is offered to sinners as soon as they sigh for it, especially in Calvin's theology it is not an inconsistency with the Gospel. Calvin explained the reason that “the reprobates cease not to add sin to sin, until being wholly hardened they despise God, or like men in despair, express madly their hatred of him.”<sup>140</sup> And the apostates are either smitten with stupor and fear nothing or curse God their judge because they

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136 Babara Pitkin, “Nothing But Concupiscence: Calvin's Understanding of Sin and the Via Augustine,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (N 1999), 358.

137 Inst., 4.15.10-13.

138 J. T. McNeill and H. M. Gamer, *Medieval handbooks of Penance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 5. See. Footnotes 5. “αἱματος” being understood in the sense of “bloodshed,” and “πνικτων” omitted.

139 See. For the unpardonable sins in Patristic literatures, Ibid., 18-20.

140 Comm. on Heb.6:6.



cannot escape from him. In short, Calvin warns that repentance is not at the will of man but that it is given by God to only those who have “not wholly fallen away from the faith.”<sup>141</sup> And Calvin does not use it as means of condemnation against his opponents but uses it to stress the urgency of repentance:

God’s intention is a warning very necessary to us, lest by often delaying until tomorrow, we should alienate ourselves more and more from God. The ungodly indeed deceive themselves by such sayings as this, that it will be sufficient for them to repent of their wicked life at their last breath. But when they come to die, the dire torments of conscience that they suffer prove to them that the conversion of man is not an ordinary work.<sup>142</sup>

Calvin does not allow that the notion of unforgivable sin is in contradiction with the covenant. Now, as then, the Lord promises pardon to none but those who repent of their iniquity, he goes on to say that “it is no wonder that they perish whom either through despair or contempt, rush on in their obstinacy into destruction.”<sup>143</sup> God always brings up the possibilities of repentance but it only happens when one rises up again after falling.<sup>144</sup> He also adds this to defend God’s severity against the calumnies of men; “for it would be wholly unbecoming, that God by pardoning apostates should expose his own Son to contempt. They are then wholly unworthy to obtain mercy”<sup>145</sup> because this would be regarded as an action to crucify Christ again on the Cross.<sup>146</sup>

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141 Ibid.

142 Comm. on Heb.6:4-6.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid.

146 Comm. on Heb.6:6.

For Calvin, unpardonable sin is willful apostasy,<sup>147</sup> the willful apostates who, while they fall away from faith in the Gospel, mock God, scornfully despise his grace, profane and trample Christ's blood, as much as it lies in their power, crucify him again.<sup>148</sup> But he teaches "apostasy deserves no excuse, so that it is no wonder God avenges such sacrilegious contempt of himself with inexorable rigor."<sup>149</sup> From this it follows that pardon is not denied to any individual sins except one, which, arising out of desperate madness, cannot be ascribed to weakness, and clearly demonstrates that a man is possessed by the devil.<sup>150</sup>

The apostates commit sins against the Holy Spirit with evil intention and resist God's truth although by its brightness they are so touched that they cannot claim ignorance and "such resistance alone constitutes this sin." So, according to Christ and Scripture, Calvin says, "he who speaks against the Son of man will have his sin forgiven but he who blasphemes against the Spirit will not be forgiven."<sup>151</sup>

Calvin presents that the limit and boundary of these sins are only concerned with the consciousness of sinners:

People whose consciences, though convinced that what they repudiate and impugn the word of God, yet cease not to impugn it; these are said to blaspheme against the Spirit, since they strive against the illumination that is the work of the Holy Spirit. .... Thus if ignorance joined with unbelief caused him to obtain pardon, it follows that there is no

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147 Hermas permits the restoration of the apostate, but Calvin restricts "willful apostasy." See. J. T. McNeill and H. M. Gamer. *Medieval handbooks of Penance*, 5.

148 Inst., 3.3.21.

149 Ibid.; Comm. on Heb. 10:26-27.

150 Inst., 3.3.21.

151 Inst., 3.3.22.

place for pardon where knowledge is linked with unbelief.<sup>152</sup>

For Calvin, apostasy is not concerning “one particular lapse or another” but concerning the “universal rebellion” by which the reprobates forsake salvation; that a return to the communion of Christ is not open to those who knowingly and willingly have rejected it. But those who reject it are not those who with dissolute and uncontrolled life simply transgress the word of the Lord but those who “deliberately reject its entire teaching.”<sup>153</sup> Hence it is not any particular failing but a complete turning away from God; apostasy of the whole man. Whoever “choke the light of the Spirit with deliberate impiety and spew out the taste of the heavenly gift, they will cut themselves off from the repentance of the Spirit and trample upon God’s word and the powers of the age to come.”<sup>154</sup>

Calvin thought that pardon is refused even though one turns to the Lord because he utterly disbelieves that “they can rise to repentance because they have been stricken by God’s just judgment with eternal blindness on account of their ungratefulness.”<sup>155</sup>

According to heading of *Institutes* III. iii. 24, (1559)<sup>156</sup> “it is sure that the mind of man is not changed for the better except by God’s prevenient grace. Also, his promise to those who call upon him will never deceive.”<sup>157</sup> Sometimes the reason why God

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152 Ibid.

153 Inst., 3.3.23.

154 Ibid.

155 Inst., 3.3.24.

156 Those who cannot be forgiven are those who cannot repent

157 Ibid.

gives his forgiveness to hypocrites is “for their own sake as for an example to all”<sup>158</sup> but it is not true repentance. So Christians may apply their minds and their efforts to sincere repentance. According to Calvin the indulgence of the Roman Church is blasphemy; that they can have no excuse<sup>159</sup> and would purposely try to extinguish the proffered light of the Spirit.<sup>160</sup>

Calvin categorically disagreed with Augustine’s contention that final impenitency could be the sin against the Holy Spirit,<sup>161</sup> but he remained under Augustine’s influence. Calvin understood that the unforgivable sin is a “state of enmity” against God rather than a “specific act of blasphemy,” and he assumed that “the enmity would persist until death.”<sup>162</sup> But Calvin wanted to warn potential backsliders about this unforgivable sin; in that not all Church members would be saved and he believed that “God uses fear of apostasy as a salutary safeguard against apostasy itself.”<sup>163</sup> There is the difference between unbelievers and believers: “the former, like slaves of inveterate and double dyed wickedness, with chastisement become only worse and more obstinate but the latter, like freeborn sons, attain repentance.”<sup>164</sup> Conclusively, repentance is the barometer of the difference between unforgivable sins and forgivable sins because God gives the chance of repentance only to the elected and the regenerated in Christ.

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158 Inst., 3.3.25.

159 Inst., 3.5.5.

160 Inst., 3.5.7.

161 Comm. on Heb. 6:4-5; Baird Tipson, “A Dark Side of 17<sup>th</sup> Century English Protestantism: the sin against the Holy Spirit,” *Harvard Theological Review* 77/3-4 (1984):311-312.

162 Ibid., 309-310.

163 Comm. on Heb. 6:4-5; Ibid., 311-312.

164 Inst., 3.8.6.

## 1. 2. The Roles of Repentance in Soteriology

### 1. 2. 1. Repentance, Faith and Word

Calvin calls apostles ‘teachers of repentance’<sup>165</sup> because through their ministry of repentance God sets up his kingdom. Repentance and faith include the fullness of the Gospel because Jesus commands his disciples to preach repentance and faith.<sup>166</sup> Actually His disciples’ messages are simple; being repentance and faith.<sup>167</sup> Through this idea Calvin expresses what the fullness of the Gospel is. The whole doctrine of the Gospel is comprehended under two branches: faith and repentance.<sup>168</sup> Faith is the inner form of salvation while repentance is the outer. Calvin states that “faith is hidden in the heart, and therefore conscience must be its witness before God. Repentance is manifested by works, and must therefore be apparent in our life.”<sup>169</sup>

Calvin demonstrated the priority of faith and Word of God to repentance through encompassing portions of his *Institutes* and his *Commentaries* and he thought that this issue is available key of his whole doctrines. He also asserts that Scripture is full of such testimonies of repentance and forgiveness of sins, and when God offers forgiveness of sins to sinners, man reaches repentance.<sup>170</sup> Because of this importance

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165 Comm. on Acts 20:21.

166 Comm. on Heb. 6:1.

167 On this point we can presume that first intention of the preached messages of Jesus’ disciples concerning repentance, is sudden conversion because they have no room to emphasise the Christian life as sanctification.

168 *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, 55-56.

169 T. F. Torrance, ed. *Short treatises on the Lord’s Supper*, 28: *Tract and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*, Vol. II, 179.

170 Inst., 3.3.20.

of repentance we ought not to forget that Christ offers repentance and forgiveness of sins and we receive it through faith. Repentance is the result of faith that comes from the grace of God, given to the elected.

Therefore, the foundation of repentance is faith and repentance is attendant upon faith; but repentance, as well as faith, is the means of receiving the grace of God. Repentance has its peculiar position in Calvin's soteriology because the fountain of grace is the mercy of God and both faith and repentance are nothing but a means of salvation. But Calvin does not treat it as a matter of unimportance but rather regards it as a matter of importance. Therefore both faith and repentance are important in salvation because God gives his grace through each of them differently.<sup>171</sup> The origin of repentance is faith, which does not mean that there is a chronological order between faith and repentance, but rather it shows that man cannot apply himself seriously to repentance without knowing himself to belong to God.<sup>172</sup> For Calvin, if one has first recognised God's grace one can then know faith but "no one is truly

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171 Inst., 3.3.2.

172 This is an important motif of understanding. Calvin is not concerned with the chronology of repentance and faith or with which initiates the other; rather he is only concerned with the fact that one who has true faith must repent of his sins. So the order between faith and repentance in Calvin's soteriology is not a chronological order, it is nothing but a logical order. When Calvin says 'faith is fountain of repentance,' that means that he criticizes the sacrament of penance which limits to a paltry few days for receiving the grace of God and has no foundation of it in faith. Calvin emphasises that certainly true repentance is connected with faith and at the same time he blames the sacrament of penance in his contemporary Roman Catholic theology for saying that after penance one can have faith. His saying, hence, is based on the above interpretation, "a repentance that for the Christian man ought to extend throughout his life." Luther's Art. 1 of 95 Thesen can be understood in this context.

persuaded that he belongs to God unless he has first recognized God's grace."<sup>173</sup>

The concept of double grace in Calvin's teachings protects the doctrine of repentance from the destroying of balance by the doctrine of justification in Reformed soteriology. He preserves the imperative and the significance of Christian obedience. Repentance, for Calvin, is not an afterthought neither is it a problem or an implication nor a psychological human response to justification. Repentance, just as is justification, is salvation. Justification, for Calvin, is a change of status but repentance is a change of state, which is compatible with one's new status. Although it comes from the grace of God it is not optional or dispensable but necessary and inevitable.

Furthermore, repentance is, for Calvin, Christ-centered and Christ-shaped. He finds the unity of "double grace" in the saving works of Jesus Christ. In view of pastoral ministry, this means that the believer is leading the person to Christ for both righteousness and holiness and both the preacher's proclamation of free forgiveness and exhortation to obedience rest upon Christ.<sup>174</sup>

The scarcity of repentance in men, according to Calvin, indicates a lack of faith in them.<sup>175</sup> Calvin insists that faith is the work of God which "alone" justifies but he dedicates a large portion of his discussion of faith in Chapters vi-x of Book III of his *Institutes* to faith as human knowledge and action.<sup>176</sup>

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173 Inst., 3.3.2.

174 Jonathan H. Rainbow, "Double Grace: John Calvin's View of the Relationship of Justification and Sanctification," *Ex Auditu* 5 (1989): 104.

175 Inst., 3.14.7.

176 Alexander Mckelway, "*The Logic of Faith*": *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, ed. by David

Through the title of *Institutes* III.iii.1, as “Repentance as a Consequence of Faith,” Calvin unveils his thinking about the relationship between repentance and faith. Because when “this topic is rightly understood it will better appear how man is justified by faith alone, and simple pardon; nevertheless actual holiness of life, so to speak, is not separated from free imputation of righteousness.”<sup>177</sup>

That faith precedes repentance<sup>178</sup> is included not only to emphasise the power of faith but also to stress repentance.<sup>179</sup> So Calvin says that “any discussion of faith that omitted these two topics (repentance and forgiveness of sins) would be barren and mutilated and well-nigh useless.”<sup>180</sup>

So Calvin does not regard repentance lightly although faith has an initiative in salvation. Rather he says, “forasmuch as we obtain none of all these without Christ, the name of Christ is therewithal set forth unto us as the only foundation of faith and repentance.” And so we begin repentance when we are turned unto God that we must prosecute the same things during our life.<sup>181</sup>

Calvin considered repentance as a second justification on the basis of the believer’s *insitio in Christum*.<sup>182</sup> For Calvin the thing which separates repentance

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Willis & Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.:WM. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 211.

177 Inst., 3.3.1.

178 Comm. on Jn. 1:13. ... That faith does not proceed from ourselves, but is the fruit of spiritual regeneration...

179 Inst., 3.3.1.

180 Ibid.

181 Comm. on Acts 2:38.

182 Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, Vol. II (Cambridge/ London/ New York/ New Rochelle/ Melbourne/ Sydney: Cambridge University Press,



(sanctification) from justification is tearing asunder the body of Christ in parts, so also we receive these two things in Him simultaneously and together (*simul et coniunctim in ipso*) that “justification and repentance (sanctification) are never dissociated from each other.”<sup>183</sup> And justification and repentance are a reality in Jesus Christ and form in Him a living unity. When we attempt to separate repentance from justification we are in fact seeking to break up the unity of one Christ.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, Niesel adds that, for Calvin, “the two things, justification and sanctification (repentance), are one in Him but only in Him.”<sup>185</sup>

Repentance is not the cause of salvation, but the grace of God is the cause of repentance because it cannot be separated from faith and the grace of God,<sup>186</sup> and it is caused by faith and the grace of God.<sup>187</sup>

It is in vain to speak of repentance unless faith is added<sup>188</sup> and he adds that “the Spirit of regeneration must be begged at the hands of God” and that we must draw

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1986), 37.

183 Inst., 3.11.6; W. Niesel. op. cit., 137.

184 Inst., 3.16.1; W. Niesel. Ibid.

185 W. Niesel, Ibid., 138. I do not agree completely with Niesel on this matter because his term “one in Him but only in Him” has the inclination to despise the reality of repentance. Even though salvation is an event from outside and God’s own work, we must not overlook the risk of Osiander, but where repentance concerns the life of Christ and His ministry, we must repent to God as a response to Him. If repentance is only treated just like justification, then we are ignoring Jesus’ death and resurrection as a model of Christian life. Even though Niesel has held to the Christocentric idea and he continually asserts the reality of repentance, he has lost the hidden meanings of the event of Christ and of “in Him.” To Niesel, repentance is nothing more than forensic justification.

186 Comm. on Acts. 11:18.

187 Inst., 3. 3. 21.

188 Comm. on Acts. 20:21.

godliness, righteousness and goodness from Him who is the fountain of all good things.<sup>189</sup>

*Confessio Fidei Gallicana* (1559), based on a draft prepared by Calvin supports that “by faith we are regenerated in newness of life, being by nature subject to sin and by faith we receive grace to live holily and in the fear of God.”<sup>190</sup>

For faith which reconciles us with God means that it is not only that He may be favorable unto us, by acquitting us of the guiltiness of death, by not imputing to us our sins, but also by purging the filthiness of our flesh by his Spirit, he may fashion us again after his own image.

Repentance and faith are so linked together that they cannot be separated. Nonetheless Calvin notes the distinction between faith and repentance, which some do falsely and unskillfully confuse, saying, that repentance is a part of faith. They cannot be separated because God shows that no man is regenerated to newness of life without faith. Calvin is opposed to Melanchthon who includes repentance in faith because he believes that repentance and faith are inseparable but distinguishable.<sup>191</sup> Yet they must be distinguished because repentance is a “turning” unto God when we form ourselves and all our life to obey him but faith is a “receiving” of the grace offered us in Christ.<sup>192</sup>

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189 Ibid.

190 Philip Schaff, ed. *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*, 371. Article XXII.

191 Inst., 3.3.5. There he reckons repentance and faith as two different things...But even though they cannot be separated, they ought to be distinguished... require to be joined rather than confused.

192 Comm. on Acts. 20:21.

Calvin regards faith as a process as is repentance, in which the action of God and the reaction of the believer are more clearly distinguishable. The believer will not be fully healed of unbelief until his deathbed.<sup>193</sup> This is why Calvin could say, on the one hand, that as an extension of God's action faith alone is the means of our salvation and faith is a thing merely passive and even more bluntly faith itself is of no value.<sup>194</sup> Calvin argues that though faith ought to be assuring, no perfect assurance exists in this life without repentance.

To prioritise the difference between repentance and faith, Calvin says, "Repentance not only constantly follows faith, but is also born of faith."<sup>195</sup> On account of this Calvin rejects the practice of the Catholic's penance, which requires the transitional preparation before having faith and hearing the word of God.

Calvin also insists that "both repentance and forgiveness of sins, that is, newness of life and free reconciliation, are conferred on us by Christ, and both are attained by us through faith."<sup>196</sup> For that reason faith precedes repentance in that after one embraces the grace of the Gospel, one can repent.<sup>197</sup> In other words, without faith one cannot repent, and we attain repentance and forgiveness through faith.

For the way in which we know that we are sinners and that we need to repent is

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193 Inst., 3.2.18-20.

194 Inst., 3.14.9; 3.11.7.

195 Inst., 3.3.1.

196 Ibid.

197 Surely no one can embrace the grace of the Gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his past life into the right way, and applying his whole effort to the practice of repentance. Inst., 3.3.1.

that firstly we need to believe in God's benevolence toward us<sup>198</sup> and secondly we must run to keep the law. We then will know the time and reason of repentance.<sup>199</sup>

Faith precedes repentance but the beginning of repentance is a preparation for faith. In his *Commentary on the Acts*, which was published from 1552 to 1554, Calvin allows reflecting on conversion more from the point of view of its cause than of its result. So for Calvin faith is not only the cause of repentance but also the result of it.<sup>200</sup> Repentance and faith are inseparable fruits of the grace of God and, in consequence of their invariable connection, repentance may, with fitness and propriety, be represented as an introduction to salvation but in this way of speaking it is represented as a result, rather than as a cause.<sup>201</sup>

When one hears the Word of God one can truly repent and believe in God. And through the Word of God one is controlled by God and recognises the benevolence of God. Calvin calls the Word of God "the sword" because it mortifies our flesh, which we may offer to God as a sacrifice.<sup>202</sup> A human being cannot apply himself seriously to repentance without knowing himself to belong to God through the Word of God.<sup>203</sup>

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198 This is an important definition of Faith: that is "Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit."

199 Repentance to Calvin entails uprightness of life and observance of the law. In other words, repentance is clearly inward change, but uprightness of life and observance of the law as well. So Calvin has the important notion that if one repents, and remains repentant, one will keep the law.

200 Comm. on Acts. 20:21

201 Comm. on 2Cor. 7:10; Inst., 3.3.21.

202 Comm. on Acts. 2:37.

203 Inst., 3.3.2.

For Calvin, the word of God is essentially the Holy Scriptures as well as the Gospel and its proclamation.<sup>204</sup>

And only through the Word of God can a human being know his misery and the necessity of repentance in his salvation. For Calvin, *mortificatio* and *vivificatio* depend on the Word of God because without it human beings cannot know their real miserable position. This theme of the Word of God is connected in Calvin's writings. (In *Institutes*, the heading of III, iii, 2 is "Repentance has its foundation in the Gospel, which faith embraces" and the heading of III, iii, 3 is "*Mortificatio* and *Vivificatio*.") (1559) No one knows grace, according to Calvin, without the Word of God. It is self-deception that many are overwhelmed by qualms of conscience or compelled to obedience before they are imbued with the knowledge of grace.<sup>205</sup> He emphasises that it is the Word of God that effects conversion and enables the sinner to pass from death into life.<sup>206</sup>

Conversion is the wholesome effect of the Word of God and through it the conversion of men becomes not only the beginning of health but it also becomes a certain resurrection from death to life.<sup>207</sup> Repentance is held forth and received and is actualised through His word and the Spirit in all who believe.<sup>208</sup>

Calvin also presents God's mercy and His commandments as fountains of

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204 Tony Lane, "The Quest for the Historical Calvin," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 55(1983), 96-97

205 Inst., 3.3.2.

206 Comm. on Acts 28:27; A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 47.

207 Comm. on 2Cor 4 :3.

208 T. F. Torrance, ed. *Tracts and treatises on the Reformation of the Church*, Vol. I, 37.

repentance.<sup>209</sup> So Repentance depends on the grace of God and His words. In Calvin's writings, the kingdom of God and the grace of God and His commandment are intimately connected to each other. The Commandment of God reveals the kingdom of God by following the grace of God.<sup>210</sup>

Repentance is the gift and work of God and authentic repentance begins with the knowledge of the truth.<sup>211</sup> Repentance, which is not less than the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, is the gift of God.<sup>212</sup> Calvin submits that what repentance does depend on the Gospel, and then why does Mark separate it from the doctrine of the Gospel? Two reasons may be assigned. Firstly, God sometimes invites us to repentance when nothing more is meant than that we ought to change our life for the better. He afterwards shows that conversion and newness of life are the gift of God as well. The Lord commands us to turn to him but at the same time he promises the Spirit of regeneration and therefore we come to receive this grace by faith.<sup>213</sup> God offers us salvation freely, in order that we may turn to him and live in righteousness.

Through the word of God, we are called to deny the flesh. And by the preaching of the Gospel, the kingdom of God is set up and established among men, and that in no other way does God reign among men.<sup>214</sup>

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209 Comm. on Mt. 3:2.

210 Ibid.

211 Comm. on 2 Tim. 2:25.

212 Comm. on Mt. 3:2

213 Comm. on Mk. 1:14.

214 Ibid.

Repentance, for Calvin, strengthens the assurance of salvation in us.<sup>215</sup> God leads his people to willing obedience by the preaching of the Gospel, and this conversion was effected only under the management and government of Christ.<sup>216</sup>

### 1. 2. 2. Repentance, Christ and the Holy Spirit

Calvin clearly summarises the progression of repentance under the roles of Christ and Holy Spirit in *Reply to Sadolet*:

Since, therefore, according to us Christ regenerates to a blessed life those whom he justifies and, rescuing them from the dominion of sin, hands them over to the dominion of righteousness, transforms them into the image of God, and so trains them by his Spirit into obedience to his will, there is no ground to complain that by our doctrine lust is given free rein.<sup>217</sup>

As we see above, the progress of repentance is totally influenced by Christ and the Holy Spirit from the first to the end. Therefore the Holy Spirit, who regenerates us in Christ, leads us wholly into obedience to Him. This is God's ministry, especially the ministry of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In man's repentance, the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit are intimately joined to renew the whole man and where Christ is, there too is the Spirit of holiness who regenerates the soul to newness of life. Wherever Christ is not, there is no righteousness and indeed no faith; for faith cannot

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215 "Second Defense of the Sacraments": *Answer to the Calumnies of Westphal*, 251.

216 Comm. on Ps. 22: 27.

217 J. K. S. Reid, ed. *Reply to Sadolet* in Theological treatise, *The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXII* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 235.

lay hold of the Christ of righteousness without the Spirit of sanctification.<sup>218</sup>

Calvin classified repentance into repentance of grace and repentance of pangs of conscience; saying that the former is authentic repentance but the latter is not true repentance in the strictest sense of the word because true repentance in the theology of Calvin is based on grace through the Holy Spirit only. The Holy Spirit causes human beings to repent and as such repentance is the work of the triune God, not of man. Our repentance is generated from God's immeasurable pardon in that, according to Calvin, "by God's free pardon to our sins we can avoid of the condemnation of eternal death, and be formed anew to His image." In addition, he willingly adopts us as His sons and freely regenerates us by His Spirit. In this manner, Christ washes away our sins by his blood and reconciles us with God by the sacrifice of his death but, at the same time consequently "our old man being crucified with him and the body of sin destroyed"<sup>219</sup> in Christ; through Christ we are made "alive" unto righteousness. Calvin attributes the merit of repentance to God only because the purpose of repentance is to be freely reconciled with God through the satisfaction of Christ.<sup>220</sup>

Therefore the triggers of repentance are regeneration by the Holy Spirit in Christ and Christ's atonement and His reconciliation with us. The sum of the Gospel is God's turning to us and our turning to God, that God through his Son takes away our sins and admits us to fellowship with him, which we, denying our own nature, and

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218 *Reply to Sadoleto*, 234-235.

219 Comm. on Rom. 6:6.

220 T F. Torrance, ed. *Articles by the Theological faculty of Paris, ARTICLE III, 'OF PENITENCE' in Tracts and treatises on the Reformation of the Church, Vol. I*, tr. by Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1958), 78-80.



ourselves may live soberly and righteously.<sup>221</sup> But indeed, without hatred of sin and remorse for transgressions, no man will taste the grace of God.<sup>222</sup> For Calvin, the hatred of sins and remorse for transgression are necessary on the side of man in the doctrine of repentance.

Calvin states that our Lord invites us who were by nature averse to follow him by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's initiative is requisite in Calvin's doctrine of repentance.<sup>223</sup> Calvin intends that repentance comes from the grace of God but the grace of God happens in repentance. In other words, in repentance we can experience the grace of God. And God entreats and exhorts us, in a variety of ways, to repentance.<sup>224</sup> If man repents voluntarily following God's grace in faith, he will avert God's chastisements.<sup>225</sup> God has once reconciled men with himself in Christ by not imputing their sins unto them and does now imprint the faith thereof by His Spirit in our hearts.<sup>226</sup> We were cleansed by Christ's blood and also we were entered into a new life by the benefit of his death and resurrection. So thus, repentant sinners shall receive the gift of the Spirit.<sup>227</sup> Repentance is a singular gift of God and indeed God declares that "he wills the conversion of all and he directs exhortations to all in

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221 Comm. on Mt. 3:2

222 Ibid.

223 Comm. on Mt. 11:20; Lk.10:13-16.

224 Comm. on Mt. 11:21. *Que Par les miracles ils n'ont esmeus pour convertir a repentance*: that by the miracles they were not moved to be converted to repentance. In here we can distinguish with conversion and repentance. One emphasizes the direction, but the other emphasizes the purpose, so that is then conversion to repentance.

225 Comm. on Lk. 13:12.

226 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

227 Ibid.

common.” Yet the efficacy of this depends upon the Spirit of regeneration because only the regenerated can repent their sins to God.

Calvin connected repentance with the re-creation of the soul so that the whole course of regeneration will be called “God’s handiwork”<sup>228</sup> and whomsoever God wills to snatch from death is quickened by the Spirit of regeneration. This fact indeed stands firmly that wherever the fear of God flourishes, the Spirit has worked toward the salvation of man.<sup>229</sup> Naturally regeneration is connected with repentance as cause and result.

In the theology of Calvin, repentance whereby man converts himself to God is an impossible thing, as he cannot create it himself. This only comes to pass when Christ regenerates us by His Spirit.<sup>230</sup> Repentance is voluntary conversion, but when God leads us to repentance then only do we have the chance of a change of heart because God changes our stony heart that it may be made fleshy. As God begins repentance in us he also gives us perseverance. This is an inestimable grace but it has no worth unless it was coupled with forgiveness of sins. The Gospel would be lame and corrupt unless it consisted of these two elements and unless men are taught that they are reconciled with God by Christ by the free imputation of righteousness and that they are fashioned again unto newness of life by the Spirit of regeneration.<sup>231</sup>

The doctrine of repentance is not a matter of theory but a matter of the living

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228 Inst., 3.3.21.

229 Ibid.

230 Comm. on Acts. 5:31.

231 Ibid.

Lord Himself, and when Jesus Christ apprehends us we escape the bondage of death and are called to newness of life through repentance. So repentance is very important in the theology of Calvin. Calvin arranges these two doctrines of repentance and justification in Christ.<sup>232</sup> For Christ does not reconcile us with God in part but wholly, neither can we obtain remission of sins by him unless it should be whole and perfect.<sup>233</sup> Both our soul and life are saved by Jesus therefore we need to repent for life.

The pardon of sins is bestowed upon us in Christ not by God who may treat us with indulgence but by healing us from our sins.<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, because we are reconciled with God only by the intercession of Christ's death, the name of Christ is therewithal set forth unto us as the only foundation of faith and repentance.<sup>235</sup> Forgiveness of sins is grounded in Christ alone and there is no other satisfaction for it. And we are saved only by the sacrifice of his death.<sup>236</sup> So our *mortificatio* and *vivificatio* happen by participation in Christ alone. If we truly partake in his death that "our old man is crucified by his power and the body of sin perishes" the corruption of our original nature will no longer thrive. If we share in his resurrection we are raised up into newness of life to correspond with the righteousness of God.<sup>237</sup> Therefore, Calvin's theology is strictly based on the revelation of God, not on personal feeling

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232 W. Niesel, op. cit., 131.

233 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

234 Comm. on Mt. 3:2.

235 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

236 Ibid.

237 W. Niesel, op. cit., 127; Inst., 3.3.9.

and experience.<sup>238</sup>

Man's conversion is in the hands of God, who instantly changes a sinner, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into another man.<sup>239</sup> And "since he engrafted us into his body, we must take especial care not to disfigure ourselves, who are his members, with any spot or blemish."<sup>240</sup> Calvin calls conversion a resurrection from eternal death. We are utterly ruined so long as we are turned away from God but when we are converted, we return to his favor and we are delivered from death; not that we deserve the favor of God by our repentance but because in this manner God raises us up from death to life.<sup>241</sup> Calvin notes that God creates us anew in Jesus. *Confession of Faith* (1536), which was, though not written by him, at least approved by him states in section VI,

We acknowledge that by his Spirit we are regenerated into a new spiritual nature. That is to say that the evil desires of our flesh are mortified by grace, so that they rule us no longer. On the contrary, our will is rendered conformable to God's will. Therefore we are by him delivered from the servitude of sin.<sup>242</sup>

According to Calvin, God's works in reconciliation and in repentance were not completed at Easter or on Ascension Day. Neither is this given in a moment but it must grow daily throughout one's whole life until one be fully joined to God; which shall be then when one have put off our flesh.<sup>243</sup> Calvin teaches "if we would come

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238 Ibid., 128

239 Comm. on 2Tim. 2:25.

240 Inst., 3.6.3.

241 Comm. on Isa. 19:22.

242 J. K. S. Reid, ed. *The Genevan Confession* in *Theological treatise*, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXII (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 28.

243 Comm. on Acts. 5:31.

then to true repentance, we must endeavor to make our whole life conformable to the example of Jesus Christ.”<sup>244</sup> The work of the Holy Spirit continuously brings Christ to the election and the elected to Christ.<sup>245</sup> Therefore we can say that repentance, as taught by Calvin, is done in Christ and by the Holy Spirit. However the Holy Spirit has two attributes: the initiator of faith and the maintainer of salvation. Thus, for Calvin, “assuring faith compels an indissoluble tie between saving knowledge, the Scriptures, Jesus Christ, God’s promises, the works of the Holy Spirit, and election.”<sup>246</sup>

In order that believers may reach this goal, God assigns to them a race of repentance, which they are to run throughout their lives. Because Christ is the most complete image of God and because Christ himself showed repentance in his whole life through his death and resurrection,<sup>247</sup> through him we shall be restored into His likeness so that we may bear the divine image in true godliness, righteousness, purity, and knowledge through our whole life. Repentance is an accomplished event by God and a received event by humans. The role of Christ is not simply to set in motion a process of salvation within us when we encounter Him, neither he alone has died the decisive death nor he alone has overcome death with the effect in Him but that the divine image in man is restored,<sup>248</sup> and his death becomes our death and his life becomes our life in repentance.

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244 *Short treatises on the Lord’s Supper*, 24. *Self-Denial Necessary*, 176.

245 Peter Toon, *Justification and Sanctification* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1983), 76.

246 Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch second Reformation* (New York/ San Francisco/ Bern/ Frankfurt am Main/ Paris/ London: Peter Lang, 1991), 49.

247 Inst., 3.3.9.

248 W. Niesel, op. cit., 127-8

### 1. 2. 3. Repentance, the Kingdom of God and the Image of God

The kingdom of God, for Calvin, is intimately related to repentance and faith on the basis of the first preaching of Jesus in the Commentary of Mark 1:14. And the summary of whole doctrine in Christ's preachings consists of two parts: repentance and the announcement of grace or salvation. Calvin intimately connected forgiveness of sins with repentance on the basis of the interpretation of the preachings of John the Baptist and of Jesus that "in substance there is the most perfect agreement: for they all connect repentance with the forgiveness of sins."<sup>249</sup> In Calvin, both forgiveness of sins and repentance present the kingdom of God.

Calvin considers repentance a prerequisite of the kingdom of God because God undertakes to govern his people who have true and perfect happiness through it. Christ rules over to save his people that he brings as his own to repentance and reconciles them with God through the forgiveness of sins. So Calvin states that the sum of the Gospel contains these two things.<sup>250</sup> He treated the Christian life with repentance and renewed forgiveness in the light of the tension between the present age and the next world. Insofar as Christians are still subject to sin, they lived in constant need of repentance and faith and insofar as Christians are 'in Christ,' their salvation is completed and inasmuch as they are still in the world, they experience a constant progress of regeneration towards its final consummation.<sup>251</sup>

At an institutional level, the kingdom of Christ is only established gradually and

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249 Comm. on Mt. 3:2

250 Comm. on Acts 5:31.

251 P. Wilcox, "Conversion":119-120.

by stages although it is discerned in his treatment of Christ's kingdom in connection with the regeneration of individuals, which is entered into once and for all. Calvin considers each individual as the whole Church that was caught between the inauguration of Christ's kingdom and its completion. The parallel here between the experiences of the Church and the individual believer exists in the theology of Calvin because he believes that there is an intrinsic relationship between Christ's body and its members. For Calvin, the solidarity between Christ and the members of his body is recognised in the experience of each individual Christian. With regard to Christ's kingdom, the same unwavering progress is to be discerned in both of them.<sup>252</sup>

That the kingdom of God is at hand means that men who were alienated from the righteousness of God and banished from the kingdom of heaven must again be gathered to God and live under his guidance.<sup>253</sup> Repentance is the gate by which to enter the kingdom of God and at the same time by repentance sinners live under His reign. God, according to Calvin's words, accomplishes his kingdom through free adoption and forgiveness of sins. In a word, the kingdom of heaven is just newness of life in Christ.<sup>254</sup> Therefore the kingdom of heaven among men, to Calvin, is nothing else than a restoration to a happy life, in other words, it is true and everlasting happiness.

As noted above, Calvin indicates that the kingdom of God, as well as repentance, is a present event and at the same time the kingdom of God is connected with a future event. God restores us to the hope of a blessed immortality and our pilgrimage of

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252 Ibid., 120.

253 Ibid.

254 Comm. on Mt. 3:3

restoration on earth continues in Christ<sup>255</sup> because, according to Calvin, human beings are in a state of deadly enmity with God and altogether shut out from the heavenly kingdom before God receives them into favor.<sup>256</sup> The only key that restores God's favor is repentance and forgiveness of sins through Christ.

The doctrine of repentance, for Calvin, is intimately associated with the progress of Christ's kingdom. Calvin repeatedly used the phrase "the progress of Christ's kingdom" in his expository writings. And the term "the kingdom of heaven is near" means that the kingdom of heaven is repentance.<sup>257</sup> Calvin construed this progress chiefly in institutional terms, equating it directly with that of the Reformed Church.<sup>258</sup> Calvin identifies with Christ's kingdom and the institution of the true Church that has the experience of the true Christian,<sup>259</sup> and insofar as it conforms to the word of God Calvin describes the life of an individual believer, as well as the policy of the Reformed Church, as a manifestation of Christ's kingdom. The kingdom of Christ in Calvin's view is truly established only where individual human beings respond appropriately to the preaching of God's word.<sup>260</sup> And the splendor of this kingdom lies in the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is given to individual believers.<sup>261</sup> Clearly the kingdom of Christ is related with repentance because the Holy Spirit rules the individual from the time of repentance; thus the purpose of the kingdom of heaven is

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255 Comm. on Mt. 3:3; Eph. 1:3.

256 Inst., Mt. 3:2

257 In a word, the kingdom of heaven is nothing else than "newness of life," .Comm. on Mt. 3:2.

258 P. Wilcox, "Evangelization in the Thought and Practice of John Calvin," *ANVIL* 12 (1995), 201-217.

259 P. Wilcox, "Conversion": 113.

260 Ibid.

261 Repentance, not less than the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, is the gift of God. Comm. on Mt. 3:2



newness of life as well as repentance.

Calvin thought that Christ's kingdom is within time and space<sup>262</sup> as he identifies the kingdom of God with the visible Church that Christ's reign is truly the kingdom of God, and as such the true Church is the institutional form of Christ's kingdom. Nevertheless, Calvin clarified that the kingdom of Christ has this institutional form incidentally, not essentially. Although the true Church is the form taken by Christ's kingdom within time and space the kingdom itself is neither temporal nor spatial since in essence it is 'eternal' and 'spiritual.'<sup>263</sup>

T. F. Torrance suggests that in Calvin "the kingdom of Christ is designed primarily to distinguish between the present condition of the Church and its future glory."<sup>264</sup> Calvin certainly knew that the appearance of Christ's kingdom, whether in the age of the prophets or the apostolic era, or the period of the Reformers, is insignificant because its true glory will only be manifest in the future and in spirit.<sup>265</sup> Calvin underlines the contrast between the way of Christ's kingdom, which appears at its beginnings or in the present, and the way in which it will be manifest at its consummation at the last day. And yet beyond this Calvin makes a more fundamental contrast between the essential character of the kingdom of Christ and its present and accidental form. Calvin's point is not that this kingdom will have a worldly splendor that it lacks at present but that its splendor is by nature spiritual and its future glory

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262 P. Wilcox, "Evangelization": 207-210.

263 See, Comm. on Ps. 45:7, Ps. 21:4, Ps. 8:7, Mic. 7:11, Dan. 7:27, Jer. 31:12.

264 T. F. Torrance, "The Eschatology of Hope' in kingdom and Church: A study in the Theology of the Reformers (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd 1956), 122.

265 Comm. on Ps. 78:70 recite from P. Wilcox. "Conversion": 114.

will be a manifestation of it. Calvin sometimes gives the impression that “his kingdom is already completed; on the other hand, he also affirms that the kingdom of Christ has not yet been complete, and that its consummation will occur only at the last day.” Calvin, concerning the kingdom of Christ, implied that it is not only begun here but also will be completed on the last day.<sup>266</sup>

As Torrance stresses, the characteristic feature of Calvin’s statements about the nature of the kingdom of Christ can be called eschatological tension.<sup>267</sup> Therefore we cannot neglect the eschatological tension in the doctrine of repentance because for him repentance stands in the present and in the future; now and forever, in relation to his hamartiology. For that reason, repentance is connected with the eternal kingdom because repentance is the door of eternal life and it prepares man for the heavenly kingdom.

Wilcox is apprehensive of Torrance’s interpretation of Calvin’s accent on the future, which is at times in danger of obscuring the fact that when Calvin states that Christ’s kingdom is spiritual,<sup>268</sup> he only means that it is by nature spiritual.<sup>269</sup> But Calvin mainly regards the kingdom of Christ as spiritual and celestial not only by nature but also in actuality.

The kingdom of God is connected with our faith in the resurrection and the progress of Christ’s kingdom. So, conversion or repentance is not only the first step

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266 Comm. on Isa. 35:1.

267 Ibid.

268 Comm. on 14:2-3. Sin is spiritual leprosy. So, as the contrary of sin repentance is inevitably spiritual.

269 P. Wilcox, “Conversion”: 114.

but also full of the kingdom of Christ because Christ requires of us repentance for the kingdom of God and because Christ's kingdom is spiritual, everything is connected with it.<sup>270</sup>

In Calvin's view of repentance, the kingdom of Christ is spiritual and it is established by the power of the Holy Spirit. In a word, the qualities of Christ's kingdom must be viewed as referring to the inner person who is regenerated by God for true righteousness.<sup>271</sup> Calvin's statement has an important meaning in this step that Christ's kingdom is not external, but it is related to the inner person.<sup>272</sup> The dominion of Christ is exercised by the Spirit who rules over the regenerated and who reforms them according to the image of God. The adjective 'spiritual' conveys Calvin's conviction that the reign of Christ effects the regeneration of individual human beings by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The significance of the eschatological tension in all his statements about the kingdom of Christ becomes clear in this light.<sup>273</sup> Therefore repentance as well as regeneration is related to inward change of man and the spiritual kingdom by the Holy Spirit. Though its initiative is spiritual, an inward repentance, as a conversion of inner person who is regenerated by Christ and the Holy Spirit, it has signs in the external life and the visible kingdom by obedience to God.

Calvin's summary of the Gospel can be clarified in the relationship between the kingdom of Christ and regeneration of saints in his thought. Perhaps the clearest such summary is to be found in a passage in *Institutes* III, xi, 1, where Calvin refers to "the

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270 Comm. on Jer. 23: 5-6.

271 Comm. on Isa 7 :7 ; Eph. 1 :3.

272 Comm. on Isa. 42:1; Inst 3.4.1

273 P. Wilcox, "Conversion" 115-117.

double grace” of Christ.<sup>274</sup>

By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.<sup>275</sup>

Nevertheless, according to Calvin, Christians experience Christ’s kingdom only as far as we have made progress in newness of life fully under Christ’s authority.<sup>276</sup> Christians are still far short of the consummation of Christ’s reign, and the complete fulfillment of prophecies about Christ’s kingdom in individual experience is not to be expected on earth. Believers must always think of making progress.<sup>277</sup> Repentance as well as sanctification, or one phase of sanctification, in the Reformed tradition is also in the progress of Christian life and it will continue until the deathbed.

Calvin formulates the functions of the doctrine of Christ’s kingdom as a framework for his exposition of the history of salvation. He construes the history of God’s people, at least from the time of the return of the people of Israel from exile as the history of the kingdom of Christ.<sup>278</sup> The proper inauguration of the kingdom of Christ only took place at the coming of Christ. Even this is not to be thought of as a momentary event since the means by which the ascended Christ established his reign was by the promulgation of the Gospel: repentance and forgiveness of sins. For this reason Calvin identifies the beginning of Christ’s kingdom with the apostolic

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274 Ibid.

275 Inst., 3. 11.1.

276 P. Wilcox, “Conversion”: 118.

277 Comm. on Isa. 2:4

278 P. Wilcox, “Evangelisation”: 203.

period.<sup>279</sup> Sometimes Calvin also speaks as if the apostolic era is the period in which the kingdom of Christ attained its consummation. This appears especially when he expounds prophetic texts which refer to the rule of God over the nations.<sup>280</sup> He says, “The prophet had respect to the kingdom of Christ here. There is no doubt that the promise extended right up to his coming, for he is speaking about the calling of the Gentiles, which God deferred until he manifested his Son to the world.”<sup>281</sup>

Calvin also sought to do justice to the decisive significance of the history of salvation of the coming of Christ. He regards the effect of the Gospel as ‘extraordinary’, ‘amazing’, and ‘incredible’, ‘sudden’, and ‘total.’<sup>282</sup> He does not separate the kingdom of God and those things which belong to Christ as diverse things but rather adds the second thing by way of exposition that the kingdom of God is grounded and contained in the knowledge of the redemption purchased by Christ. Therefore, men are strangers and foreigners from the kingdom of God until having their sins done away with and they are reconciled to God and are renewed into holiness of life by the Spirit.<sup>283</sup>

And the kingdom of God is then erected and does then flourish among them, when Christ the Mediator does join them to the Father, having both their sins freely forgiven them, and being also regenerate unto righteousness, that beginning the heavenly life upon earth, they may always have a longing desire to come to heaven, where they shall fully and perfectly enjoy glory.<sup>284</sup>

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279 Comm. on Dan 7:8.

280 P. Wilcox, “Evangelisation”: 205.

281 Comm. on Jer. 49:6.

282 Comm. on Mic. 4:1-2.

283 Comm. on Acts 28:30.

284 Ibid.

And, according to Calvin, the kingdom of Christ is connected to the *imago Dei*, which is the purpose of repentance and the spiritual life and is governed by God directly.<sup>285</sup> Actually the matter of the *imago Dei* is one of the most difficult issues in Calvin's theology<sup>286</sup> but Calvin says that the purpose of repentance is the restoration of *imago Dei*. The "sole end of repentance as regeneration is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated by Adam's transgression."<sup>287</sup> The object of repentance is to manifest in the life of believers a harmony and agreement between God's righteousness and their obedience and thus to confirm the adoption that has been received as children.<sup>288</sup>

Calvin's *imago Dei* concerns both nature and humankind, both body and soul, both natural and supernatural, both obscured and lost, both Adam and Christ. The distinctive dynamic perspective structure that pervades this area of his thought, however, provides his various statements on the *imago Dei* with broad unity; a unity in which these necessarily contradictory yet complementary claims are interconnected as parts of a larger whole. Since Calvin's definition of the *imago Dei* includes the notions of reason, the will, the soul and his development of these anthropological issues may be expected to follow similar lines.<sup>289</sup> To Calvin, the deformation of the whole of parts of *imago Dei* can be understood under the Doctrine of Sin. The divine image in man was destroyed and effaced by his sins. The divine similitude in man, in

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285 Comm. on Jer. 23: 5-6.

286 M. Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988), 37.

287 Inst., 3.3.9.

288 Inst., 3.6.1.

289 M. Engel, op. cit., 37-63.

the strictest sense, and his original uprightness no longer exist.<sup>290</sup> Therefore repentance becomes an important means for restoration of the *imago Dei*.

To sum up the whole doctrine of repentance, which Calvin speaks of, is that believers ought to be constantly thinking of repentance. And this repentance is to be a renewal of the whole man; renewal of life or regeneration of the spirit is exactly the restoration of the *imago Dei*.<sup>291</sup> The strength of the *imago Dei* and its continuous maintenance in man lie in the word of God. Regeneration through the Holy Spirit is like another creation and it far surpasses the first creation.<sup>292</sup> The meaning of the restoration of the image of God, according to Calvin, does not mean that the image of God is the soul or any natural property of the soul but that the soul is the mirror that reflects God's image in it, or ought to reflect it in it.<sup>293</sup> To Calvin, Christ is not only the image of God, in so far as he is the eternal word of God, but even in his human nature, which he has in common with us, the likeness of the glory of the Father has been engraved so as to form his members to the resemblance of it.<sup>294</sup> Therefore *imago Dei* links God's will and his action and our obedience to the word of God. And thus it is understood fully from the believers' regeneration in Christ and this characterises the whole man. Spiritual regeneration is nothing other than the restoration of this image and therefore "righteousness and true holiness are by the figure of synecdoche, for

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290 Inst., 1.15.4.

291 T. F. Torrance, ed. *Antidote to the Sixth Session on Acts of Council of Trent : Tract and Treatises in Defence of the Reformed faith*, Vol. III, , 142.

292 Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub., 1957), 52-53.

293 Ibid., 53.

294 Ibid., 58.

though this is the chief part, it is not the whole of God's image."<sup>295</sup>

T.F. Torrance distinguishes Calvin's *imago Dei* in a twofold sense:

In the general sense, in which all creation is said to reflect (as in a mirror) the glory of God. God images himself in nature, by beholding the works of His hands. In a particular sense, in which man specially is said to reflect (as in a mirror) the glory of God, by an intelligible response to the word, and more strictly speaking, it is God who images himself in man, and that means that He graciously embraces man as His child in Christ the express image of his glory.<sup>296</sup>

The repentance, which must embrace our whole existence, must not be understood as simply an improvement of the faculties which we already possess; what is in question is rather a new creation.<sup>297</sup> This is a second creation through Christ where everything that is effaced, which is part and parcel of our ordinary nature,<sup>298</sup> is restored; everything is better than the old. As Calvin saw it, the establishment of Christ's reign over an individual human being was no less God's proper prerogative than the establishment of the kingdom of Christ by the restoration of the Church. As a result, Calvin presents a close relationship between the kingdom of God, *imago Dei*, forgiveness of sins and repentance through his lifeworks; that by the coming of Jesus Christ the kingdom of God is completed and by the forgiveness of sins and repentance *imago Dei* is restored and for the restoration of the *imago Dei* and the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ preached repentance and forgiveness of sins.

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295 Ibid., 60.

296 Ibid.

297 W. Niesel, op. cit., 90.

298 Inst., 2.3.6. "It is created anew; not meaning that the will now begins to exist, but that it is changed from an evil to a good will."



### 1. 3. The Characteristics of Repentance and Sanctification

#### 1. 3. 1. Repentance and Conversion

Nowadays many Reformed theologians and Reformed Christians easily make the mistake of using conversion as *terminus technicus* on the basis of the conceptions of pietism and English Methodism. Thus many people are disinterested in the Reformed doctrine of repentance and Calvin's doctrine of repentance, which leads Christians to the assurance of salvation and certainty of faith and 'repentance of life' as a progress in faith.<sup>299</sup> And there are many pains taken to understand Calvin's personal conversion in *terminus technicus* of modern evangelicalism and revivalism.

Calvin's "*subita conversio*" in the *Preface in Commentary of Psalms* and *conversio ad docilitatem*, which was translated as "turning to teachableness"<sup>300</sup> in Calvin's autobiography, has been known to illuminate both his theological thoughts and his understanding of his personal religious experiences. It is true that his experience of conversion shows well the nature and origin of conversion.<sup>301</sup> Throughout his narrative, Calvin notes that it is God who is presented as the active party; man is passive; God acts, man is acted upon.<sup>302</sup>

Many Calvinistic scholars have tried to explain his conversion within modern

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299 W. Neuser, *Calvin's conversion to teachables: Calvin and Christian Ethics*, ed. by De Klerk (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Studies Society, 1987), 70.

300 W. Neuser, *op. cit.*, 68-69.

301 Ganoczy argues that Calvin's concept of repentance is reminiscence of conversion recently experienced by Calvin himself. Ganoczy, *op. cit.*, 246.

302 Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford, U.K.: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 70.

Reformed systematic terms or as *terminus technicus* on the basis of the conceptions of pietism and modern evangelicalism but they have neglected Calvin's own intention and its original meaning in Calvin's whole theology.

In his *Preface to the Commentary on the Psalms* Calvin contrasted the words obstinacy and teachableness, and his father's intention and God's hidden intention<sup>303</sup> to show the characteristics of his personal conversion. In the narrative of his life Calvin wrote that "the world is governed by the hidden providence of God."<sup>304</sup> In next part of its preface Calvin treated eternal predestination and election. This implies that his *conversio ad docilitas* is just one step of the whole progress of God's providence to save his elected.<sup>305</sup>

Conversion, for Calvin, is caused by God's direct intervention, and it is not described in theological terms in the strict sense and avoids contemporary account about it. And furthermore the description of his conversion as the result of God's providential grace "fits exactly into Calvin's theological emphasis on election as the divine initiative in the process of redemption."<sup>306</sup>

W. Neuser presents twelve stories, especially Zaccheus, the Samaritan woman and the Scribe (Mk 12:32-33), from the Gospels as examples of *conversio ad*

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303 As a matter of fact, we can feel that through his autobiography he wants to show God's hidden intention or counsel.

304 Joseph Haroutunian and Louise Pettibone Smith, ed. *Commentaries and Letters, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXIII* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 51-55.

305 Ibid., 56.

306 H. T. Kerr and J. M. Mulder, *Famous Conversion: The Christian Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1983), 24.

*docilitas*<sup>307</sup> but these stories acknowledge nothing but docility as a part of the providence of God. Especially, in the story of the Samaritan woman Calvin avers that “repentance is the beginning of true teachableness,”<sup>308</sup> meaning that man knows a sense of guilt by the grace of God.<sup>309</sup> Neuser is partially correct in that he puts *docilitas* in the decree of God: “God himself seeks those who are wandering in the errors of their way and changes the obstinate passions of our heart.”<sup>310</sup> The means of conversion to teachableness and repentance are based on the word of God or God’s calling, and teachableness is the subjective attitude of God in the process of development.<sup>311</sup>

Calvin’s theology is concerned with the realistic phase in which it authentically reflects the faith of the author. Calvin’s theology is not the figment of his mind but the concrete statement of what God is actually doing in the world, in Calvin’s own life and in Geneva and in the Church. Calvin’s life was congruent with the theology he wrote of.<sup>312</sup>

Until now many scholars have been interested in Calvin’s personal conversion, what it is, its date and meaning: H. Lecoultre argues that Calvin was converted to Protestantism when he understood that it was necessary to combat and replace the

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307 W. Neuser, op. cit., 60-63.

308 Comm. on Jn. 4:19.

309 W. Neuser, op. cit., 61.

310 Ibid., 62.

311 Ibid., 64-67.

312 John Leith, *Calvin’s Theological Realism* in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology*, ed. by David Willis & Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.:WM. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 345.

church of his fathers rather than amend it.<sup>313</sup> P. Sprenger firstly makes Calvin a ‘fanatical’ adversary of the “new doctrine” and then presents him as having broken with the Mother Church.<sup>314</sup> K. Müller advances the hypothesis that Calvin may have been converted during his last participation in public prayers (“certain sacred ceremonies”) at the Cathedral of Noyon, where in so doing he discovered the falsehood of Roman worship.<sup>315</sup> J. Pannier describes the conversion in these terms: “Openly, in some official sense, Calvin broke the ties that held him within the framework of the Roman Church, on 4 May 1534, the day when he resigned his benefices.”<sup>316</sup> F. Wendel writes of Calvin’s break with the Church and Christian humanism; this occurred after a long period of stubbornness<sup>317</sup> “which for some time held him within the bosom of the Roman Church.”<sup>318</sup> A. Lang sees in the “*subita conversione*” a sudden break by Calvin with his former aspirations and ideals or with the errors of the “old Church”; this break is followed by the adoption of a “new concept of life” and commitment to the true God.<sup>319</sup> To the extent that they tend to make the mistake of separating it from the Bible and Calvin’s notion of conversion, which essentially means “repentance,” it has nothing to do with a confessional change. And the debate of what the precise date of Calvin’s conversion was is worthless in the study of conversion or repentance, because Calvin’s main concern is not a date or a

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313 H. Lecoultré, “La conversion de Calvin,” *RThPh*, 1890, 24.

314 P. Sprenger, *Das Rätsel um die Bekehrung Calvins* (Neukirchen, 1960), 14, 28, 66.

315 K. Müller, “Calvins Bekehrung” *NGG* (1922):213-214.

316 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 265.

317 François Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et Évolution de la pensée Religieuse* (Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 21: ... susso en avait connu un et qui sont d’ordinaire le resultat d’une longue préparation inconsciente.

318 Ibid., 23-25

319 A. Lang, “Die Bekehrung Johannes Calvins,” *StGThK*, 1897, Vol. II., fasc.1, 37.

reason but conversion to teachableness itself and conversion to the providence of God purposely.

Furthermore, they seem at times to be influenced by a pietistic view of conversion when they attach so much importance to determining its date, place, and setting.<sup>320</sup> However in Calvin's case the conversion is understood not just as confessional but also as penitential<sup>321</sup> because he never mentioned the contents and reasons for his conversion. And Ganoczy notes the distinction between 'conversion as repentance' as God's ordinary work and 'conversion as a miracle' as God's extraordinary work.<sup>322</sup> And Ganoczy adds that Calvin's conversion is 'conversion as repentance.' But Calvin did not distinguish between the conversion of non-Christians and the repentance in Christians in its broad meaning. In addition he uses the terms *conversion* and *resipiscere* more broadly. The whole of conversion to God is understood under the term repentance.<sup>323</sup> And for Calvin 'conversion as a miracle' is dealt along with 'conversion as repentance' in the same meaning. Therefore he never explicitly distinguishes 'initiatory' conversion experiences from conversion experiences more generally<sup>324</sup> because for him it is not necessary make a distinction.

Nevertheless, a central theme of Christian spirituality is that notorious sinners are redeemed from their waywardness through a single, often dramatic, moment of

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320 Althaus, "Die bekehrung im reformatorischen und pietistischen Licht," in *Um die Wahrheit des Evangeliums* (Stuttgart, 1962), 224ff.

321 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 266.

322 Ibid., 262.

323 Inst., 3.3.5.

324 P. Wilcox, "Conversion": 121.

conversion.<sup>325</sup> Paul and Augustine, the two fountainheads of western Christianity, both underwent conversion experiences that later generations took as a model.<sup>326</sup> Conversion is not merely turning but a volte-face and revolution of human life by divine intervention:

To speak of “conversion,” however, is not merely to draw attention to a sudden change of mind or heart: it is to suggest, discreetly yet definitely, that behind this volte-face there is to be discerned the hand of God. Conversion is something directed toward and accomplished by God.<sup>327</sup>

In certain aspects, the conversion of Calvin is as radical as Paul and Augustine’s was. McGrath compares Paul’s conversion with Calvin’s from the standpoint that they were opponents of the new beliefs and of the background to their conversion. Parker, however, demonstrates that Calvin did not compare his conversion with Paul.<sup>328</sup>

A certain parallel was noted between medieval Catholicism and Judaism on the one hand, and evangelicalism and New Testament Christianity on the other. Just as Paul symbolized the momentous transition between Judaism and Christianity, so his conversion might be paralleled in the sixteenth century by one who broke with his catholic background, in order to assume, deliberately and decisively, an attachment to the Reformation.<sup>329</sup>

Furthermore McGrath compares Calvin’s conversion with Augustine, in which they have different religious backgrounds. To investigate this comparison is useful to this study in that it makes known the nature of conversion. And through these

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325 Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, 69.

326 cf. Fredricksen P, “Paul and Augustine: Conversion narratives, Orthodox tradition and retrospective Self”. *Journal of Theological Studies*. Vol. 37 (1986): 3-34.

327 Alister E McGrath, op. cit. 69.

328 See. T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin* (Herts, England: Lion Publishing, 1982), Appendix 2. 192.

329 Alister E McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, 69.

comparisons (Paul and Calvin, Augustine and Calvin) offer the utilities about two aspects of conversion:

The decisive conversion experience narrated by Augustine was also assimilated by image-makers of the Reformation. Were there not parallels between Augustine's gradual disillusionment with pagan superstition (as they saw it), culminating in a decisive change of course and an open embracing of the Gospel, and their own spiritual pilgrimages from the religious superstitions of the medieval Church to the rediscovered religion of the Gospel?<sup>330</sup>

The conversion of Calvin is the same as the conversion of Paul in the sense of change and turning but in method and direction they are different. However the conversion of Paul is a rare and special case.

In *Das Rätsel um die bekerhrung Calvins* P. Sprenger subjected Calvin's mention of his conversion to a close investigation. He does not think that it is useful to analyse the terms and the concept of "conversion" in the text of the Psalms Commentary itself.<sup>331</sup> In *The Young Calvin* A. Ganoczy examines Calvin's account theologically, seeking to understand what the conversion meant in relation to Calvin as a Churchman.<sup>332</sup> McGrath suggests that "conversion, to Calvin, does not designate merely a private and interior religious experience; it embraced an outward, observable and radical shift."<sup>333</sup> We cannot neglect the radical shift of conversion but Calvin treated it as one of the things in a process even though his conversion has characteristics of suddenness.

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330 Ibid., 70

331 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 242.

332 T.H.L. Parker, Appendix. 192

333 Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, 70.

Sprenger's comparison of Calvin's conversion, as related in the Psalms commentary, and Calvin's mention of Paul's conversion is illuminating lexicographically, but it is misleading in that it relates Calvin's conversion to Paul's. Parker presents the reason why this is so:

Now, Calvin himself does not do this, and his silence is pregnant. It is not difficult to see why he did not link himself to Paul. On the one hand, Paul before his conversion had been a persecutor of the Church: Calvin was never persecutor of either the evangelicals or the Romanists. And on the other hand, Calvin did not wish to associate himself with any miraculous revelations from heaven, with their suggestions of 'les spirituals'.<sup>334</sup>

Neuser draws a parallel between Calvin's conversion and the conversion from paganism to Christianity or from Judaism to a disciple of Christ.<sup>335</sup> However Calvin's conversion is different to Paul's because Calvin's conversion is, in Calvin's words, "not to turn away from the profession of Christianity but to take it back to its own source or form of doctrine and restore it, cleansed of all its corruptions, to its essential purity,"<sup>336</sup> and the whole story of his youth notes that his conversion is the "unreserved, wholehearted commitment to the living God."<sup>337</sup>

After Parker quotes the portion concerning the unexpected conversion in *Preface in Commentary on the Psalms* he presents his opinion. It is useful to investigate Calvin's "*subita conversione*" in this text.<sup>338</sup>

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334 T.H.L. Parker, op. cit., 192-193

335 W. Neuser, op. cit., 57.

336 G. R. Potter and M. Greengrass, *John Calvin* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 7-8.

337 John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 107-118.

338 On the basis of Calvin's Seneca Commentary, Parker translates *subita* as unexpected. See. Alister E



God drew me from obscure and lowly beginnings and conferred on me that most honorable office of herald and minister of Gospel. My father had intended me for theology from my early childhood. But when he reflected that the career of the proved everywhere very lucrative for its practitioners, the prospect suddenly made him change his mind. And so it happened that I was called away from the study of philosophy and set to learning law: although, out of obedience to my father's wishes, I tried my best to work hard, yet God at last turned my courses in another direction by the secret rein of his providence. What happened first was that by an unexpected conversion the tamed to teachableness a mind too stubborn for its years- for I was so strongly devoted to the superstitions of the papacy that nothing less could draw me from such depths of mire.<sup>339</sup> And so this mere taste of true godliness that I received set me on fire with such a desire to progress that I pursued the rest of my studies more coolly, although I did not give them up altogether. Before a year had slipped by anybody who longed for a purer doctrine kept on coming to learn from me, still a beginner, and a raw recruit.<sup>340</sup>

Here the clue to the solution of this issue may be found. To be teachable is the opposite of being hardhearted and stubborn.<sup>341</sup> And his conversion was not the result of any wish or of intention, but rather it took place unexpectedly.<sup>342</sup> As McGrath explains, Calvin's conversion with the term "*subita*" implies that most conversions are "unpremeditated but not necessarily sudden."<sup>343</sup> Calvin mentioned "for a year" as a period of progression. However, Calvin merely seems to be clarifying the unusual meaning of the term *subita* in the sense of "unpremeditated."<sup>344</sup>

Many theologians overlook the whole story. That is, that they do not see the

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McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, 70. Footnote.

339 "la prise de conscience du péché a joué le rôle décisif dans la conversion de Calvin. "

340 François Wendel, op. cit., 25.

341 See. Comm. on 2Cor. 7: 8. Calvin here also contrasts docility and obstination and he explains "Obstinez et endurcis."

342 See, Comm. on Heb. 6:2-6; on 1 peter 2:3

343 Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, 70.

344 Ibid. Footnote. 5.

wood for the trees. Through his autobiographical narrative, Calvin presents the Providence of God that has worked throughout his life; he mentions “my father had intended me for theology from my early childhood.” God accomplishes this and in mentioning this story Calvin shows the ‘conversion as a progress,’ which he consistently asserted in the *Institutes* and *Commentaries*. Actually in the *Institutes* of 1551, Calvin considered the “preparation for conversion or for repentance.”<sup>345</sup> He did not consider that ‘conversion as a miracle’ is different from ‘conversion as repentance.’ For Calvin “conversion as a miracle” is dealt with as a particular kind and special form of “conversion as repentance.”<sup>346</sup> Furthermore, in the story of Paul in his Commentary Calvin depicts that Paul’s conversion is “a universal example or type of the grace that God manifests daily in calling all of us.”<sup>347</sup>

Reflecting on conversion in the *Institutes* of 1539, Calvin includes the idea of both ‘conversion as a miracle’ and ‘conversion as repentance,’ and he says that in essence they are not different; both are equally the exclusive work of God. Besides Calvin never tries to suggest that conversion must have a particular time and location as the pietists will do later.<sup>348</sup>

The prerequisite for understanding Calvin’s personal conversion is that he does not take up another Credo or other ethics that depart from the mother Church. Calvin had depended on the faithfulness of God and his covenant for the Church in Christ.<sup>349</sup>

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345 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 247.

346 Ibid., 248.

347 Comm. on Acts 9:1ff. following summary of A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 248-49.

348 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 252.

349 Ibid., 253-54.

Above all, this gives an insight into the context of Calvin's conversion and his followers. Calvin used verbs in the present tense several times in his autobiographical narrative. These allusions show that he has little concern for chronological precision.<sup>350</sup> Some theologians try it to interpret this in theological aspects. Wernle understands '*subita conversione*' as a reflection of his faith<sup>351</sup> and Sprenger sees it as a "judgment of faith," or a "theological judgment" which transcends chronological precision.<sup>352</sup> Even Ganoczy agrees with them.<sup>353</sup> Ganoczy says that the entire *Preface to the Commentary on the Psalms* belongs to this prophetic genre and Calvin likens himself to the prophets, and as such his conversion is on the basis of a "theological statement."<sup>354</sup> Ganoczy understands Calvin's conversion as a theological statement.<sup>355</sup> He sees it as theological retrospection but he fails to allude to the possibility of Calvin's conversion in a special point in time<sup>356</sup> and the fact of his conversion itself. It seems clear that the exact meaning of '*subita conversione*' should therefore be sought in a theological-prophetic context and not from a purely historical point of view.<sup>357</sup> As K. Müller stresses this interpretation is also the best way to avoid the dispute between the slow improvement attested by the earliest documents and the spontaneous

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350 Ibid., 259-60.

351 Wernle, "Noch einmal die Bekehrung Calvinus," ZKG Vol. 27 (1906): 90-95. cited from A. Ganoczy, Ibid. 262: "However, this is immediately clear: it is not a historical reference; he wants to give his reader his reflection based on faith."

352 Sprenger, *Das Rätsel um die Bekehrung Calvins*. (Neukirchen, 1960), 4, 12.

353 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 262

354 Ibid., 263.

355 Ibid., 262.

356 Ibid., 245.

357 Ibid.

transformation affirmed by our text.<sup>358</sup>

But although it includes the theological intention, it cannot only be called a theological statement because in his opinion Psalms cannot be classified as a prophetic book. Furthermore, Calvin's conversion is nothing but a personal experience and has no theological intension because throughout his works he never mentioned this experience of conversion as a means for explaining his theological viewpoint. According to Bouwsma, Calvin, in his many discussions of the Christian life and the way of salvation, attached little or no significance to 'conversion' as a precise event.<sup>359</sup> Tony Lane argues that Calvin does not regard his personal story as the "norm" of conversion<sup>360</sup> but through his story he wants to attest to God's providence and grace in his life.

Calvin wishes to demonstrate, forcefully and eternally, the valid theological truth that the grace of God is stronger than man's resistance.<sup>361</sup> Ganoczy concludes his assertions about Calvin's '*subita conversio*' in the *Preface to the Commentary on the Psalms*, by indicating that the personal conversion of Calvin is not the dominant theme but rather it is the triumph of divine power over every human obstacle. Calvin's life changes direction without his intention to do so; "God by the secret bridle of his providence finally turned my course in another direction." And in the French text,

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358 K. Müller, "Calvins Bekehrung" *NGG* (1922): 188-255. cited from A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 263.

Footnote. 124: "This 'sudden conversion' is therefore something entirely different from the development that we so far have been able to trace. This is not presented as a break or a sudden turn in either its beginning or its continuation."

359 W. J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A sixteenth Century portrait* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 11.

360 A.N.S. Lane, "Conversion: A Comparison of Calvin and Spengler" *Themelios*, 18 (1987): 20.

361 A. Ganoczy, op. cit., 264.

Calvin says, “by His secret providence God nevertheless finally pulled the bridle to the other side.”<sup>362</sup> Calvin may seem to regard this narrative as actual providence although Ganoczy regards it as just a metaphor. This idea ‘hidden’ connects to ‘*subita*’ through his narrative and Calvin presents the ‘hiddenness of the Providence of God’ and ‘secretly.’ This gives the idea that God’s providence happened in his life secretly.

Calvin’s soteriology is characterised by an eschatological.<sup>363</sup> that the kingdom of God is completed with the coming of Christ but yet uncompleted in individual experience. Christians are not only described as those who “are being converted” but they are also those who are already “converted to Christ.”<sup>364</sup>

During the history of Dogmatics, the relationship between the will of God and the human will in the doctrine of repentance has been a matter of controversy. It is a fact that Calvin gives no credit for a human contribution to conversion: “people never turn to God voluntarily,”<sup>365</sup> and “people cannot convert to God by their own free will, unless he first changes their stony heart into hearts of flesh. Indeed, this renovation is a work surpassing that of creation itself.”<sup>366</sup> Human beings can no more convert themselves than create themselves. Regeneration is nothing other than God’s own creation. From Calvin’s point of view, this is true at every stage of the Christian life. Conversion and repentance are the work of God alone. He maintains that God must

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362 Ibid., 262. See. Footnote 111.

363 P. Wilcox, “Conversion”: 119.

364 Ibid., 120.

365 Comm. on Mal 4:6.

366 Comm. on Ps 81:14.

forcibly subdue the will of the unregenerate.<sup>367</sup> The only preparation that he recognises occurs not when a sinner acts in some way but when the sinner is acted upon by God. Calvin regards “the sinner is slain” as true preparation for conversion.<sup>368</sup> People can be converted when the Lord subdues their wicked inclination;<sup>369</sup> when the Lord has determined to have pity on men in the end they may repent to God.<sup>370</sup> Repentance is essentially the gift of God.<sup>371</sup> Through his experience Calvin knew very well the problems of auricular confession, which could not give rest to the penitent. He knew that true repentance must give “assurance of salvation that is found only in the mercy of God shown to us in Jesus because in Him alone is accomplished that which appertains to our salvation.”<sup>372</sup> In ‘*subita conversione*’ Calvin mentioned that conversion is exclusively the work of God, not the work of man. He is not attempting to explain the suddenness and progression of conversion. Furthermore, it can be regarded as his personal experience and theological reflection thereon and the unexpected change of theological alignment brought about by God.

### 1. 3. 2. Moment and Progression

Nowadays, debate concerning the characteristic of conversion is usually polarised between those who emphasise ‘decision’ or ‘suddenness’ and those who

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367 P. Wilcox, “Conversion”: 121.

368 Comm. on Ezek. 13:22-23.

369 Comm. on Isa. 65: 25.

370 Inst., 3.3.20.

371 Inst., 3.3.21

372 John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 117.

stress ‘gradual progression.’ Calvin sets forth conversion in an eschatological framework that encompasses both ideas. On the basis of God’s ‘double grace,’ which is reconciliation and sanctification, Calvin does not ignore the view of ‘sudden’ conversion but rather he focuses on “change in the gradual progress in the holiness of life.”<sup>373</sup> Sometimes Calvin treats conversion and repentance, regeneration and sanctification as one process. So repentance as restoration to the image of God is a progression.

It does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples, renewing their mind to true purity that they might practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death.<sup>374</sup>

The repentance of a human being, according to Calvin, does not take place in an instant. On the contrary, repentance is a process in which it is necessary to make progress. “We are converted to God little by little, and in various stages for repentance has its progress.”<sup>375</sup> For Calvin, “no one is converted to God in a single day.” and even he says, “Sudden conversion is never to be found in a human being.”<sup>376</sup> Believers, Calvin says, are renewed from day by day, gradually step-by-step and that they do not put off ‘the old man’ in a day. It is seen that repentance has many stages forming a progression.

The Spirit of God calls us to repentance every where, in the law, the prophets, and the Gospel; at the same time.... when he orders us to be renewed in our hearts, to be

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373 P. Wilcox, “Conversion”: 113.

374 Inst., 3.3.9.

375 Comm. on Jer. 31:18.

376 Comm. on Jer. 24:7.

circumcised to the Lord, to be washed, and to cease from wicked pursuits, to loose the bond of iniquity bound within us, to rend our hearts and not our garments, to put off the old man, to renounce our own desires, and be renewed in the image of God; besides enumerating, as the fruits of repentance, acts of charity, and the exercises of a pious and holy life.<sup>377</sup>

Believers are gradually converted to God in stages; repentance has its own stage in this progress.<sup>378</sup> There is an important contrast to be made between the instantaneous conversion of modern evangelicals generally and Calvin's concept of conversion as a process.<sup>379</sup> Alluding to the Pilgrim's Progress, Steinmetz suggests that for Calvin and his fellow Reformers, in contradistinction to the American evangelical experience of the last two centuries, conversion 'is not the little wicket gate' through which John Bunyan's pilgrim pass but the entire pilgrimage to the celestial city.<sup>380</sup>

In the context of the discussion in the *Institutes*, it is clear that Calvin criticises the Anabaptist's belief that moral perfection was to be experienced in the present, and he calls it "mad excess."<sup>381</sup> Calvin adds, "We are purged by the Spirit's sanctification in such a way that we are besieged by many vices and much weakness so long as we are encumbered with our body. Far removed from perfection, we must advance steadily forward."<sup>382</sup> And "Just as certainly as Jesus Christ alone will bring about the consummation, so certainly the change which He effects in our lives does not take

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377 *Articles by the Theological faculty of Paris*, 77-78.

378 OC 38, 671

379 A.N.S. Lane, op. cit., 20.

380 D.C. Steinmetz, "Reformation and Conversion": 30.

381 Inst., 3.3.14.

382 Ibid.



place in a moment,”<sup>383</sup> nor does “it represent the beginning of a process of development by which man gradually attains the goal of perfection.”<sup>384</sup> It is rather that throughout our entire lives we must practice repentance.<sup>385</sup>

Even though Christ broke the dominion of sin we are still engaged in a constant struggle because sin dwells in Christians. Repentance is militancy against sin and the restoration of the *Imago Dei* in us. This state of affairs persists for our whole life and only comes to an end with death.<sup>386</sup> No doubt in the struggle laid upon us there is progress. The process of repentance takes place for one’s whole life and is at the same time one of gradual growth. But our entire advance is attended by tottering and limping and indeed crawling on the floor.<sup>387</sup> Believers are forced to recognise ever more and more our essential incapacity.<sup>388</sup> God trains us daily in humility to prevent us from becoming proud and forgetting our dependence on grace. We realise that the source and strength of the new life does neither lie in ourselves nor have we any security about attainment of perfection. Such security is given us solely in Jesus

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383 Inst., 3.3.9.

384 In *Adversus Haereses*, IV. xxxviii.1; in *Sources Chrétiennes*, Vol. C, ed. by A. Rousseau (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 942.1-946.17. Irenaeus notes on human progress. This shows well as a progress of repentance, “And being newly created they are therefore childish and immature, and not yet fully prepared for an adult way of life. And so, just as a mother is able to offer food to an infant, but the infant is not yet able to receive food unsuited to its age, in the same way, God, for his part, could have offered perfection to humanity at the beginning, but humanity was not capable of receiving it. It was nothing more than an infant.” Recited from Alister E. McGrath, ed. *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford, UK/ Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Pub., 1995), 212; 6.1.

385 Inst., 3.3.8.

386 Ibid.

387 Inst., 3.6.5.

388 Inst., 3.3.10.

Christ.<sup>389</sup>

Calvin clearly allows for various degrees of faith and assurance of salvation. Calvin utilises such concepts as infancy of faith, beginnings of faith and weak faith even more frequently than Luther.<sup>390</sup> In relation to the process of maturation of faith, its secret beginnings or final realisation, Calvin asserts that assurance of salvation is directly proportional to faith's development. More specifically, the Spirit is continually presented not only as the initiator of faith but also as its maintainer and the cause of its growth and advancement.<sup>391</sup> Regeneration, sanctification, repentance, faith, and assurance are all progressive.<sup>392</sup> Sometimes Calvin treats both repentance and regeneration in the same sense.<sup>393</sup>

Calvin goes on to refer to repentance as regeneration and reconciliation as justification in the double grace. Hereby we see that repentance as sanctification indicates that the whole life of believers is repentance. In Calvin's soteriology double grace is linked closely with repentance. This 'double grace' provides the structure of *Institutes* Book III; after an introduction on faith, Calvin spends the remainder of the book in an explanation of sanctification and justification. The emphasis on the twofold grace of Christ is a consistent feature of Calvin's soteriology that is presented in his biblical expositions as well as in the *Institutes*. Even in the *Institutes*, however, he uses various terms to distinguish between its two parts. In *Institutes* III, iii, 1, for

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389 Inst., 3.2.17-21

390 Ibid.; Comm. on Gal. 4:6.

391 Inst., 3.2.33.

392 Inst., 3.2.14; Comm. Jn 2:11.

393 Sometimes we need to distinguish regeneration from repentance to improve the understanding definitely.

example, having stated in his usual way that the sum of the Gospel is said to consist of repentance and the forgiveness of sins, he proceeds to explain these concepts with reference to “newness of life and free reconciliation.”<sup>394</sup>

Calvin uses several pairs of words for twofold grace: ‘Justification and sanctification’, ‘reconciliation and regeneration’ and ‘forgiveness of sins and repentance.’<sup>395</sup> For Calvin they are synonymous pairs and each of them serves to aid in comprehending the grace of Christ and to summarise the message of the Gospel. He warns that these two aspects of Christ’s grace are not to be separated from one another.<sup>396</sup> On the other hand, he insists that for the purposes of exposition the two must be distinguished precisely although they are neither separated nor confused.<sup>397</sup>

The association in Calvin’s mind between Christ’s *duplex gratia* and his *munus duplex* (Priestship and Kingship) is possibly indicative of the correlation between them. Calvin draws a distinction between Christ’s work, as Priest in the case of our justification and his work as King with reference to our sanctification.<sup>398</sup> However, the intrinsic inseparability of these two aspects of Christ’s grace in Calvin’s theology means that, occasionally, the exploration of one inevitably spills over into the other.

Christ brings about repentance throughout the totality of our lives. This acknowledges that we are at war against sin. Repentance must be a daily undertaking

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394 Inst., 3.3.1.

395 Usually Calvin uses a pair of terms. Through this Calvin intends that repentance is forgiveness of sins.

396 Inst., 3.9.6.

397 Comm. on Isa 59:20.

398 P. Wilcox, op. cit., 116.

in the Church as it is necessary for us during the whole course of our lives.<sup>399</sup> According to Calvin, true repentance is firm and constant and it creates a war with the evil that is in us, not just for a day or a week but “without end and without intermission.”<sup>400</sup> Calvin places great emphasis on genuine repentance as a continuing process of growth in grace.<sup>401</sup> Authentic repentance is a life under the cross in hatred of self and under continuous mortification of the flesh.<sup>402</sup> And it takes place in us when we are regenerated by the Spirit to newness of life.<sup>403</sup> His main concern in repentance is surely newness of life for one’s whole life.<sup>404</sup>

Calvin connects the gradual aspect of repentance with the forbearance of Christ. The forbearance of Christ is great in greatness, Calvin says, so “Christ receives men even those whose faith is very small. Man’s faith grows and pursues perfection in the progression of life. Christians make daily progress towards the fulfillment of their faith.”<sup>405</sup> Bouwsma asserts that Calvin always emphasises the gradualness of repentance rather than the suddenness of conversion in the Christian life<sup>406</sup> but on the contrary Calvin does not always stress the gradualness of conversion alone.<sup>407</sup> Calvin does not forget the tension in repentance even though he emphasises the gradualness

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399 Comm. on Acts. 2:38

400 *Short treatises on the Lord’s Supper*, 27, 178.

401 Peter Toon, op. cit., 77.

402 Leif Grane, op. cit., 138.

403 Comm. on 1Cor.1:2.

404 This means that the image of God will be recovered through our lives. In Christ, His righteousness imputed to us, but the point of the whole rediscovery is that when the time comes, Christ will receive us.

405 Comm. on Jn. 2:11.

406 W. J. Bouwsma, op. cit., 11.

407 P. Wilcox, “Conversion”: 122.

of repentance. Assurance, for Calvin, is free from doubt, yet not free. It does not hesitate, yet can hesitate. It contains security but may be beset with anxiety.<sup>408</sup> This is the paradox in Calvin's doctrine. So, through the whole life the Christian needs to be strengthened in true repentance.

### 1. 3. 3. Repentance, Fruits and Evidence

For Calvin, the relation between faith and good works is clearly explained in his theology and at the same time this explanation can help in understanding the necessity of them in soteriology. And he adds that this is not a contradiction in the veil of his theology that we are saved by faith alone. He called it '*Duplex acceptio hominis*' or '*Operum Justitia.*' Calvin says,

But when the promises of the Gospel are substituted, which proclaim the free forgiveness of sins, these not only make us acceptable to God but also render our works pleasing to him. And not only does the Lord adjudge them pleasing; he also extends to them the blessings which under the covenant were owed to the observance of his law. I therefore admit that what the Lord has promised in his law to the keepers of righteousness and holiness is paid to the works of believers.<sup>409</sup>

And he presents the three reasons why God accepts them;

The first is: God, having returned his gaze from his servants' works, which always deserve reproof rather than praise, embraces his servants in Christ, and with faith alone intervening, reconciles them to himself without the help of works. The second is: of his own fatherly generosity and loving-kindness, and without considering their worth, he raises works to this place of honor, so that he attributes some value of them. The third is:

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408 Joel R. Beeke, op. cit., 54.

409 Inst., 3.17.3.

He receives these very works with pardon, not imputing the imperfection with which they are all so corrupted that they would otherwise be reckoned as sins rather than virtues.<sup>410</sup>

This is important in understanding why the doctrine of repentance precedes the doctrine of justification in the *Institutes*. This is a polemical issue for scholars studying Calvin. Niesel says that the reason Calvin places his doctrine of repentance before his doctrine of justification is in order to forestall the objections of Romanism from the start.<sup>411</sup> Wendel presents a concrete reason why Calvin puts repentance before Justification as being that Calvin wants to emphasise that “to be righteous in the sight of God is solely by faith, in other words, we are justified in the sight of God by faith alone.”<sup>412</sup> But at the same time the priority given to the doctrine of repentance expresses something peculiar to Calvinistic theology. Calvin explains it as his wanting to show how we appropriate salvation by pointing to our communion with Christ.<sup>413</sup> There is, for Calvin, no repentance apart from communion with Christ.<sup>414</sup>

Calvin argues the reason for it in the *Institutes*,<sup>415</sup> saying, “for when this topic is rightly understood, rather, it will better appear how man is justified by faith alone, and simple pardon; nevertheless actual holiness of life, so to speak, is not separated from free imputation of righteousness.”<sup>416</sup> This order just follows the logical order. However his argument is more persuasive.<sup>417</sup> Concerning the position of

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410 Inst., 3.17.3.

411 W. Niesel, op. cit., 130.

412 François Wendel, *op. cit.*, 180.

413 W. Niesel, op. cit., 130-31.

414 Inst., 3.14.4. In here Calvin includes good works in the doctrine of repentance.

415 François Wendel, op. cit., 180. See. Footnote. Wendel misquotes this. Not Inst., 3.1.1. but Inst., 3.3.1.

416 Inst., 3.11.1.

417 François Wendel, op. cit., 177.

repentance,<sup>418</sup> both Niesel and Wendel fail to catch the real intention of Calvin. This is one of the important issues in this thesis because the position of repentance in Calvin's *Institutes* offers insight into its importance. From this order, Calvin presents the necessity of good works as fruits of repentance.

Because it was more to the point to understand first how little devoid of good work is the faith, through which alone we obtain free righteousness by the mercy of God; and what is the nature of the good works of the saints, with which part of this question is concerned.<sup>419</sup>

Calvin intends to announce what the nature of the good works of the saints is. As Wendel notes, it is not more focus on repentance than Justification, but this form shows particular causality. Calvin parallels justification and repentance at the same level<sup>420</sup> and at least this shows that repentance is one of the two important streams in Calvin's Reformation. Repentance is more meaningful than just the confession of sin before God.<sup>421</sup> About the necessity of good works in the life of Christians, Calvin presents a fourfold classification for the kinds of righteousness that are possible for man through the whole course of his life; "For men are either firstly, endowed with no knowledge of God and immersed in idolatry, or secondly, initiated into the sacraments, yet by impurity of life denying God in their actions while they confess him with their lips, they belong to Christ only in name, or thirdly, they are hypocrites who conceal with empty pretenses their wickedness of heart, or fourthly, regenerated by God's

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418 For Calvin Regeneration and Repentance is the same term (I interpret repentance as regeneration...  
Inst., 3.3.9.

419 Inst., 3.11.1.

420 François Wendel, op. cit., 175.

421 Inst., 3.3.1

Spirit, they make true holiness their concern.”<sup>422</sup>

From the first to the third types in this fourfold classification, which Calvin speaks of, are the unregenerated men who have no power to do good works because they have no faith, even if they have faith, it is only in name and they do not have true living faith. So they have no good works.<sup>423</sup> Repentance is a prerequisite to the turning of the heart and when the turning of the heart appears in the whole life, Calvin calls it “producing fruits worthy of repentance.”<sup>424</sup> Herein, for Calvin, repentance includes not only conversion to God, but also good works. For him, generally repentance happens throughout the life, but conversion indicates the direction of it, to God, to the Lord through his lifeworks, in the strictest sense.

Calvin distinguishes between repentance itself and the fruits of repentance. For him repentance is an inward turning but the fruits of repentance are presenting a life of good works.<sup>425</sup> However, the turning of life to God requires a transformation, not only in the soul itself but also in outward works.<sup>426</sup> Because Christ took on both divine and human nature, he can sanctify our soul and flesh.<sup>427</sup> But the purpose of the Holy Spirit coming is to sanctify us; so by the power of the Holy Spirit we continually advance through entangling vices, daily fighting against them, because we are far

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422 Inst., 3.14. 1.

423 Inst., 3.14.1-8.

424 Inst., 3.3.5.

425 Ibid.

426 Inst., 3.3.6.

427 Inst., 3.11.8-9.



from perfection,<sup>428</sup> even though we are justified once and for all.

Repentance is transformation of the soul and it is called a new heart; circumcision of the heart. Repentance is a change from our inmost heart.<sup>429</sup> The renewal by the fruits of repentance is righteousness, judgment and mercy. Repentance is not acting upon the righteousness, judgment and mercy but rather putting on the inclination of righteousness, judgment and mercy.<sup>430</sup>

So, in relation to repentance, vivification means that the regenerated nature puts on new inclinations in Christ. The nature of the fruits of repentance is the duties of piety toward God, of charity toward men and holiness and purity in the entire life.<sup>431</sup> As such, weeping and fasting are not subjoined as perpetual or necessary effects of this, but have their special roles.<sup>432</sup> Calvin does not place them on the same level as the fruits of repentance for Christians but he considers their particular worth on occasions; and as such he calls them “privilege of Christians.”<sup>433</sup> Christians must repent sincerely because through it God forgives our sins<sup>434</sup> and amends our lives towards godliness.<sup>435</sup> When repentance is applied to this external profession it is sometimes improperly diverted from its true meaning. Overemphasising the role of

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428 Inst., 3.3.14.

429 Inst., 3.3.6.

430 Inst., 3.3.8.

431 Inst., 3.3.16.

432 Inst., 3.3.17. Calvin asserts the need of weeping and fasting today. “The pastors of the Church would not be doing ill today if, when they see ruin hanging over the necks of their people, they were to cry out to them to hasten to fasting and weeping.”

433 *Form of Prayer for the Church*, 106.

434 Inst., 3.3.25.

435 Ibid.

faith in justification has possibility of diminishing the works of Christ and glory of God<sup>436</sup> because faith is one of the means of grace but not all the works of Christ and His ministry.

According to Calvin, confession of sins is “a testimony of repentance.”<sup>437</sup> Confession of sins is our duty and obligation but more concretely it is our privilege, so Calvin’s attitude to repentance is not abstract but concrete and repentance is an ongoing, lifelong process that also needs concrete confession of sins and external figures of it. This idea suggests that repentance is an event in Christ like justification, but at the same time an event in this world. But Calvin criticises the Roman Catholic Church for torturing for confession and forcibly demanding a preparation for faith with it. So Calvin points out her iniquity concerning it saying, “the whole performance would be nothing but an idle mockery.”<sup>438</sup>

Calvin’s doctrine of repentance is almost always connected with good works. Repentance, for Calvin, which is attested by words, is of no value, unless it is proved by the conduct.<sup>439</sup> Calvin affirms that good works will make it evident, over a period of time, whether or not they have seriously repented. He indicates another step of repentance: seriousness. However Calvin takes up good works as evidence of authentic repentance.<sup>440</sup> Good works are called fruits of repentance by Calvin, but he

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436 François Wendel, *op. cit.*, 199. elle n’en est pas moins nôtre, une fois que nous l’avons reçue, et nous pourrions donc. En insistant trop sur le rôle qu’elle est appelée à jouer dans la justification, nous en prévaloir et réduire d’autant la part du Christ et la gloire de Dieu.

437 Comm. on Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5.

438 Comm. on Mk. 1:5.

439 Comm. on Mt. 3:8; Lk.3:8.

440 Comm. on Mt. 3:8

is in two minds over it; on the one hand he rejects Papist penance, which so corrupts this other part of the Gospel that it quite excludes the remission of sins, which is to be obtained by Christ, and on the other hand he emphasises the necessity of the fruits of repentance.<sup>441</sup> Even though Berkouwer did not regard it as a violation of the correlation between penance and repentance in Calvin's theology,<sup>442</sup> in fact, their correlation is violated. Calvin blames the Papists for overthrowing the whole doctrine of the Gospel; since, "first, they take from men's consciences the certainty of faith; that done, forasmuch as they part the forgiveness of sins between the death of Christ and our satisfactions, they do altogether deprive us of Christ's benefit."<sup>443</sup>

On the contrary, true repentance, says Calvin, lifts us up with "hope of pardon" because Jesus promised us forgiveness of sins in the two parts of the Gospel, repentance and remission of sins.<sup>444</sup> Calvin observed this order of repentance in his doctrine that those who yet live unto the world and the flesh and who may begin to crucify the old man are raised unto newness of life and that those who have already entered the course of repentance may continually go forward towards the mark of salvation. Furthermore, repentance cannot be rightly taught unless works are required because conversion of the inward heart ought to bring forth fruits in the believer's life.<sup>445</sup> Calvin emphasises the inward change of heart in the doctrine of repentance. Repentance is an inward matter, which has its seat in the heart and soul, but afterwards yields its fruits in a change of life. So thus we, says Calvin, cannot be

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441 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

442 G.C. Berkouwer. *Sin*. Tr. Philip C. Holtrop (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 349.

443 Comm. on Acts. 2:38

444 Comm. on Lk. 24:47.

445 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

justified freely through faith alone without at the same time living holy.<sup>446</sup> But Calvin refers to this distinction that repentance is an inward renewal of the man which manifests itself in the outward life as “a tree produces its fruit.”<sup>447</sup>

In spite of Calvin’s positive assertions, there is the dissoluble question of cause and effect in repentance concerning an inward change and good works as outward evidence. The most important aspect of the doctrine of repentance is an inward change and change of the entire man. Conversion, or turning unto God, is directly linked to repentance,<sup>448</sup> which is an inward thing and placed in the affection of the heart.<sup>449</sup> Although repentance is initially a matter of inward change, external evidence of repentance is required. Calvin’s doctrine of repentance has this tension that they (justification by faith alone and necessity of good works) are not a contradiction but a matter of priority in his soteriology although he states that there is not always occasion for those outward figures of repentance.<sup>450</sup>

As examples of outward attitudes of repentance, Calvin presents, sackcloth and ashes, these being strictly related to the beginning of conversion in Calvin’s doctrine of repentance and which must be preceded by hatred of sin, fear of God and mortification of the flesh.<sup>451</sup>

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446 Comm. on 1Cor. 1:30.

447 Comm. on Mt. 3:8; Lk.3:8.

448 Here, Calvin again tries to distinguish between conversion and repentance. He indicates that repentance refers to the more static and conversion the more active and dynamic aspects in his doctrine of repentance.

449 Comm. on Acts. 26:19-20.

450 Comm. on Lk. 10:13-16.

451 Comm. on Joel 2:13; Mt 11:21.

Calvin regards baptism as the very sealing of the remission of sins by Christ and Him being established in our consciences. Therefore Calvin joins faith and repentance together in the same sense<sup>452</sup> because in baptism, Christ declares our forgiveness of sins and calls us to repentance.<sup>453</sup> Calvin infers that the true sacrament arising from preaching is the baptism of repentance.<sup>454</sup> He further suggests that baptism is the outward sign of repentance for forgiveness of sins. In this manner he treats the baptism of John the same as the baptism of Christ; that the latter is the essence but the former is an outward sign. He makes a distinction between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ. This is the peculiarity of Calvin's doctrine of baptism that it is said to be an outward representation of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>455</sup> Calvin's doctrine of baptism is developed in terms of a various metaphors: Calvin sees "it as a sign of forgiveness of sins, mortification, renewal, adoption of entrance into the Church and separation from the world."<sup>456</sup> He sees baptism as a help to confirm and increase our faith and remission of sins, which is an effect of faith; it is annexed to it as to the inferior mean. Moreover, baptism is regarded by Calvin as a means by which our old man is crucified and is a sign and token of repentance that is taught through whole the Scripture.<sup>457</sup> Calvin also regards circumcision of Old Testament as a sign of repentance.<sup>458</sup>

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452 Comm. on Acts 2:38.

453 Comm. on Mk. 3:5.

454 Comm. on Lk. 3:3.

455 Ibid.

456 John. Witvliet, op. cit., 152-165. See. Footnote 7.

457 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

458 *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, 88: Comm., on Deut. 30:6; Comm. on Jer.4:4; Comm. on Rom. 4:11.

Calvin says that repentance does signify that it is an inward turning of man to God which is shown afterwards by external works. Calvin consistently considers good works as also the work of God, in Christ. “For Christ gives us the Spirit of repentance for this cause, that he may renew us inwardly; to the end that a new life may afterward follow the newness of the mind and heart. And if it belongs to Christ to give repentance, then it follows that it is not a thing that is in man’s power.”<sup>459</sup> He continues by saying that “it is a certain wonderful reformation, which makes us new creatures, repairs in us the image of God, and brings us out of the bondage of sin unto the obedience of righteousness.”<sup>460</sup>

The holy life of a Christian is the purpose of election<sup>461</sup> and without the repentance of the Christian there is naturally no election.<sup>462</sup> Calvin blames Scholastic Sophists for not teaching repentance as the inward renewal of the mind, which bears with it true correction of life, but of only teaching repentance with discipline and austerity that serves partly to tame the flesh, partly to chastise and punish faults.<sup>463</sup> Calvin, however, regards mortifying our flesh as our inability in aiding our salvation. With this idea in mind, Calvin criticises the synergic elements in the doctrine of penance of the Roman Catholic Church<sup>464</sup> because, for him, true repentance is not ceremonial repentance but inward repentance given only by God.<sup>465</sup>

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459 Comm. on Acts. 5:31

460 Ibid.

461 Comm. on 1Cor. 1:2.

462 Inst., 2.3.11.

463 Inst., 3.4.1.

464 Comm. on Acts 9:5.

465 T. F. Torrance, ed. *Antidote to the seventh session on Acts of Council of Trent in Tract and Treatises*

Calvin does not neglect the polarity between the divine action of God and the reaction of man. Where Luther sees that faith is a single event comprised of the action of God and the reaction of man, Calvin posits justification and faith at two places, before and after conversion and regeneration.<sup>466</sup> Whereas Luther represented a suspension of the problem of the active life, of ethics in the broadest sense, for Calvin faith and ethics were in practice coincident.<sup>467</sup>

According to the Roman Catholic Church the best satisfaction is to sin no more and to do all possible good toward one's neighbor.<sup>468</sup> As the *Augsburg Confession* states, "then good works, which are the fruits of repentance, are bound to follow,"<sup>469</sup> and "no mention is made of works of satisfaction, but rather of good works, which are the fruits of repentance."<sup>470</sup> So faith and works are again joined by this phase. It is interesting to note why Calvin emphasises good works as the fruits of repentance. He wants to criticise the use of satisfaction in the Roman Catholic Church, he replaces satisfaction with good works, which, as he has explained, is the successor of true repentance. Like Luther says, repentance is "God's strange work which is meant to drive people to their proper work. The Christian's life as repentance is nothing else than a life in faith which alone gives God the Glory."<sup>471</sup>

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*in defense of the Reformed faith*, Vol. III, 175.

466 Alexander Mckelway, op. cit., 212.

467 Karl Barth, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 49-87.

468 Leif Grane, op. cit., 140.

469 Ibid., 134.

470 Ibid., 135.

471 Ibid., 141.

Assurance, confidence, certainty, trust are the very essences of faith.<sup>472</sup> Wilhelm Niesel maintains that Calvin rejects the *sylogismus practicus* of later Calvinism but Calvin did utilise the principles of the syllogism in a practical sense.<sup>473</sup> The secondary support of works can be regarded as essential, since for Calvin, justification as the ground of assurance and repentance as the support of assurance are inseparable.<sup>474</sup> Though good works are not the ground of salvation they do form a secondary ground of assurance. The *sylogismus practicus* may never push aside the ground of assurance in God's promises. It must always retain a secondary, supporting role.<sup>475</sup> *The Heidelberg Catechism* (1563) also presents clearly the relationship between the doctrine of repentance and good works as fruits of it. Part 3, especially Q86-91 of the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, "we must show our gratefulness to God with good works, that are done out of true faith in accordance with the Law of God –Ten Commandments- and for his glory, and through good works we may be assured of our faith."<sup>476</sup> It adds in Q. 88 and Q 89, "true repentance and conversion have two parts: they are the dying of the old self and the birth of the new. One is "sincere sorrow over our sins and more and more to hate them and to flee from them," the other is complete joy in God through Christ and a strong desire to live according to the will of God in all good works."<sup>477</sup> This catechism particularly links the new life and good works of

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472 Joel R. Beeke, op. cit., 48.

473 Ibid., 72.

474 Inst., 3.14.18; David, Foxgrover, *John Calvin's understanding of Conscience*. Diss., Ph. D. (Clarmont, 1978), 436-437.

475 Joel R. Beeke, op. cit., 78.

476 Mark A. Noll, ed. *The Heidelberg Catechism in Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 154-155.

477 Ibid., 155.



the *Institutes*.<sup>478</sup> Calvin explains that furthermore the “Christian’s good works - to live according to the holy will of God and in His Communion- is done in reality, and is not a difficulty for them as they have the power of Holy Spirit.”<sup>479</sup>

Calvin presents sincere love for one’s neighbor as another outward figure of repentance that “if he is endued with faith and repentance, if he entertains sincere love for his neighbor, if he has his mind pure from all hatred and malice, those are the proof of being a true member of Christ.”<sup>480</sup> So we notice that repentance is one of the proofs of being a member of Christ.

Calvin notes that faith maintains this holy work and helps to have good works in the life. *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* also supports it that “faith is the product of the word of God and this faith does not hinder us from holy living, or turn us from the love of righteousness, but of necessity begets in us all good work.”<sup>481</sup>

Calvin does not link sin only in our relationship with God but also with the Church and our neighbors. He draws the distinction between secret sins and open sins and especially for the latter, he emphasises that there should be solemn rebuke by the Church.<sup>482</sup> Calvin advocated “the mutual private confession between Christians” as a way of public repentance and confession to ministers in accordance with

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478 Inst., 3.6-8.

479 Otto Thelemann, *An Aid to the Heidelberg Catechism*, tr. M. Peters (Grand Rapids, MI: Douma Publications, 1959), 311-312.

480 *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, 92.

481 Philip Schaff, ed. *Confessio Fidei Gallicana*, 371. Article XXII.

482 Inst., 4.12.3.

James 5:16.<sup>483</sup>The purpose of discipline, advocates Calvin, is to bring the sinner to repentance and to call him back to salvation.<sup>484</sup> But he warns us about public sins, which are committed openly and bring offense to the entire Church, that “it is not enough if he, who by setting a bad example through his misdeed has gravely injured the Church, be chastised only with words.”<sup>485</sup> He argues that one who openly sinned ought “for a time to be deprived of the communion of the Supper until he gives assurance of his repentance.”<sup>486</sup>

Barth posits that “Calvin’s self-denial, which is one of fruits of true repentance in *Institutes* III, vii, is affected by the medieval abnegation of mysticism<sup>487</sup>. This is caused by Barth’s misunderstanding of the theology of Calvin; as he regards it as a phase of ethics whereas Calvin regards it as grace by the work of God in Christ.<sup>488</sup> In Mysticism abnegation is a means of immediacy and a simultaneous means of meeting God but Calvin regards self-denial as only a step of repentance and external transformation by Holy Spirit. They (Calvin and mysticism) use the same terms but their purpose and application are different.

For Calvin, repentance is an integral part of prayer and should form the beginning of prayer, and as such, prayer is an important means of repentance. The

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483 John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of penance*, Num XXIX (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 415.

484 Inst., 4. 12.5, 10: Bryan. D. Spinks, “A Seventeenth Century Reformed Liturgy of Penance and Reconciliation,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989), 183-197.

485 Inst., 4. 12. 6.

486 Ibid.

487 On this position, Wendel has the same opinion. François Wendel. op. cit., 189.

488 Comm. on Acts 5:31.

plea for forgiveness of sins is the most important part of prayer. Through this we understand one truth of repentance; prayer is a good means of repentance and even though prayer is practiced outwardly, repentance is mainly related to an inward changing of sinners.<sup>489</sup> So Calvin said that repentance is the mother of prayer.<sup>490</sup>

Calvin maintains the ‘third use of the law’; that the Decalogue is the rule of conduct for the justified believer, as it makes us recognise sins and when sinners know what sins they have committed they can repent before God. He also allows a space for the Christian life in the three chapters on the grounds of his ‘third use of the law’, where the Christian life and good works are not the law. These grounds are Christ; Christ is the pattern to which the believer must conform, that is “set before us as an example, whose pattern we ought to express in our life.”<sup>491</sup> According to Berkouwer “Calvin did not entirely succeed in steering clear of the cliffs of legality.”<sup>492</sup> But Calvin knew well the position of the law and the third use of it in the Gospel. Actually he escaped from antinomianism and legalism and he pursued balance between them. As such, his doctrine of repentance emphasised both sides, that of the divine grace and of human activity by the grace of God.

The culmination of the Christian life, according to Calvin, is a life conformed to the will of God.<sup>493</sup> And salvation is both forgiveness of sin and repentance, both God’s grace as mercy and God’s grace as power. The proper unity of these two aspects of the

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489 Inst., 3.20.9.

490 Comm. on Acts. 8:22.

491 Jonathan H. Rainbow, op. cit.:103.

492 G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 170; hereafter, FS

493 J. H. Leith, Rvds ed, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta, Georgia : John Knox Press, 1981), 79.

one experience of salvation is the art of the Christian life and is never easy to achieve.<sup>494</sup> But the salvation of a Christian, for Calvin, stands in the faith and fruits of faith in Christ. They are dissoluble in Calvin's doctrine of repentance.

According to Berkouwer Calvin "was not interested in the intrinsic subjectivity of impenitence but only in subjectivity as the correlate of the salvation which has now appeared, and the knowledge of this which man now has."

## SUMMARY

For Calvin repentance is an important element of salvation. This is not a mere confession of sin but a change of the whole life to God. Therefore repentance is a requisite element of salvation. Even though we are saved by faith alone we cannot overlook the importance of repentance in salvation because repentance is given only to the regenerated by the grace of God. Therefore for him repentance, as well as faith, is necessary in salvation. Calvin proves the necessity of repentance in salvation with *Duplex gratia* and *munus duplex* of Christ.

This repentance is a result of listening to the word of God, not only the Gospel or the law, but the total Scripture. And through the word of God man can become aware of his sins and repent of them to God.

Through repentance a human repents of his sins but the one who makes us aware of our sins and repent of our sins is the Holy Spirit and Christ. Therefore

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494 Ibid.

repentance can be called the ministry of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Although there can be a lot of subjectivity about repentance it is surely a gift of grace from God which is given to the elected. Through repentance Christians experience the kingdom of God and go there eschatologically and at the same time they restore the *imago Dei* that we have lost by our sins. God wants to forgive the sins of all mankind. Even though some sins are very serious, God forgives our sins through repentance. Impenitence becomes an unforgivable sin.

Many theologians try to find the essence of Calvin's doctrine of repentance from his personal experience of conversion but for Calvin his personal conversion is nothing but a personal experience and through his personal conversion Calvin only affirmed that his conversion was a direct result of the providence of God.

For him repentance or conversion is not only a miraculous event but also a turning of the whole life to God and throughout our entire life we must complete this repentance.

In this repentance is borne the fruit of repentance in the Christian's life. Calvin supported the notion of a *Practicus Syllogismus* arguing that the fruit of repentance is the mark of salvation and a sign of true repentance and an important means of Church discipline. Calvin explained the necessity of good works in his soteriology suggesting a *Duplex acceptio hominis* and *Operum Justitia*.

Calvin's doctrine of repentance is comparatively balanced between subjectivity and objectivity. He emphasised the absolute necessity of salvation through faith and repentance; that we are saved by faith and we are forgiven only by the merit of Christ

and repentance. Calvin, as well as Luther, wanted to change penance-centered Christianity to grace and faith-centered Christianity. We must not only understand repentance in the *Ordo Salutis* of Reformed Theology, but rather we must regard it as the supporting presupposition of faith as well as the grace of God. Therefore for Calvin, repentance becomes the life of the Christian and the grounds of and effect of all *Ordo Salutis*; meaning that Christ lives but I die and Christ dies for me and through Him I live. Even though comparatively he focused on the subjectivity of salvation in Reformed theology, he pursued the balance between the task of man and the work of God. He never forgets this tension in the Bible and Reformed theology.

## **Chapter 2. The Doctrine of Repentance in the Theology of Karl Barth**

### **2. 1. The Necessity of Repentance in Soteriology**

#### **2. 1. 1. The Nature and Importance of Repentance**

Karl Barth is a one of the most eminent scholars in the history of theology, especially in the twentieth century. His influence is so dominant that, as John Baillie says, “nobody seems to be able to talk theology these days without mentioning him.”<sup>495</sup> Whether Barth’s ideas are used for good or for evil, their influence is bound to be great.<sup>496</sup> However, we cannot overlook the fact that Barth was one of the most impressive and commanding theologians of the last century.<sup>497</sup> Inevitably, therefore, when dealing with the doctrine of repentance according to Reformed perspectives, Barth’s doctrine of repentance cannot be bypassed because, as Sykes remarked, “we clearly stand at the threshold of a period of evaluation of Barth’s significance for Christian theology, which will most certainly be more exhaustive in extent than anything known hitherto.”<sup>498</sup>

It will also be necessary to compare Barth with Calvin because Barth has frequently used the terms of Calvin in his theology, although his doctrine of

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495 S. W. Sykes, ed. *Karl Barth: Studies of his theological method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 2. Recited from, J. Baillie. *Our Knowledge of God* (London, 1939), 17.

496 C. Van Til, *Karl Barth and evangelicalism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1964), 5-6.

497 Richard A. Muller, “The Place and Importance of Karl Barth in the Twentieth Century: a Review Essay” *Westminster Theological Journal* 50/1 (S 1988): 127-128.

498 S. W. Sykes, op. cit., 1.

repentance is different from that of Calvin. In order to understand the doctrine of repentance according to Karl Barth, we must first understand the pivotal idea of his theology. According to Ford, the central ideas of Barth's doctrines are the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ.<sup>499</sup> As F. H. Klooster says, the real heart and unity of Scripture in Barth is Jesus Christ, and his central idea is resurrection<sup>500</sup> because the resurrection of Christ reveals the central mystery of the gospel in Him. Thus, for Barth, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis for the entire Gospel.<sup>501</sup>

However, Barth's position is to be distinguished from the orthodox evangelical and Reformed understanding concerning the resurrection of Christ because his doctrines are based not on the *Historie* but on the *Geschichte*. The loss of the genuine historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its parallel loss of significance in redemptive accomplishment are a facet of the fundamental divergence between Barth's theology and the teaching of the Holy Scripture.

Barth fought against the religious individualism and historical relativism of

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499 Ibid., 13. According to Sykes, for the understanding of Barth's theology we can consider two methods. "Two of the authors, Dr Roberts and Dr Ford, have written doctoral theses which are, in effect, analyses of the strategies pursued by Barth chiefly in his *Church Dogmatics*. Dr Roberts takes the theme of time and eternity, and uses it as a tool for the systematic analysis of Barth's view of the structure of reality.... Dr Ford, on the other hand, explores Barth's persistent emphasis upon the theme of story and narration, and tries to bring out the way in which his use of Scripture is structured by a fundamental pattern provided by the sequence of Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost." Even though Barth uses both methods to explain his doctrine of repentance, time and eternity and Good Friday and Easter, he uses the former for the presupposition of this doctrine; the latter for the content of it.

500 Fred H. Klooster, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ" *Westminster Theological Journal* 24 (May 1962): 138.

501 Ibid., 137.



liberal theology of the nineteenth century which “rejected the traditional view of the absoluteness of both biblical revelation and the Scriptures” and argued that “the believer’s final authority was his and her own Christian experience.”<sup>502</sup> Contrary to the liberalism of the nineteenth century, Barth emphasised the absoluteness and objectivity of faith and salvation. It is for this reason that Barth labels his theology evangelical. This implies that he thinks that his theology “recalls both the New Testament and at the same time the Reformation of the sixteenth century,”<sup>503</sup> but evangelical theologians do not agree that Barth is, in fact, an evangelical theologian. Cornelius van Til in particular does not regard Barth’s theology as evangelical theology because, at least for van Til, evangelical theology must consent to its own fundamental issues, but the theology of Barth does not consent to the fundamental truths of evangelical theology. Therefore Barth’s theology, in the strictest sense, is not evangelical.

In particular we are thinking of all Protestants, whether Lutheran, Arminian or Reformed in their theology, who subscribe to the infallibility of Scripture and therefore to the idea of temporal creation, and the historicity of the Genesis account, the substitutionary atonement through Jesus Christ the son of man and son of God and his bodily return on the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead.<sup>504</sup>

However one cannot easily summarise Barth’s doctrines and what he has to say in the corpus of his writings because they are massive and complex<sup>505</sup> and his ideas

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502 David L. Mueller, “Karl Barth and the Heritage of the Reformation” *Review and Expositor* 86 (W 1989): 46.

503 Ibid., 45.

504 Cornelius. Van Til, “Has Karl Barth become orthodox” *Westminster Theological Journal* 16 (May 1954): 135.

505 J. B. Webster, ed. *The Cambridge companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York:

changed over time. So, as J. B. Webster says, Barth's views "on any given topic cannot be comprehended in a single statement, even if the statement be one of his own, but only in the interplay of a range of articulations of a theme."<sup>506</sup> It is also difficult to express the doctrine of repentance in Barth's theology in a single statement because it is sometimes complicated with other. Furthermore, the doctrine of repentance sometimes seems to be neglected by Barth himself. However, we cannot deny the fact that Barth is interested in the doctrine of repentance and that his doctrine of repentance differs from traditional Reformed theology. Even though B. Ramm suggests in his *apologetics* that "many of Barth's seminal ideas may be found in Calvin and parallel ideas in Abraham Kuyper, judged to be the greatest Reformed theologian since Calvin,"<sup>507</sup> the similarity of his ideas to great Reformed theologians in regards to the doctrine of repentance cannot provide an identity of substance *in se* with them.

For Barth, sanctification is one of two central ideas in his doctrine of reconciliation, the other being justification. His doctrine of repentance includes conversion, penitence and sanctification, but in fact he regards sanctification as a general Scriptural term that includes both conversion and penitence and he prefers the term 'sanctification' to 'repentance'.

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What is meant by sanctification (*sanctificatio*) might just as well be described by the

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Cambridge University Press, 2000), 8.

506 Ibid., 9.

507 Fred H. Klooster, "Barth and the future of evangelical Theology" *Westminster Theological Journal* 47/2 (Fall 1985): 317.

less common biblical term regeneration (*regeneratio*) or renewal (*renovatio*), or by that of conversion (*conversio*), or by that of penitence (*poenitentia*) which plays so important a role in both the Old and New Testament, or comprehensively by that of discipleship which is so outstanding especially in the synoptic Gospels.<sup>508</sup>

The way in which Barth explains sanctification as being described by the terms ‘regeneration’, ‘renewal’, ‘conversion’ and ‘penitence’ shows that he uses the same terms as Calvin.<sup>509</sup> Calvin treats sanctification in terms of repentance, but Barth treats repentance in terms of sanctification, although Barth extracts repentance from the reconciliation as justification in Christ Jesus.

Barth treats the doctrine of repentance in the light of sanctification. He prefers to use the term sanctification to repentance because it has meaning itself (“saints”), and it deals with “the being and action of God.”<sup>510</sup> And this sanctification depends on the Holiness of God because He is only originally and properly holy in and for Himself. In fact, God sanctifies the unholy that depend on Him by His actions towards them<sup>511</sup> in circumstance and in human history. According to Barth, ‘sanctified’ in the Bible does not mean ‘devout’ or ‘virtuous’, but rather ‘separated by God’. Thus sanctification is not a quality immanent in human action itself but divine separation. “Knowing the divine act of sanctification we can and should offer our action to God

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508 CD 4/2, 499-500.

509 Ibid.

510 Ibid.

511 Ibid.

as penitence and conversion just as a sacrifice is offered (Rom. 12:2).”<sup>512</sup>

Through an understanding of Barth’s doctrine of ethics, which is concerned with sanctification and repentance, we should be able to understand his doctrine of repentance more easily and correctly, since his doctrine of repentance includes the doctrine of sanctification and his doctrine of sanctification includes the doctrine of repentance and the ethical life of Christians. For Barth forgiveness of sin and repentance are put in parallel and distich. Concerning the doctrine of repentance, Barth contended that the ethical life is the work of the Spirit in the covenant community in which the good man is created. However, the foundation of Barth’s ethics is always Jesus Christ. So he states that “ethics as the doctrine of God’s command, and therefore as the doctrine of sanctification given to man by God, is grounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”<sup>513</sup>

As has already been stated, the starting point of Barth’s doctrine of repentance is the event of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Barth’s close identification of sanctification and ethics shows the necessity of fulfillment of the Gospel in the ethical sphere. But he never makes ethics a replacement of the Gospel. According to Barth, repentance is the first, basic element of the Gospel, the foundation of human activity and human ethics, but it is the work of God only and through this act man can look forward to God.

Repentance is not the last and noblest and most refined achievement of the righteousness of men in the service of God, but the first elemental act of the righteousness

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512 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 113. Barth used to refer to this scripture portion for explanation of the basis of his ethics and sanctification.

513 CD 2/2, 777.

of God in the service of men; the work that God has written in their hearts, and which, because it is from God and not from men occasions joy in heaven; that looking forward to God, and to Him only, which is recognised only by God and by God Himself.<sup>514</sup>

In Barth's theology repentance is both the first demand of all Christians and, at the same time, the beginning of Christian Life.<sup>515</sup> And repentance is demanded by God and converts man to God in order to give glory to God. In repentance man gives up his honour and becomes a perfectly new being.<sup>516</sup>

The great contribution of Barth to the reconstruction of the doctrine of sanctification, which includes the doctrine of repentance and conversion, is that he shows the personal and relational phases of sanctification for the dynamics of reconciliation within the covenant.<sup>517</sup> In reconciliation, man is both justified and sanctified. So our approach to repentance must consider this relational condition. Both justification and sanctification are found in the reconciliation of Jesus Christ.

Sanctification is a particular scope of the second part of the doctrine of reconciliation in the theology of Karl Barth<sup>518</sup> and is indissolubly bound up with justification.<sup>519</sup> For Barth, the justification of man originates in the statement "I will

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514 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*. tr. from the sixth edition by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 68.

515 J. C. Lombard, *Die Leer van Die Heiligmaking by Karl Barth* (n.v. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1957), 50. See footnote 262. *Barth beskou die Buße as Primêr etiese handeling, en gehoorsaamheid bv. Aan ander gebooie as sekondêr.*

516 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 60.

517 Hans, Küng, *Justification: the doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic*, tr. Thomas Collins, Edmund E. Tolk, and David Granskou. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 211.

518 CD 4/2, 499.

519 Ibid.

be your God,” and the sanctification of man originates in the statement “Ye shall be my people.”<sup>520</sup> Therefore sanctification is an event willed and accomplished by God.<sup>521</sup> God’s sanctifying involves a modification of a person’s situation and constitution; they must deduce the consequences of it, but it is wholly and exclusively God’s own act.<sup>522</sup> Justification is also God’s act and the action of man is useless in it. But we must not neglect the fact that Barth intends to deliver the doctrine of sanctification from the pitfalls of legalism and quietism.<sup>523</sup>

If we want to abstract our penitence from God’s acceptance of it, over which we have no control, then we have no means to differentiate its salutary disquiet from the useless disquiet of our own self-knowledge when this is left on its own. With our penitence as such, be it ever so sincere and serious, we cannot force the mercy of God which alone gives meaning.<sup>524</sup>

Through sanctification God leads His people to His purpose not *de jure* but *de facto*. Sanctification is not merely rectification but instruction and God’s direction.<sup>525</sup> Jesus’ action is not for Him but for saints as the true covenant-partners of God in fellowship and co-operation with Him. Saints’ sanctification is positive “in contrast to others upon whom this has come *de jure* but not *de facto*.”<sup>526</sup>

To this extent the Marxist Milan Machovec is correct in stating that sanctification in Barth’s theology is a very “sophisticated attempt to make possible the survival of

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520 Ibid.

521 CD 4/2, 500.

522 CD 4/2, 501.

523 FS, 118.

524 Karl Barth. *Ethics*, 113.

525 CD 4/2, 527.

526 Ibid.

religion in an age of atheism,<sup>527</sup> and that it is sometimes nothing but theological sophistication or hypothesis.

### 2. 1. 2. Sin and Repentance

Barth does not speak of the covenant of works based on Genesis 2:16-17, but of the covenant of grace. Therefore his doctrine of sin must be treated differently than that of Reformed tradition.<sup>528</sup> Because of his view on the covenant of grace the doctrine of sin is understood obscurely in Barth's terms.<sup>529</sup> And we cannot easily grasp the idea of sin which is a counterpart of repentance in Barth's theology because his doctrine of sin is a reduction of sin as an ontological idea.

The genuine understanding of the idea of sin in the theology of Karl Barth is very important to the understanding of the doctrine of repentance that requires man to turn away from sin. Principally Barth attributes our incapacity to our finiteness rather than to our sinfulness<sup>530</sup> so he defined sin not as a result of man's evil works but as an inevitable character of creatures. According to his theology, sin does not require the responsibility of sinners, therefore repentance is not an essential element of the forgiveness of sins. And sin can be recognised only through *analogia fidei* that I am a

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527 Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Unreal God of Modern Theology*, tr. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard Pub., 1988), 97.

528 Sometimes Barth argues that sin means transgression, deviation and man's eternal lostness. Cf. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 149-151.

529 Fred H. Klooster, "Karl Barth's doctrine of reconciliation: a review article," *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (May 1958): 172.

530 H. Francis Davis, op. cit, 137.

sinner, the enemy of God, others and self.<sup>531</sup>

Since justification is the fulfillment of the covenant, man will never be reconciled to God without being pronounced free from guilt and without being justified.<sup>532</sup> Reconciliation is a reaction of God against sin.<sup>533</sup> Sin is the interchanging of God and man, that exalting of man to divinity or depressing of God to humanity, by which we seek to justify and fortify and establish ourselves.<sup>534</sup> So to live in sin means that by an invisible necessity we cannot do otherwise than wilfully and consciously exalt ourselves to divinity and depress God to our own level and to our own side.<sup>535</sup>

Barth classifies sins into three large groups, namely pride, sloth and deception. These categories are connected with the threefold office of Christ. According to Barth, pride is man going his own way, following his own will, sloth is man choosing his lowliness and remaining in his own darkness, and finally deception is man closing his door to truth. At any rate Barth deduces 'sin is pride' from the meaning of *vere Deus* because God humbles Himself by becoming man. Sin in its first form is pride and for this Christ has His high priestly office:

When God condescends to man, when He makes Himself one with Him in order to be truly his God, man cannot fall away from the work of this mercy of God to him. But what Adam did, what Israel did... what even the Christian does when he forgets that he is a Christian, is the very thing which is forbidden by this first form of grace, the very thing which is made impossible, which is excluded, which is negated because it is itself a

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531 Ron, Highfield, *Barth and Rahner in Dialogue toward an Ecumenical Understanding of Sin and Evil* (New York, Bern Frankfurt am Main, Paris: Peter Lang, 1989), 15.

532 Hans Küng, *Justification* (London: Burns and oats, 1964), 23.

533 Ibid.

534 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 190.

535 Ibid.



negation. It is the fall in the form of presumption, acting as though God had not humbled Himself to man....His high-priestly office.<sup>536</sup>

Sin in its second form is sloth and for this Christ has His kingly office:

He wills and seeks us as we are, in our creatureliness, as men, that we may be raised to the status of children. That is why He humbled Himself. That is the meaning and force of His mercy... and against that sin in its second form is sloth....the doctrine of His kingly office.<sup>537</sup>

And sin in its third form is deception and for this Christ has His prophetic office:

When God Himself is the pledge that He has done all this, man cannot pretend that he knows better. When the truth speaks for itself, man's knowing better is only falsehood, a lie. ...we are incorrigible liars....the doctrine of prophetic office.<sup>538</sup>

Barth connected *Trägheit* (sloth)<sup>539</sup> especially with the repentance of man in the grace of God. Sloth is the refusal of God's gift of freedom out of an indolent self-contentment. The kingdom of God is the repentance and the counterpart of sin, and all sloth contradicts the kingdom of God, which is basically the reflection of the opportunity to live in communion with God.<sup>540</sup> The breaking of the kingdom of the world is accomplished by the coming of the kingdom of God and through repentance. The kingdom of God means that God calls His saints in Jesus to make them His disciples<sup>541</sup>; thus sloth is the refusal of God's calling. So, the call of Jesus will be

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536 CD 4/1, 142-3.

537 CD 4/1, 143.

538 CD 4/1, 144.

539 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik: Ein einführender Bericht* (Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 258. "Die Sünde ist-konfrontiert mit der in Jesus Christus geschehenen Erhöhung und Aufrichtung des Menschen-Trägheit."

540 CD 4/2, 524.

541 CD 4/2, 545-48.

along the lines of the encounter between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world.<sup>542</sup>

How can man know that he is a sinner? In Barth's theology he can know it in Jesus Christ because "Jesus Christ is the representative of all humans before God" and when He died He showed that the whole human being is completely corrupt and becomes the man of sin.<sup>543</sup> But Barth does not try to show that Jesus Christ is this mirror and the fact that it is presupposed in faith. He asks only how "Jesus is the mirror."<sup>544</sup> Sin may not be given an independent, self-originating and self-contained treatment, but has to be seen in the light of the atonement.<sup>545</sup> There is no need of hamartiology and the doctrine of repentance of traditional understanding because Barth's doctrine of sin is based on the Christocentric sphere only.

Sin is not regarded as the breaking of covenant of works or lawlessness or disobedience of a specific command given to the first man<sup>546</sup>, but sin is 'No' where God says 'Yes'<sup>547</sup> and the self-surrender of the creature to "Nothingness."<sup>548</sup> And sin has "no positive part to play in God's plan; it is the object of God's uncompromising 'No'."<sup>549</sup>

*Das Nichtige* is a counterpart of God's will and sometimes it is used for the

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542 CD 4/2, 552.

543 CD 4/1, 407.

544 Ron, Highfield, op. cit., 20-21.

545 CD 4/1, 139.

546 CD 4/1, 508.

547 CD 4/1, 139

548 CD 4/1, 79; Barth uses the German term "*Nichtige*." It is translated as Nothingness in English.

549 Ron, Highfield, op. cit., 20.

expression of evil. For Barth *das Nichtige* is not a description of his categories of pride, sloth, and deception, but rather the senselessness, ridiculousness and worthlessness of sin. Therefore it is a “disqualification in contrast to the noble activity of God.”<sup>550</sup> Barth defined *das Nichtige* as the opposition and resistance to God’s world-dominion, the stubborn element and alien aster.<sup>551</sup> *Das Nichtige* exists simply as that which God does not will.<sup>552</sup> Repentance and sanctification are obedience to God, but *das Nichtige* is rebellion and disobedience against God’s will.

And *das Nichtige* can have value or attain validity “only insofar as universal revelation has not yet been finished, as the whole creation still waits for it and looks forward to it.”<sup>553</sup> Evil is the incursion of *das Nichtige* into creation. Barth treats *das Nichtige* as powerful, dynamic, menacing, destructive factor. So *das Nichtige* is “the power of darkness that haunts our world,”<sup>554</sup> menace and cosmic menace. For that reason only God can break it and crash it.

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550 G.C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, 280.

551 CD 3/3, 289. According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, Evil is *das Nichtige*. Evil is not *defined* as *das Nichtige* by Barth. Rather, evil is *identified* by Barth as *das Nichtige*. To the question of real evil, Barth gives the *das Nichtige*. *Das Nichtige* is what the English word “evil” designates. Scriptural words for *das Nichtige* are chaos and demonic. And the fundamental feature of *das Nichtige* is that it menaces God and creature alike, especially those creatures that are human. Evil is the actualization of this menace. Furthermore, Barth regards Heidegger and Sartre’s comprehension of *das Nichtige* as shallow compared to that available to the Christian, he thinks that they did nevertheless recognize *das Nichtige*. But throughout his Church Dogmatics 3/3, he criticises existing ideas of sin, such as those of Leibniz, Schleiermacher, Müller, Heidegger and Sartre, because in Christianity we have God, who removes the origin of our pains and forgives our sins, against *das Nichtige*. cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Barth on Evil” *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (O 1996): 584-608

552 Gustaf Wingren, op. cit., 36. Wingren prefers to translate *Nichtige* to Non-being.

553 Ibid., 37.

554 Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Barth on Evil” *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (O 1996): 586.

Holy Scripture regards *das Nichtige* as a kingdom, based upon a claim to power and a seizure of power...always on the march, always invading and attacking. Its decisive insight is that God Himself is the superior and victorious opponent of *das Nichtige*....It is for the Bible no mere figure of speech or poetic fancy or expression of human concern but the simple truth that *das Nichtige* has this dynamic, that it is a kingdom on the march and engaged in invasion and assault.<sup>555</sup>

*Das Nichtige* is that menacing tendency which forces the creature, by means of the creature's ontological non-self-sufficiency, to sink out of existence, and it is that menacing tendency which forces God, also by means of the creature's non-self-sufficiency, toward the overthrowing of the demarcations made by God at creation for the sake of fellowship with the creature.<sup>556</sup>

Because naturally man has no self-sufficiency he falls easily to back-sliding. But he thinks that God's preservation preserves humans from the risk of falling into *das Nichtige*. In spite of the fragility of man God keeps his people in the providence of preservation.

For Barth, to deny such a power is to trivialise what transpired at the cross and in the resurrection.<sup>557</sup> For him, *das Nichtige* is "not non-being as such. Non-being is, precisely, not anything." Whereas "*das Nichtige* is something, there is *das Nichtige*." But however the power that *Nichtige* has over us is an illusion and it is a dangerous illusion with a real power because we do not know the essential reality. Therefore we have been continuously deceived by it.<sup>558</sup> But since sin has been defeated by Jesus

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555 CD 3/3, 523-4.

556 Nicholas Wolterstorff, op. cit., 591.

557 Ibid., 586.

558 Gustaf Wingren, op. cit., 36.

Christ, it is not real and it has no future. In short, the reality of God is eternal, with past, present and future coinciding in pure duration because “the reality of nothingness is only past.”<sup>559</sup> Throughout his works he frequently says that evil is a power but he denies the objective existence of evil.<sup>560</sup> And *das Nichtige* is “not a creature of God but comes about as the inevitable accompaniment of God’s bringing forth of creatures.”<sup>561</sup> *Das Nichtige* is not a creature of God but rather *Nein* as a shadow of God’s creation. But this explanation has a logical contradiction that becomes evident when Barth explains the falling of Satan, who was a created being and became evil in the book of Jude 6 and II Pet. 2:4.<sup>562</sup>

In sin, which is the concrete form of *das Nichtige*, we should find the negative aspect of creation.<sup>563</sup> Sin is not only the creature’s act of disobedience but also the creature’s submission to *das Nichtige*, therefore sin is the concrete form of *das Nichtige* which is opposite to God. And the reality of *das Nichtige* is the wrongdoing of the average man, but this is sometimes confused because Barth’s assertion to sin is not that which man does.<sup>564</sup> However, he tries to explain sin in the real sense that sin and evil are factual things without illusion, and not fate but human deliberate action, even though he asserts hereditariness of sin. Actually Barth prefers *Ur-Sünde* to *Erb*

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559 Ron, Highfield, op. cit., 15.

560 Gustaf Wingren, op. cit., 126.

561 Nicholas Wolterstorff, op. cit., 587.

562 Gustaf Wingren, op. cit., 37-38.

563 CD 3/3, 307.

564 J. B. Webster, *Barth's moral Theology: human action in Barth's thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) 68-71.

*Sünde*.<sup>565</sup>

Wingren criticises Barth, saying that, according to Barth, “original sin now consists in wrong thinking and that faith becomes correct thinking.”<sup>566</sup> This Wingren regards as “intellectualism and its accompanying abstractions.”<sup>567</sup> And he treats it as “symptoms of the unreality of God’s work in Barth’s theology.”<sup>568</sup>

There is in Barth’s theology no active power of sin, no tyrannical, demonic power that subject man to slavery and which God destroys in his work of redemption. There is no devil in Barth’s theology. This is a constant feature in his theological production.<sup>569</sup>

For Barth, the forgiveness of sins is regarded as already having been given by event of reconciliation and Christ’s death and His resurrection. For Barth, forgiveness of sins has already been fulfilled and this ‘fulfilled’ (τετελεσθαι) perfect tense is also the future tense which has procured for us. Thus Barth sometimes used “thou hast done it once and for all.”<sup>570</sup> The reason that Barth stressed the perfect tense and the ‘already’ of the forgiveness of sins is that he wished to give assurance of salvation to contemporary Christians<sup>571</sup> and he therefore put the problem of forgiveness of sins in the event of Jesus Christ.

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565 J. B. Webster, *Barth's moral Theology: human action in Barth's thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) 72-75.

566 Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Unreal God of Modern Theology*, 96.

567 Ibid.

568 Ibid.

569 Gustaf Wingren, op. cit., 24. According to G. Wingren the reason for this situation is that there was no evil power in the liberal theology against which Barth continually reacts.

570 J. B. Webster, *Barth's moral Theology: human action in Barth's thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) 56.

571 Ibid.

But Barth argues that forgiveness of sins will only be thoroughly fulfilled when we pray for forgiveness for our sins. And we cannot receive God's pardon unless we pray that He forgive us our offenses, even though this was inaugurated by the death of Jesus Christ.<sup>572</sup> Nevertheless, we must thoroughly understand that it is not possible for us to speak seriously in this fashion with God. Barth criticises Calvin because he "departed from the Christological basis and norm of Christian theology, appealing to another sources of knowledge, knowledge deduced from an abstract concept of a holy, all-powerful, all-determining God."<sup>573</sup> So Barth "undercut the whole of Calvin's theology."<sup>574</sup> But the source of Calvin's theology is Jesus Christ and, contrary to Barth's accusation, he never appealed to abstract ideas. Rather, Calvin is more biblical than Barth in regards to the doctrine of sin because all of Calvin's theology is deduced from the Bible itself and from Jesus Christ and, as Barth agrees, Calvin is a man of material commitments.<sup>575</sup>

Barth considers Heb 6:1-8, which has been regarded as referring to an unforgivable sin, as including "a good deal of anxiety and admonition and even warning."<sup>576</sup> And he regards the rejection of the grace of God as a sin against the Holy Spirit. Barth thinks that these verses include God's faithfulness and conversion, which were initiated once and for all. So Barth suggests that unforgivable sins in the Bible are just admonitions and threats to the Christian.<sup>577</sup> For Barth, the only and ultimate

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572 Ibid., 58.

573 Ron, Highfield, op. cit., 18.

574 Ibid.

575 Ibid.

576 CD 4/2, 569.

577 CD 4/2, 568-69.

unforgivable sin against the Spirit is work-righteousness.<sup>578</sup> For that reason Barth criticises the Roman Catholic Church for corrupting true repentance into a “sacrament of penance” and discipline of Christians. Calvin confirmed the doctrine of repentance as discipline and admonition in order to maintain the purity of the Church, whereas Barth argues for the uselessness of discipline because repentance as discipline in salvation is not necessary.

But there is no Church discipline- and it is a misunderstanding and misapplication of the saying about the key of the kingdom of heaven in Mt. 16:19.... As we can only believe the Christian community as such in its identity with the holy community of Jesus Christ, so we can only believe ourselves and others as its holy members.<sup>579</sup>

He is critical of Rome’s identification of repentance with an act of penance. Barth, as Calvin did, rejects the Catholic notion of penance. But whereas Calvin regards penance as Christian discipline, Barth does not admit the worth of Christian discipline in the doctrine of repentance because it is apt to slide towards the sacrament of penance and work-righteousness.

The post-apostolic and early Catholic Church failed to take note of these warnings in the Gospel, Paul, John and Hebrews. Relapsing into the way of thinking of later Judaism, it again made the conversion which rules the whole life of Christians into a matter of particular acts, and later of a special penitential discipline. This led finally to the special “sacrament of penance” which Luther contrasted so sharply with the μετανοεῖτε of Jesus.<sup>580</sup>

Concerning the forgiveness of sins, Barth has a broader sense than Calvin and it

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578 Karl Barth, *De apostolisch Geloofsbelijdenis*, ed. K. H. Misskotte, 1935, 150; cited from G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, 227.

579 CD 4/1, 698.

580 CD 4/2, 569.



is more sensitive than other modern conservative theologians, but he has the wrong idea of sins, and these ideas themselves have problems from the start because Barth thinks that although we may acknowledge and regret that we have sinned, we do not need to confess that we are sinners.<sup>581</sup> Even though Barth tried to solve the doctrine of sin in the event of Jesus Christ and said that it is an impossible possibility, this is nothing but modern theological Docetism because it is nothing but opium for the certainty of redemption.

## **2. 2. The Roles of Repentance in Soteriology**

### **2. 2. 1 Repentance, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and Grace of God**

#### **2. 2. 1. 1. Repentance, Christ and the Holy Spirit**

When one understands the doctrine of repentance in the doctrine of salvation, one more clearly recognises the importance and value of the doctrine of repentance. Salvation is the fulfillment of a covenant, an eternal covenant, according to which God purposes to bring the human race into reconciled relation with him, and “reconciliation between God and the human creation that he loves in Christ.”<sup>582</sup> The basis of the Church is the correlation between repentance and the Church that rests on the incarnation of the Christ who summons us to repentance.<sup>583</sup> According to CD 4/1-3, salvation is achieved “by the self-same historical happening characterized as,

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581 CD 4/2, 394.

582 Colin Gunton, *Salvation: The Cambridge companion to Karl Barth*. (ed) J. B. Webster (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 144.

583 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 517.

respectively, a divine act, a human act and a divine-human act.”<sup>584</sup> Therefore salvation is the work of Christ alone. For this reason, repentance is inevitably connected to reconciliation through faith in Christ.

*Participatio Christi* is also at the heart of Barth’s doctrine of sanctification. In Calvin’s *Commentaries*,<sup>585</sup> Calvin tried to connect repentance and sanctification with only Christ himself but that not of man. Christ washes away our sins by his blood, and reconciles us with God by the sacrifice of his death. Christ makes us “alive” unto righteousness. But Barth criticises Calvin’s concept of *participatio Christi* because he thinks that it is lacking to have objectivity in salvation. It shows that Calvin wants to treat both sanctification and repentance in the objective sphere, and Barth emphasises the objectivity of salvation in Christ only.

In Calvin’s concept of *participatio Christi* there is lacking that which we have described as the objective presupposition of the participation of the saints in the sanctity of Jesus Christ, the sanctification which has come to man *a priori* in Him, which is absolutely sure to the saints, and which gives to their existence teleological meaning among men...This means that Calvin’s doctrine of sanctification does not have the foundation which is finally needed to carry it.<sup>586</sup>

Barth’s criticism of Calvin is not proper. It is true that Calvin emphasises human responsibility more than Barth, but the starting point and initiative of sanctification are only God and Jesus Christ.

And man’s sinful action is disturbed by Jesus’ action. By the disturbance of Jesus Christ we are separated from the world. This is the end of our calling, where the

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584 Colin Gunton, *Salvation: The Cambridge companion to Karl Barth*. 146.

585 John Calvin, Comm. on Mt. 3:2; Comm. on Mt. 11:20; Lk.10:13-16.

586 CD 4/2, 520.

Church of Jesus is made up of saints (ἐκκλησία) and this is man's sanctification. By this disturbance man is set at the side of God and "may be the witnesses of the Holy One."<sup>587</sup>

Like other Reformed theologians, Barth has as the most important keys in his doctrine of repentance that Christ has died for man and that the Holy Spirit has been given to man. This is renewal and is the chief element of salvation.<sup>588</sup> And God makes the regenerated sinners who are his children and who are sought and found by God in Christ and through Holy Spirit repent.<sup>589</sup>

So, first of all, the doctrine of repentance is connected preferentially with Jesus Christ who died and was resurrected from the dead. Through His resurrection, and only in Him, man has true repentance. And when man is grafted in His resurrection, our Head and true God and true Man, man can enjoy His works in the Holy Spirit. For Barth, the benefits of the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit in us and for us are our regeneration and conversion, the establishment of the law of God, and the sanctification of our lives.<sup>590</sup> Therefore the cause of our conversion is Jesus Christ in the power of Holy Spirit.

We ask who the man is of whom we have spoken continually as one who is engaged in conversion. And the answer is simply that in the true sense it is He alone. It is not He without those to whom He is revealed as such in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is He as their Head. But it is He, and He alone, as the origin and basis of the conversion of the

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587 CD 4/2, 526.

588 Karl, Barth, *The Christian Life*. 63.

589 Karl Barth, *Ethics*. 416.

590 Karl, Barth, *Credo*, tr. by J. Strathearn McBab (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 156-8.

many.<sup>591</sup>

In Barth, sanctification is based principally on Christ Jesus and on the Holy Spirit.<sup>592</sup> Therefore conversion is in the compulsion of the Holy Spirit and its actualisation also depends wholly on Jesus Christ. In other words, God has sanctified us in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Not because I am that in my self, but because in Christ He has called and chosen me, has promised these his gifts to me through the Holy Spirit, because He has sanctified me..., led by His Hand.<sup>593</sup>

Jesus Christ is the whole power of our conversion.<sup>594</sup> And conversion is the coincidence of both 'still' and 'already' in Christ Jesus. But "it is not the *simul* of a balancing or co-ordination of two similar factors. But rather it is in falling-out of both 'still' and 'already'"<sup>595</sup> because this 'still' and 'already' only coincide in him. For Barth, the new life which is the effect of justification has such little reality that Barth denotes it "only by the verbs may, can, ought, and will. As these verbs painfully indicate, the new life is still to come, strictly eschatological."<sup>596</sup> Because "Christ is our sanctification," it is not inadequate to describe it as the process by which we continually turn from the old to confront the new in the realities of present history, but it is proper that sanctification is not accomplished in this present and the fulfillment of it is eschatological. Barth used the term 'decision' (*Entscheidung*) as an idea of

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591 CD 4/2, 582.

592 David Mueller, "Karl Barth in Dialogue on the Foundation of Salvation" *Review and Expositor* 91 (Fall 1994): 487-503.

593 Karl Barth, *The Christian Life*. 14.

594 CD 4/2, 583.

595 CD 4/2, 572-573.

596 Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Unreal God of Modern Theology*, 82.

repentance, but it is not the same as the Reformers and pietists and is rather the decision of God in Jesus. Therefore this ‘decision’ is for the decision and conversion of man that participates in it.<sup>597</sup>

Repentance as well as forgiveness of sins occurs in Christ, only in Him and always with Him. Forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus is sanctification to His people and by the forgiveness of sins through Christ we are sanctified. And we can understand this properly and effectively in Christ only because it becomes actualised in Him. Appropriately it is an event only in Christ Jesus.<sup>598</sup>

Sanctification consists of the fact that in and through Jesus Christ man is called by God into freedom, summoned to use the freedom which he has already been granted in Jesus Christ.<sup>599</sup> It allows men even as sinners to render obedience and establish themselves as people of God.<sup>600</sup> Man’s action in sanctification is nourished by the Holy Spirit who has united us with Jesus.<sup>601</sup> Sanctification is understood only in Jesus Christ, even though the Holy Spirit shows us the direction, because in Christ “God (*vere Deus*) is for man, and man (*vere homo*) is for God” and the reality of conversion has “its basis and origin in this climax, in Jesus Christ.”<sup>602</sup>

In the second Christological aspect, Jesus Christ as *vere Homo*, Barth reveals the dialectical counterpart of the first Christological aspect, *vere Deus*. And Barth urges

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597 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 380.

598 CD 4/2, 582.

599 CD 4/1, 101.

600 CD 4/2, 499.

601 CD 4/2, 529.

602 CD 4/2, 581-82.

that in Christ Jesus all people convert to God and therefore conversion is once and for all in Christ. Likewise, the reconciliation of the world with God takes place in the person of a man in whom, because He is also the true God, the conversion of all men to God is an actual event.<sup>603</sup> And what has happened in Him as the true man is “the conversion of all of us to God, the realization of true God.”<sup>604</sup> In so far as Christ was and is and will be very man, the conversion of man to God took place in Him; the turning and therefore the reconciliation of all man, the fulfillment of the covenant.<sup>605</sup> According to Barth, conversion is God’s work makes us his own possession, so that “God is for us and that we are His.”<sup>606</sup>

And the beginning of repentance and the continuation of it are all from the works of the Holy Spirit. This is the operation of the Holy Spirit, not only to initiate conversion (*operatio initialis*), but also to continue it throughout the believer’s life (*operatio perpetua*). And even through their continuing sinfulness, by the work of Holy Spirit the miracle of grace of God never ceases in their heart.<sup>607</sup>

In the face of the instruction of the Holy Spirit there can be only the most concrete obedience.<sup>608</sup> In the Holy Spirit the realisation of this new existence is not the result of man’s own decision, rather each man is “the man concerning whom decision

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603 CD 4/2, 131.

604 Ibid.

605 Ibid.

606 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Doctrine of reconciliation: a survey of Barth's Kirchliche Dogmatik; pt 4/2” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 10 (Mr 1957):82.

607 George Hunsinger, *Karl Barth's Doctrine of Holy Spirit: The Cambridge companion to Karl Barth*, ed. J. B. Webster (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 183.

608 CD 4/2, 372.

has already been made in the existence of the man Jesus Christ.”<sup>609</sup> Through Jesus Christ Christians are justified; still they remain in sin because they are “in the battle with old man” but he will grasp “the new freedom in Christ.”<sup>610</sup>

So, sanctification, or the response of man, comes from the Holy Spirit<sup>611</sup> because the forgiveness of sins and the new creation of God are given us by Holy Spirit. Barth regards sanctification as not being nominal,<sup>612</sup> neither formal nor in *de jure*, but sanctification is a real change, even in this restricted sense, and the creation of a new form of existence in which man becomes the true covenant-partner of God.<sup>613</sup>

And this happens in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ God has made us a new creature.<sup>614</sup>

By the power of Holy Spirit the event in Christ Jesus becomes ours.

Thou have given us thy Holy Spirit in order that the work of this creation which thou hast accomplished in this new human being, Jesus Christ, may become a living thing in us; in order that thy grace, displayed in this event, may become ours.<sup>615</sup>

Barth declares that conversion is “above wholly creaturely and wholly divine.”

He means that the initiation of the action is in God and the occurrence wholly and

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609 CD 4/2, 363.

610 O. G. Otterness, *The Doctrine of Sanctification in the Theology of Karl Barth*, Unpublished Ph.D. Diss. (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1969), 125.

611 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 203. *Er (Heilige Geist, Geist Jesu Christi) ist belebende Macht und erleuchtende Macht.*

612 H. Francis Davis, “The essence of Barthism” *Downside Review* 68 (Ap 1950): 137. But Barth is called as a nominalist.

613 CD 4/2, 525.

614 Karl Barth, *Prayer*, ed. by Don E. Siliers, tr. Sara F. Terrien. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 57.

615 *Ibid.*,

utterly on the creaturely level. What happens in conversion is a “subordinate moment in the act of majesty in which the Word became flesh and Jesus Christ rises again from the dead.”<sup>616</sup> Repentance and sanctification are works of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but, in the strictest sense, they occur only in Christ.

Sanctification is not the achievement of human beings in the history of God’s salvation, but rather the grateful acknowledgement of God’s accomplishment for all. The aim of sanctification “does not break but keeps the covenant which God has made with him for all eternity.” And the man who “is awakened and empowered by the action of the holy God does this sanctification.”<sup>617</sup> Sanctification of Christians has a reality only in Jesus Christ’ sanctification because sanctification of Christians is participating in the sanctity of Christ. In other words, sanctification is participation in Jesus’ holiness.

Repentance is not mechanical, but a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit which occurs in the heart of man. And sanctification in man is ascribed to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, but no attempt is made to describe that work. This bestowal makes us not a corrected and revised edition of the old human being “but a new human being and a new creation altogether.” Conversion is “the isolation in which this individual must perish as he was, and can and may become new.”<sup>618</sup> A new subjectivity is “bestowed at the core which affects one’s being as a whole.”<sup>619</sup> In all its actions the work of the Holy Spirit is always and everywhere a wholly new thing. The

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616 CD 4/2, 556.

617 CD 4/2, 514

618 CD 4/2, 565

619 George, Hunsinger, 1991, op. cit., 164.



Holy Spirit calls for conversion, even more “radical conversion.”<sup>620</sup> A man is not a Christian if he does not follow the impulsion and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Barth states that the sanctification of man in Christ provides for all man *de jure* but can be realised as *de facto* in Christians. The realisation of *de facto* sanctification is limited to those who are brought to conscious faith in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. Barth has criticised universalism in his doctrine of salvation and he presents the limited salvation in Jesus Christ as Calvin did. The problem has been “the difficulty in maintaining that the believer participates in a *de facto* sanctification.” This difficulty arises because “Barth affirms a *de facto* sanctification in man and then paradoxically feels constrained to deny it.”<sup>621</sup> The very difficulty at the heart of Barth’s doctrine of sanctification is that he fails to deal with the distance between the *de jure* and *de facto* sanctification.

#### **2. 2. 1. 2. Repentance and the Grace of God**

Barth believes that in the New Testament, the terms ἐπιστρέφειν and μετανοεῖν have the twofold theological meaning that they are directed to God and accomplished by God. Repentance is an absolute, pure and vertical miracle from God and it is an act of God because in fact repentance is only possible from God and we can see the value of it only through Him.<sup>622</sup> The cause of true change, repentance, is the love of God for sinners. Therefore, love of God is the starting-point for this proving and knowing of

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620 CD 4/4, 39.

621 O. G. Otterness, op. cit., 197.

622 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 119.

change. Repentance is the true ground of boasting before God; it is the work which is valued by God and for which he renders his Spirit. According to these ideas, repentance is only God's act and through it new conversion is brought forth to glorify God's glory in sinners. Furthermore, repentance, or conversion, is something perfectly new that has never been done before by the hand of God through Jesus Christ. God's action that is always holy in His mercy is man's sanctification.<sup>623</sup> Through this sanctification man "can live as the loyal covenant-partner of God who is well-pleasing to and blessed by Him."<sup>624</sup> In and with His sanctification ours has been completed as well and "we are saints and sanctified because we are already sanctified, already saints in this One."<sup>625</sup>

Barth regards *mortificatio and vivificatio* as turning from the old world and turning to the new world, but they are not a consciousness of man but are gratitude to God's mercy.<sup>626</sup> This process is rather near to re-creation. And in the process of repentance human beings are grasped as whole persons who have all their possibilities and experiences and attitudes and "they come to be 'wholly oriented' upon He who is their Head."<sup>627</sup> Karl Barth regards repentance as difficult and severe.<sup>628</sup> This means that it is, on the one hand, not easy, and on the other hand it has more meaning than simple gratitude and mere conversion of thoughts. The way of repentance is that in

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623 CD 4/2, 511-13.

624 CD 4/2, 514.

625 CD 4/2, 516.

626 Karl Barth, *The Christian Life*, 59-64.

627 George, Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 162.

628 Karl, Barth, *The Christian Life*, 62.

the face of God's will there is nothing for our will but a radical re-creation, not a reforming, but a re-creating and a becoming new.<sup>629</sup>

Even though God requires the transformation of thinking of sinners, there is only room for His work, and it is “enough for grace sufficient, even for ethics.”<sup>630</sup> The realisation of repentance is rooted in God who is the basis of man's hope for deliverance from sin and death. The attempt to claim sanctification for ourselves will “inevitably have the smack of hyperbole and even illusion.”<sup>631</sup> As sinners, “since nothing has been done, the exhortation to renewal of mind, to re-thinking, to repentance, an exhortation which can be obeyed and which, being obeyed, can lead to action, is inevitable.”<sup>632</sup> Repentance is an action of eternity, of God and of the grace of God.

Grace is sufficient to destroy the noxious assurance of men and to give them the status of the new man in Christ. Grace is sufficient to awaken them from the sleep of righteousness, and to make of them men who have been sacrificed. Grace is sufficient to prevent men being removed altogether from that which is good and acceptable and perfect.<sup>633</sup>

The grace of God is not impersonal power but the gift of God by which He stands in personal relationship to man through Jesus Christ and the covenant

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629 Karl Barth, “Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes” (lecture delivered to the Aarau Church Council, 16 January 1916), in idem, *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, 10. Cited from B. L. McCormick. *Karl Barth's critically realistic dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development (1909-1936)*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 134.

630 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 436.

631 CD 4/2, 582.

632 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 438.

633 Ibid., 437.

community. And the election of grace is the sum of grace and the essence of all good news is that God is for man the One who loves in freedom.<sup>634</sup> God's command is not a second thing which stands alongside his grace but rather grace itself. Barth says that "grace has the form of command, the Gospel the form of the Law."<sup>635</sup> Therefore repentance is required by God as a command of Him but it is not an auxiliary element of grace and salvation.

By faith and by grace we receive forgiveness of sins,<sup>636</sup> and to receive grace means to receive forgiveness of sins.<sup>637</sup> Barth says that repentance and obedience are gifts by the grace of God.<sup>638</sup> Barth treats forgiveness of sins and repentance as the same from the viewpoint of God's grace.<sup>639</sup> Forgiveness of sins is a "gift to man and received by him as a gift" and "grace is forgiveness of sins."<sup>640</sup>

By faith we can perceive the forgiveness of sins and it will be our repentance in Christ. It is authentically fulfilled "*in Christ and Christ alone.*"<sup>641</sup> Furthermore we can know it to be authentically fulfilled by *us* only as we believe in Christ Jesus.<sup>642</sup>

In our impotence of repentance to both God and our neighbours we can just render obedience thereby, bringing the sacrifice that is required of us. Therefore all of

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634 CD 2/2, 3-13.

635 CD 4/2, 535.

636 Karl, Barth, *Credo*, 151.

637 *Ibid.*, 153.

638 Karl, Barth, *Credo*, 153.

639 *Ibid.*, 148-151.

640 *Ibid.*, 154.

641 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 439.

642 *Ibid.*, 439.

these are accomplished by grace only.<sup>643</sup>

This awakening is both wholly creaturely and wholly divine. Yet the initial shock comes from God. The reality of this event depends wholly on the reality of God.... Thus there can be no question of co-ordination between two comparable, but only of the absolute primacy of the divine over the creaturely.<sup>644</sup>

In a broader sense, repentance is God's work and it is a proof of election and reprobation because God has the initiative of repentance and God Himself sanctifies His chosen people in Christ. Because Barth's doctrine of repentance is based on the mercy of God and God shows His mercy to those whom He has elected; God gives the chance of repentance to His people only. And the man who is impenitent neither knows nor repents because he is separated ultimately from God. Therefore this is not a work of man and man cannot know or repent among us. But this hardening is ours. God shows His mercy to the invisible man who is "miraculously united with God, the new born man."<sup>645</sup> The man who repents on the basis of the mercy of God becomes a new born man. And, according to Barth, "through the call to conversion by the Word of the Cross, human subjectivity is opened up, re-established, and redetermined."<sup>646</sup> The essential point is that the work of conversion, in the theology of Barth, always stands before us afresh because the living Word of God is never done with us but always moves on before us.<sup>647</sup>

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643 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 203. For him grace of God is *die Rechtfertigung des hochmütigen Menschen, die Heiligung des trägen, die Erleuchtung und Berufung des in der Lüge Lebenden*.

644 CD 4/2, 557-8.

645 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 353.

646 CD 2/1,14

647 George, Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology*, 162.

Calvin also regards repentance as God's handiwork<sup>648</sup> which is the accomplished event by God, but is the received event by man.<sup>649</sup> For Calvin, true repentance is inevitably related with the conformity of our whole lives to the example of Jesus Christ.<sup>650</sup> But, for Calvin, God gives responsibility to man and it is not the boastfulness of man but the confession of sinners, while for Barth, on the other hand, repentance is only the work of God and it becomes the boastfulness of man in the Spirit and an invisible event in eyes of sinners.<sup>651</sup> Even though repentance is a work of God, it takes place inwardly and happens like the circumcision of the heart in His people. Grace is the transformed relationship for man's renewal, not mere change, and it provides the basis for man's responsible action in personal terms. As did Calvin, Barth emphasises the daily penitence<sup>652</sup> of Christians through the Holy Spirit. This indicates that he has the idea of new life in daily life.

### 2. 2. 2. Repentance and Faith

Contrary to Calvin's doctrine of repentance which is concerned with the matter of fact, the great matter in Barth's doctrine of repentance is that he regards repentance as the matter of knowledge. Barth's soteriology is epistemological, although he said that "this is a matter of confession, being awakened to faith."<sup>653</sup> Even though his

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648 Inst., 3.3.21.

649 W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, 127-8

650 *Short treatises on the Lord's Supper*, 24. *Self-Denial Necessary*, 176.

651 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Roman.*, 119.

652 CD 4/4, 39. Christian life is indeed a daily penitence itself.

653 Colin Gunton, *Salvation: The Cambridge companion to Karl Barth*. 151.

doctrine of repentance has epistemological characteristics it does not mean that we cannot find any factors of the concrete confession and action in the doctrine of repentance. Conversion is presented primarily in noetic terms. This is a peculiarity of Barth's theology.

According to Barth's objectivity of salvation, man's sanctification is completed by Christ Jesus and man should accept it only by faith. Therefore faith is instrumental to accepting the objectivity of salvation and true repentance, both on the divine side and the human side. The necessity of repentance is known through faith and faith allows man to know his situation to be one of brokenness and alienation. So faith is as related to sanctification as it is to justification.

And repentance is "being open to the strangeness of resurrection and to the free and boundless initiative of faith."<sup>654</sup> Barth argues that repentance is connected with faith which is the beginning of it. Faith precedes repentance. So human beings have "no protection against the necessity of repentance" because it is the standing point of our faith.<sup>655</sup> Barth connects faith, repentance and obedience intimately; the former being God's address and latter being the hearing of the address of God by man. Therefore for Barth faith and repentance are in unity.

Yet there are still two things in the unity, and the vitality of the revelation to God depends on there being two: that I put myself under grace but also under judgment, under the promise but also under the demand, under the gospel but also under the law, in faith but also in penitence and obedience.<sup>656</sup>

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654 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 386-389.

655 Ibid., 395.

656 Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics Introduction in the Christian Religion Vol. I*, ed. by Hannelotte

For Barth, faith and repentance are inseparably related to each other and “we never have the one without the other.”<sup>657</sup> Repentance is not separated from our faith. And faith and obedience to God are “inseparable moments of the one occurrence”<sup>658</sup> However, the two are not identical because “faith is not obedience.” But, as obedience is “not obedience without faith, faith is not faith without obedience.”<sup>659</sup>

Consistently Barth tries to connect faith and obedience, and he criticises Reformed dogmatics about the relatedness of the two because “this pair is so universal and distinctive that Reformed dogmatics cannot possibly fail to assert them.”<sup>660</sup> Repentance is needed for true faith and faith brings about repentance. The proclamation of grace demands repentance from man and repentance is “only preparation and good works are only the result of faith.”<sup>661</sup> Faith is sanctification as well as it is connected with justification and plays an important role in repentance, obedience and the Christian life, too.<sup>662</sup>

Sanctification is a transformation and a new determination, which has taken place *de jure* for all men.<sup>663</sup> But *de facto* it is not known by all men as justification, but is awakened to faith. Only God Himself knows the extent of the justified.<sup>664</sup> And Christians know their repentance in faith. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit makes

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Reiffen, tr. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 195.

657 Ibid.

658 CD 4/2, 537.

659 CD 4/2, 538.

660 Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics Introduction in the Christian Religion Vol. I*, 172.

661 Ibid.

662 Ibid.

663 CD 4/2, 511.

664 Ibid.



saints in reflection of His own holiness. So holiness is only in God and His singular act. God alone is originally and properly Holy. But the sanctification and justification are revealed in faith and Christians received them through faith in Christ. Barth connects sanctification with obedience and he connects justification with faith as a pair.

The fact that sanctification is accomplished in Jesus as our Lord and Head means that we are asked for our obedience, or supremely our love; just as the fact that our justification is accomplished in Him means that we are asked for our faith.<sup>665</sup>

But repentance itself is quite impossible without faith in God. To believe in God means to believe in the “awakening of man to conversion.”<sup>666</sup> Barth rejects repentance as a mere action of man, instead calling repentance faith or faith through the Gospel. Therefore repentance involves faith and true faith includes repentance. By faith, repentance becomes good news and a proclamation of grace.

Interpreted by faith, repentance can no longer be what it could be alone. It can no longer be understood as the condition which man must fulfill to attain to forgiveness of sins, as penitence in the later gloomy and legalistic sense of penance. Repentance as faith in the good news of the kingdom which has come is not a burden.<sup>667</sup>

Barth translated πιστις θεου, which has usually understood as man’s faith in God, as faithfulness of God. A statement about man’s believing becomes, through his daring translation, a statement about God’s faithfulness. Technically speaking, *fides qua* becomes *fides quae*: “the attitude of faith is absorbed into faith’s object and the

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665 CD 4/2, 516-17.

666 CD 4/2, 558.

667 CD 4/4, 81-82.

emphasis on a human action is removed.”<sup>668</sup> Thus Barth excludes the merit of man’s part in faith. For this reason Barth does not clearly see the problem of repentance and the problem of sin which the Reformation had, even though he thinks that his thought is congruent with the theology of the Reformers.<sup>669</sup>

Without any merit of man and by grace alone, repentance is granted and imputed to us with the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, if only we accept such benefits with a believing heart.<sup>670</sup> Only through faith in Christ Jesus can the Christian hold His action and His grace. As a matter of fact, substance of faith in the forgiveness of sins consists in holding on to the ‘yet’ in view of Jesus Christ as the One who claims us by taking our place and who therefore claims us in free grace.<sup>671</sup>

Barth does not forget to warn of the danger of fideism and of hypostatizing faith. Thus he states that “we cannot have knowledge in relation to God without action.”<sup>672</sup> Action means repentance and obedience. But Barth does not want to distinguish between what is the work of God and what is the work of man because both faith and obedience is works of the Holy Spirit.<sup>673</sup> Through the power of the Word of God, those who are called by Jesus are transformed from within, existentially and totally. And we become a different person than we were before, called instead of uncalled,

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668 Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Unreal God of Modern Theology*, 81.

669 Gustaf Wingren, *Theology in conflict*: Nygren, Barth, Bultmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958), 26.

670 Karl, Barth, *Credo*, 160

671 Ibid.

672 Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics Introduction in the Christian Religion Vol. I*, 172.

673 Ibid., 173.

and the external Word thus meets us with inwardly victorious power.<sup>674</sup> Sanctification of Christ and sanctification of Christians are recognised in faith and in the knowledge of faith only. Christ takes our place and through faith in him we can and should be completely and absolutely satisfied. Our proper faith is completely and entirely our adjustment towards Christ Jesus.<sup>675</sup>

Man's conversion only has meaning where it depends on the conversion of God. So Barth said that "the proclaimed conversion to God is an action and being ascribed and promised personally to each individual."<sup>676</sup> His belief regarding forgiveness of sins is that Jesus Christ's righteousness became man's righteousness in Him.<sup>677</sup> But forgiveness of sins requires the responsibility of Christians. It is from this standpoint that real ethics derives and we can have standards of good and evil. "Living by forgiveness is never by any means passivity, but Christian living in full activity."<sup>678</sup> This is the sign of the Christian because we will be judged by it.<sup>679</sup>

Barth points out that the word μετανοεῖν expresses the missing second aspect of repentance because "only forgiven sin can really be recognized and confessed sin, the recognition and confession, if they are to be serious, are not possible without conversion."<sup>680</sup> In faith the concept of repentance is not only to know what sin is and

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674 CD 4/2, 520, 526.

675 Karl, Barth, *Credo*, 159.

676 CD 4/2, 565-6.

677 Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, tr. by G.T. Thomson (London: SCM Press, Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1949, 1966), 152.

678 Ibid.

679 Ibid.

680 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 110.

what it means that we are sinners, but also to know that God is merciful to us and our sin is forgiven even though we stand under God's judgment<sup>681</sup> because Christ forgives our sins. The forgiveness without repentance is God's denial, his nonacknowledgement of sin.<sup>682</sup>

How can we know that the sanctification in Christ affects the sanctification in man? Barth argues the sanctification of Christians with the idea of the brotherhood of Christ. And Jesus' sanctification is fulfilled indirectly in all Christians who are members of the Head. This idea shows us how we can take part in God's holiness, and through this idea the *de jure* sanctification becomes the *de facto* sanctification. Barth identifies ontologically between men and Jesus Christ. Through this identity repentance and conversion in the event of Jesus Christ as our Head becomes our repentance and conversion. With this Barth applies Jesus' event to the sanctification and justification of man. The purpose of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is "to accomplish in His own person the conversion of man to himself."<sup>683</sup>

As those who are of like humanity with Him, in Him as our Head and Lord, we are claimed as those who regenerate and converted, as those who are already engaged in the turning to God, and therefore in Jesus Christ before in truth, that it can be said of us that we are righteous before God, and that we are also holy before God.<sup>684</sup>

Barth argues that the transition has already been effected in Jesus Christ as Royal Man.<sup>685</sup> Barth never confronts the question of how sanctification takes place in the

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681 Ibid., 431.

682 Ibid., 110.

683 CD 4/2, 274-275.

684 Ibid.

685 CD 3/4, 3.

historical existence of the believers. To be assured that God has taken responsibility in the obedience of Christ for man is a necessary presupposition for sanctification, but it does not answer the question about man's own sanctification. Barth maintains that his Christological solution to the problem of how God's saving action is related to man does not deny the sovereignty of God's grace, or the responsibility of man as a covenant-partner. Even though sanctification is an act of God alone, and not an act of man, through Him we are sanctified and become covenant-partners and witnesses of Him and of His event because Christ gave the power to Christians and they are witnesses "to the sanctification of man as accomplished in Him."<sup>686</sup> And our conversion is taken in consequence of Jesus Christ that the witnessing about Him to us has the power to set us in the freedom of conversion.<sup>687</sup>

This is possible when God's works are distributed in the Christians. Through this distribution, the Christian belongs to Jesus and sanctification is to be gotten as his own. Through this concept we can easily know how the sanctification in Christ can come to us. "He allows us to have a share in that which belongs to Him."<sup>688</sup>

And repentance becomes man's works in Christ only by the power of Holy Spirit because Jesus is our Head and Brother, and we are his brother and we are members of our Head. By virtue of the works of the Word and Spirit of God we are sanctified<sup>689</sup> and by God's goodness we are called to repentance.

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686 CD 4/2, 528.

687 George, Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology*, 79.

688 CD 4/2, 582.

689 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 108.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification man's weakness is overcome and God's purpose is fulfilled. The greatest difficulty in Barth's sanctification is the denial of *de facto* sanctification in order to affirm that sanctification is only real in Jesus Christ.

L. W. Wood criticised Barth's Trinitarian Christology that "it had neglected the Holy Spirit because Barth had wanted to avoid falling into the subjectivism of pietism and liberalism."<sup>690</sup> Nominally, Barth did not overlook the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in his theology, especially in his doctrine of sanctification, and he makes the Triune God the starting point of Christian doctrine in the history of salvation.<sup>691</sup> And contrary to L. W. Wood's assertion, he uses pneumatology to support the objectivity of faith, even though sometimes his doctrine of pneumatology is seen as nominal and hypothetical.

However, according to James J. Buckley, the problem with Barth's pneumatology is its "lack of distinctiveness of the identity of the Spirit with Christ in election, creation, and ecclesiology." That is why Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is re-enforced by the use of that doctrine as the theological background for a Christological rather than a pneumatological description of God's identity *pro nobis*.<sup>692</sup> For this reason, it is difficult to find the importance of ministry and the role of the Holy Spirit in the doctrine of repentance in Barth's theology. Another reason is

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690 Laurence W. Wood, "From Barth's Trinitarian Christology to Moltmann's Trinitarian Pneumatology" *Asbury Theological Journal* 55/1 (S 2000): 51.

691 CD 1/1, 345-346.

692 James J. Buckley, "A Field of Living Fire: Karl Barth on the Spirit and the Church" *Modern Theology* 10 (Ja 1994): 84-85.

that, even though he has consistently argued in favour of the traditional Trinity, Barth regards the Holy Spirit not as a Person but rather as a power of God or relatedness of God.<sup>693</sup> According to Barth, the Holy Spirit is “no other than the presence of Jesus Christ”<sup>694</sup> and the work of the Spirit is nothing other than the work of Jesus Christ.<sup>695</sup>

Generally, in the soteriology of Karl Barth, the doctrine of repentance is placed in the unity and distinction between the saving work of the Spirit and the saving work of Christ. According to Rosato, Barth lays “the whole emphasis on the soteriological role of the Spirit, and he subordinated any thought of an activity of reconciliation in Christ to that.”<sup>696</sup> Even though Barth tries to maintain the balance of the ministry of the trinity through *filioque* in the soteriology of his Dogmatics, in actual fact, in Barth’s doctrine of repentance the works of the Holy Spirit are neglected correlatively. It is especially difficult to find the role of the Spirit in the section that deals with the awakening to conversion in CD 4/2. This shows that Barth’s own interest in the doctrine of conversion is in Christ alone. Calvin puts the weight of repentance down to works of the Holy Spirit, but Barth, in his doctrine of repentance, puts the weight of repentance down only to works of Christ.

It is true that in his soteriology Karl Barth excessively emphasises the assurance of salvation so that he loses the balance of the roles of both God and man in his doctrine of sanctification, especially in his doctrine of repentance. We cannot neglect

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693 Karl, Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, tr. Grover Foley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 42-52.

694 CD 4/2, 319.

695 CD 4/2, 241.

696 George S. Hendry, “The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth” *Theology Today* 43/3 (O 1986): 419-423.

Barth's endeavour to save contemporary theology from the earlier form of liberal humanism which attempted to isolate its ethical concerns from the experience of reconciliation, but he loses the true response of man and the actuality of Christianity even though he has asserted the term before God.

Doctrine has to have the power to change man's whole life in the presence of God and in the world. But there is no benefit in the categorical proposition as logical tautology. To this extent, Barth's doctrine of repentance is nothing but the pursuit of the trace of history of his era.

However, it is difficult to find the reality of cognition in the theology of Karl Barth. On comparison with Calvin, Barth is near to agnosticism. Between God and man there is a qualitative differentiation and abyss as Kierkegaard said, but God wants to make Himself known to mankind through His revelation and He Himself approaches His creatures in Christ and in revelation.<sup>697</sup>

## **2. 3. The Characteristics of Repentance and Sanctification in Soteriology**

### **2. 3. 1. Repentance and Justification**

It is necessary to connect sanctification and repentance because Barth puts the doctrine of repentance in the category of the doctrine of sanctification. Barth, however, prefers the term 'sanctification' in *Church Dogmatics* to such terms as 'rebirth',

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<sup>697</sup> Cf. Inst., 1.1.1.



‘repentance’, ‘conversion’ and ‘discipleship’ because its root meaning is holiness and because he wants to emphasise that sanctification is the work of God alone and the Holy God is the acting agent in sanctification as in justification.<sup>698</sup>

For Barth justification and sanctification, which includes repentance, are not separated from salvation. So Barth rejects the idea of putting justification and sanctification in the chronological *Ordo Salutis*.<sup>699</sup> As Hans Küng described, the relationship between sanctification and justification in the theology of Karl Barth is not a chronological but rather a natural relationship.<sup>700</sup> Barth does not agree with the *Ordo Salutis* of the seventeenth century, but rather he regards that order as a *simul* event, even though he sometimes tries to distinguish between sanctification and justification.

Repentance is not repentance without faith, and faith is not faith without repentance.<sup>701</sup> This is why it is difficult to separate repentance from reconciliation and even from justification in Barth’s theology. Between sanctification and justification there is no such order (*Prius* and *Posterius*, superiority and subordination) in the temporal sense.<sup>702</sup> Although justification is logically prior to sanctification, they are, Barth maintains, not two things but simply two views of the same act of God known in its totality as reconciliation.<sup>703</sup> Thus there is no temporal priority of justification

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698 CD 4/2, 511-533.

699 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 261.

700 Hans Küng, *Justification: the doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic*, 68.

701 CD 4/2, 538.

702 CD 4/2, 507.

703 See. Anno Quadt, *Gott und Mensch: zur Theologie Karl Barths in Ökumenischer sicht* (München, Paderborn, Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1976), 122. “Heiligung ist also nicht ohne

followed by sanctification.

Justification is in any event the dominating presupposition of sanctification. On the side of purpose sanctification precedes justification, but on the side of divine action, or in order of action, justification precedes sanctification.<sup>704</sup> According to Barth, sanctification is not a second divine action, but a different moment of divine action in reconciliation with God. When Barth considers the relationship between sanctification and justification, he maintains that they are two moments in one action and are thus inseparable.

The first considers the relationship of sanctification and justification. The two are not successive stages but two ‘moments’ in the one action. They present aspects which are genuinely different but they are also inseparable, so that there can be no cheap grace or quietism.<sup>705</sup>

Barth asserts that sanctification “rests wholly and utterly” on man’s justification before God. Justification deals with the forgiving love of God by which man’s sinful pride is overcome, but sanctification deals with the way in which the grace of God overcomes man’s sloth and establishes him as God’s covenant-partner. In sanctification man becomes God’s covenant-partner in the on-going history of reconciliation. Repentance is based on the doctrine of justification, which is “you are saved.” Therefore if one has no faith in justification in Jesus Christ, one cannot repent

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*Rechtfertigung, Rechtfertigung nicht ohne Heiligung denkbar.”*

704 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 264. *Dem Ziele nach (strategisch) ist die Heiligung der Rechtfertigung überzuordnen. Der Reihenfolge innerhalb des einen göttliche, Tuns jedoch geht die Rechtfertigung voran(taktisch).*

705 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Doctrine of reconciliation: a survey of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik*; pt 4/2” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 10 (Mr 1957): 81.

to God.<sup>706</sup> The forgiveness of sins aspect of justification is connected with the Christian life continuously and it always involves the demand for sanctification.

Barth insists that the New Testament makes sanctification dependent upon justification, but justification is never dependent upon sanctification. If sanctification becomes the condition of justification, the Gospel is turned into the law. On the other hand, if sanctification is absorbed into justification the result is cheap grace.<sup>707</sup> In certain respects both justification and sanctification are subordinate and both have priority.<sup>708</sup> Barth regards the life of sanctification as the goal of justification. Justification aims at the external manifestation of sanctification.<sup>709</sup>

However justification and sanctification are “different aspects of the one event of salvation.” This idea originated in the *ασυγχυτως* (*inconfuse*) and *ατρεπτως* (*immutabiliter*) of Chalcedon<sup>710</sup>, in which he deduces the justification and the sanctification in Christ who is humiliated and exalted on the Cross. Barth consistently tries to distinguish between justification and sanctification in his theology, for they are not identical. For him they are not the same and one cannot include the other.

As the two moments in the one act of reconciliation accomplished in Jesus Christ they are not identical, nor are the concepts interchangeable... Justification is not sanctification

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706 Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 151.

707 Ibid., 135

708 Ibid.

709 O. G. Otterness, op. cit., 135.

710 Philip Schaff, ed. *The Creed of Chalcedon: The Creed of Christendom, Vol. I*, 29-34. This distinction is used for maintaining the nature of Christ against Eutychianism. The nature of Christ, even after the act of incarnation, is “without confusion or conversion (*ασυγχυτως*, *inconfuse*) and *ατρεπτως*, *immutabiliter*” and “without division or separation (*αδιαρέτως*, *indivise*, and *αχωριστως*, *inseparabiliter*).” So, “the divine will ever remain divine, and the human ever human.”

and does not merge into it. Sanctification is not justification and does not merge into it. Thus although the two belong indissolubly together, the one cannot be explained by the other.<sup>711</sup>

It is important, according to Barth, to make a distinction between justification and sanctification, but only for dialectic a purpose. Barth wants to distinguish sanctification from justification because he wants to put the weight on both of them, because if one neglects and overemphasises only one side it perverts the works of God and man and one will never understand the essence of Gospel. Barth believes that if one does not give any independent significance to the problem of sanctification, one will necessarily obscure in a very suspicious way the existential reach of the atonement.<sup>712</sup>

So there is confusion when justification is absorbed into sanctification. The reason Barth continuously distinguishes between them is that they have particular significance: God turns in free grace to sinful man, and in the same grace He converts man to Himself. As God turns to sinful man, man's conversion to God cannot be lacking. And the conversion of man to God presupposes at every point and in every form that God turns to him in free grace.<sup>713</sup> As Hans Küng points out, in the theology of Karl Barth justification and sanctification are not considered to be the same thing. Rather, Barth "has treated the relationship between justification and sanctification in a very discriminating fashion."<sup>714</sup>

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711 CD 4/2, 503.

712 CD 4/2, 504.

713 CD 4/2, 505.

714 Hans Küng, *Justification: the Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic*, 68.

For Barth, justification is not the central idea of his theology, instead Christ is the center of his theology. Justification is nothing but the confessional characteristic of the Lutheran tradition.<sup>715</sup> According to this idea, sanctification is not a subordinated event of justification, but starts from Christ just as justification does; that is to say, they are different things which are related in the event of Christ. Therefore their distinction is necessary to the understanding of the atonement and salvation through Christ. Justification grasps the righteousness promised in Jesus Christ, whereas sanctification is obedience and love as man's correspondence to the holiness imparted to him in Jesus Christ.

There is no justification without sanctification and there is also no sanctification without justification. Therefore no one can apprehend the grace of the Gospel without true *meditatio poenitentiae* or sanctification.<sup>716</sup> But Barth states that the question of the order in this relationship is also confused in Calvin's theology, although Barth calls Calvin the theologian of sanctification in the light of *Institutes* chapters' iii-x of Book III.<sup>717</sup>

It is obvious that in the *simul* of the one divine will and action justification is first as basis and second as presupposition, sanctification first as aim and second as consequence. In this there is no contradiction. But for Barth sanctification does not merge with justification and each of them has their own position.<sup>718</sup> As a twofold

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715 Gustaf Wingren, *Theology in Conflict: Nygren, Barth, Bultmann*, 30.

716 CD 4/2, 506.

717 CD 4/2, 509.

718 CD 4/2, 508-511.

answer, it corresponds to the substance of the matter.<sup>719</sup>

As Calvin did, Barth uses the idea of *Duplex gratia*, in order that the separation of sanctification from justification tears asunder the body of Christ, so these two things which we receive in Him simultaneously are never dissociated from each other.<sup>720</sup> Therefore they are a unitary event from Christ and in Christ.

As we now turn to consider sanctification in and for itself, we are not dealing with a second divine action which either takes place simultaneously with it, or precedes or follows it in time. The action of God in His reconciliation of the world with Himself in Jesus Christ is unitary.<sup>721</sup>

Justification and sanctification must be seen in the unity of their diversity.<sup>722</sup> For Barth they are surely two events, but his interest lies in their unity because they come from one Christ.

A separation of justification and sanctification, says Barth, can have “its basis only in a separation within the one actuality of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>723</sup> And the separation of and relationship between sanctification and justification, first of all, is understood explicitly in *participatio Christi*.<sup>724</sup> But the essence of Gospel must include either sanctification or justification.

But we have to say that to ignore the mutual relationship of the two can only lead at once to false statements concerning them and to corresponding errors in practice: to the idea of a

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719 CD 4/2, 508-09.

720 Inst., 3.11.6.

721 CD 4/2, 501-02.

722 Hans Küng, *Justification: the Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic*, 68.

723 CD 4/2, 505.

724 CD 4/2, 509-511.

God who works in isolation, and His ‘cheap grace’ (D. Bonhoeffer) and therefore an indolent quietism, where the relationship of justification to sanctification is neglected; and to that of a favored man who works in isolation, and therefore to an illusory activism, where the relationship of sanctification to justification is forgotten.<sup>725</sup>

Barth rejects the understanding of justification as God’s work for man and sanctification as the work of man for God because the grace of God is as necessary for sanctification as it is for justification.<sup>726</sup> Barth states that “our sanctification is God’s work, not our own.”<sup>727</sup> In Barth’s theology every attempt to measure the sanctification of man in a quantitative way was rejected.<sup>728</sup> And justification is for the justified, but sanctification is never for the sake of the sanctified. Rather it is for the sake of the witness to the world.<sup>729</sup> Therefore we are witnesses in His sanctification and repentance is the external manifestation of justification. And the sanctification of man that takes place in Jesus Christ is witnessed in the community of Christians.

That Barth’s emphasis is on repentance as obedience to God’s command in his doctrine of sanctification shows the extent of his dependence on Calvin. Barth uses the dialectics in his theology, *simul Justus et simul peccator*, but he forms his ethics in the concreteness of God’s commandment that “the concrete individual must give concrete obedience to God.”<sup>730</sup> His dialectical theology is “not the end of itself, but

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725 CD 4/2, 505.

726 Anno Quadt, op.cit., 123. “*Allein das Werk der Gnade.*”

727 CD 2/2, 645.

728 O. G. Otterness, op. cit., 137.

729 Ibid., 135.

730 H. U. von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*. tr. by John Drury (New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 89.

only a means and a method to arrive at the real things.”<sup>731</sup> Sanctification takes the shape of justification.

Even though Von Balthasar does not entirely agree with Barth’s position, he does give a good evaluation of Barth in his Catholic position. Von Balthasar and Jean Louis Leuba agreed that we must not approach Barth as one who was static and systematic, but rather as one who was prophetic in his *Church Dogmatics*. The sanctification of man is dynamic in terms of his conversion to God, not static.<sup>732</sup> Justification, according to Barth, “can be perfectly accomplished in one era, while in another his sanctification is just begun.” So his doctrine of sanctification is understood as a prophetic answer of his era.

First of all, this is very important whether Barth truly understands the Reformation of Calvin and Luther or not. According to Von Balthasar, Barth intended to keep the theology of Calvin and Luther from the attack of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Troeltsch.<sup>733</sup> This intention strengthens his theological standing in Reformation theology. In order to solve this problem Barth needs objectivity and actuality, and he especially needs sanctification and repentance to be an action of God only, not of the self-understanding of man, because he believes that his pre-generation lost the essence of Christianity through anthropocentrism and individual piety.

Although Barth makes it clear that the sanctification of the Christian has an objective reality apart from the self-understanding of man, and Jesus Christ already

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731 Ibid., 46.

732 Ibid., 89.

733 Ibid., 25-32.



makes stand men rightly in His obedience<sup>734</sup>, he consistently maintains that sanctification cannot be separated from man's subjective awareness of it<sup>735</sup> through faith. This is because although, for Barth, justification and sanctification are "God's supratemporal act on man,"<sup>736</sup> faith is the "paradoxical fact of the appropriation of this act of God in the consciousness of man, and in deed of the individual man."<sup>737</sup>

But although Barth suggests the *analogia fidei* as a tool of appropriation of God's work, and to the extent that he emphasises the appropriation of acts of God through faith, ultimately the work of God is incomprehensible because man cannot understand God and can never save himself by his own power except through the light of revelation in Jesus Christ.

But Louis Berkhof charges that Barth "virtually confuses justification and sanctification" so as to negate the Christian life.<sup>738</sup> Actually L. Berkhof is correct in the statement regarding Barth's view on sanctification because in his *Church Dogmatics* sanctification is almost identical to justification as a statement on God and His work.

Barth's view is criticised by I. Rilliet, who says that "Gnosis replaces faith, and an indifference which is very dangerous in practice replaces ethics."<sup>739</sup> In fact, in Barth's theology the grace of sanctification merges with the grace of justification and

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734 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 267.

735 CD 4/2, 296.

736 Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Unreal God of Modern Theology*, 81.

737 Ibid.

738 Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: The Banner of Truth Press, 1959), 537.

739 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 84.

the law merges with the gospel. This is the great problem with sanctification and justification in his theology.

Barth classifies the forms of sanctification into four large categories, namely conversion, discipleship, good works and the cross.<sup>740</sup> These categories will be dealt with next since these forms of sanctification become not only the forms of repentance, but also the fruits and evidence of repentance.

### **2. 3. 2. Repentance and Conversion**

As mentioned above, sanctification includes conversion, repentance, rebirth, discipleship, good works and the cross, and at the same time conversion includes repentance. Barth prefers the term ‘conversion’ to the term ‘repentance’ because, for him, conversion is related to God’s conversion to man in Jesus Christ and conversion as a work of God is more objective than repentance which has more subjective elements. Nevertheless, sometimes Barth, as Calvin, uses repentance and conversion in the same sense.<sup>741</sup>

Barth divides sanctification into two parts: sanctification as a wider definition and conversion as a concrete realisation of sanctification. For Barth, repentance is shown as a kind of conversion in faith because man cannot convert to God by himself and God’s conversion to man is the cause of human repentance and this can only be

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740 CD 4/2, 515.

741 CD 4/2, 500.

understood through faith in Christ.<sup>742</sup> In and with the reality of God and Jesus Christ, the reality of conversion in which men are lifted up from the sloth of death also “impinges upon us, and becomes our own problem.”<sup>743</sup>

Throughout his writings, Barth sometimes makes mention of conversion as a mere change, or a changing from unbelief.<sup>744</sup> Throughout the works of Barth conversion means the transformation to the holy by Jesus Christ to serve God, and it includes conversion from unbelief, conversion of gentiles, conversion of Jews and conversion of Christians to follow Jesus.<sup>745</sup> This differs from Calvin’s notion of conversion as an act of conversion.

For Barth, reconciliation is primarily in a man-ward direction as “the conversion of man to God” and the goal of it is surely “complete conversion of the world to Him.”<sup>746</sup> Barth shifts from the picture of awakening to that of warfare to illustrate another aspect of conversion. This concept is well expressed by the German word *Auseinandersetzung* which conveys the idea of a “falling out” or a “quarrel.” Barth describes conversion as a “falling out with the self.”

Yet conversion is not an end in itself. The encompassing of the whole life-movement of man is the final quality of conversion emphasised by Barth. Barth agrees with both Calvin and Luther in that they emphasise that the whole life of man

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742 G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, tr. by Harry R. Boer (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 21-31.

743 CD 4/2, 560.

744 CD 2/2, 499.

745 CD 2/2, 268-299.

746 CD 4/1, 75.

is involved in repentance. Therefore conversion which “affects the whole man is not an individual matter or sectional, or once-for-all, but is in company with others and means a whole life of conversion.”<sup>747</sup> Repentance as a daily experience is “not with the regrettable traces of his being and action”<sup>748</sup> of his past, but with his whole life. It is neither a single act in the past or a series of continuing moments. Man in conversion is a continuous awakening and participation in the movement of covenant history because forgiveness of sins does not occur only in the moment of Christian man’s conversion, but whenever the Christian looks back, he is looking at the forgiveness of sins.<sup>749</sup>

For Barth, repentance concerns the whole life of man, not an instant movement. Therefore repentance is “not to be regarded as an instant that can be left behind after it has occurred.”<sup>750</sup> The movement is regarded as an ongoing event that recurs throughout one’s life. Repentance is “neither exhausted in a once- for- all event, nor is it accomplished in a series of such acts.”<sup>751</sup> Repentance is not a matter of “individual moments” but of “the totality of the whole life movement” of the particular person concerned.<sup>752</sup>

Barth sees the moment of conversion as *vocatio continua* instead of *vocatio unica* because “*vocatio continua* the call to conversion is an ongoing event, recurring

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747 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Doctrine of reconciliation: a survey of Barth's Kirchlliche Dogmatik; pt 4/2” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 10 (Mr 1957):82.

748 CD 4/2, 571.

749 Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*. 149-150.

750 George, Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology*, 162.

751 CD 4/2, 566.

752 Ibid.

through one's existence in time."<sup>753</sup> And because this conversion is movement by God, it "cannot be interrupted but extends over the whole of his life."<sup>754</sup> Conversion has to do with a movement of the whole man. For Barth, conversion is the movement in the process even though he regards it as a once-for-all event in Christ. Like Calvin he has both aspects of conversion, in process and in moment.

Barth thinks that repentance and conversion have characteristics of gradualness as a process. Sanctification is only absolute in God's time. The fruits of it are not fully accomplished in this time. At present man is still involved in the process of turning, in the warfare of conversion. Fulfillment of conversion waits for the eschatological event. And conversion is a once-for-all event that is constantly happening.

Christians are those who constantly stand in need of reawakening and who depend upon the fact that they are continually reawakened. They are thus those who, it is to be hoped, continually waken up.<sup>755</sup>

Barth understands conversion as a repetition which is moving toward conversion because it is necessary in our present time and we are still sinners.

We cannot understand the conversion of man as a matter for only one period in his life...or in which he might have to repeat it at this or that specific point, the prior or intervening times being periods in which he does not live in conversion, either because he is already converted, or is in need, and capable, of conversion but is only moving toward it.<sup>756</sup>

But Barth sees that *μετάνοια* in the sense of the Baptist and Jesus Christ includes

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753 George, Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology*, 163.

754 CD 4/2, 566

755 CD 4/2, 555.

756 CD 4/2, 566.

the new beginning of human life at a particular time and “all kinds of action commanded at a particular time.”<sup>757</sup> Conversion is an act which is constantly renewed in the event of Jesus Christ. In spite of the continuity of repentance Barth asserts the possibility of sudden conversion through the Gospel.<sup>758</sup> For him, momentary repentance is nothing but a part of the fullness of repentance for the whole life in Christ Jesus. But repentance inevitably evokes a momentary event whether once-for-all or repeated. However, Barth believes that if *paenitentia agite* “takes place only in these moments, and not in the whole context of human life, it does not take place at all.”<sup>759</sup>

Christians live in *simul justus et simul peccator*, partially right and partially evil, and they are in tension between *de jure* and *de facto* sanctification. Barth sets the definitive limit of men’s conversion because men are still sinners, still live in the flesh. According to Barth, this is the real figure of our conversion.

It is true that the situation seems to cry out for this separation. It seems to be much more illuminating if, instead of saying that the whole man is still the old and yet already the new, in complete and utter antithesis, we say that he is still partially the old and already partially the new.... It is in this way that man knows himself when he is really engaged in conversion.<sup>760</sup>

And this conversion is brought about by the word of God. Therefore, when one encounters the word of God, one is being caught up “in a process of conversion.”<sup>761</sup>

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757 CD 4/2, 567.

758 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 309.

759 CD 4/2, 567.

760 CD 4/2, 572.

761 George, Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology*, 161.

This process entails man being *simul (totus) justus, simul (totus) peccator*, that is the old man having to perish and the new one to come.<sup>762</sup> Barth warns against the overstressing of *mortificatio* in Calvin's doctrine of repentance and he moves away from Calvin's doctrine of repentance because Calvin emphasises both sides with balance.

Barth criticises, as Calvin did, the scholastic understandings of *mortificatio* and *vivificatio* because he thinks that justice cannot be done to the objective content of the weighty words *mortificatio* and *vivificatio* by overemphasising the subjective and psychological side of the process.

This is obviously because they have to do only with the subjective and psychological side of the process and therefore cannot do justice to the objective content of the weighty words *mortificatio* and *vivificatio*-no matter how strong may be the expression used (*consternatio, humiliatio* and even *desparatio*), or how fine the description of the *consolatio*.<sup>763</sup>

Barth is critical of both Calvin and Kohlbrügge for emphasising the *mortificatio* at the expense of *vivificatio*. In Barth's words, for them the call to advance is overshadowed by the call to halt. Barth criticises Calvin's overemphasis of the negative side and he criticises that Kohlbrügge emphasises both the positive and negative sides exaggeratedly *in extremis*. But both Calvin and Kohlbrügge "failed to allow its origin, Jesus Christ, to speak for itself with sufficient force and clarity, and therefore to bring out the teleology of the dispute, i.e., the fact that *vivificatio* is the

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762 Ibid. Bromiley says that at this point Barth warns against the danger of overstressing *mortificatio* at the expense of *vivificatio*.

763 CD 4/2, 575.

meaning and intention of *mortificatio*.”<sup>764</sup>

In contrast, Barth emphasises the teleological aspects of conversion. There is a real rising and coming and appearing of the new that makes it possible for there to be a *mortificatio*. It is really *vivificatio* that is the meaning and end of repentance. Barth places more emphasis on *vivificatio* in the doctrine of repentance than did Calvin.<sup>765</sup> Conversion is based not on the law but on the Gospel of liberation. By the ‘yes’ of God man can live for God and is awakened to conversion. This makes us free in Christ and, therefore, by the living Spirit it binds and engages us with God.<sup>766</sup> It is for this reason that Barth criticises Calvin’s doctrine of repentance for having a somber character in virtue of overemphasising the side of *mortificatio* because “he develops his doctrine in the light of a concept of law which cannot be regarded as identical with the law of the Spirit of life of Rom. 8:2.” Contrary to Calvin’s view, Barth argues the primacy and the Gospel “in virtue of which the decisive work of that event of revelation is new life, the *vivificatio*, of man.”<sup>767</sup>

Barth approaches the basis and origin of conversion in three steps. In order to understand these, it is helpful to understand the idea of conversion. Firstly, conversion is not the figure with the magical and mechanical or automatic associations which it might conjure up, and calls the thing intended by its proper name.<sup>768</sup> And the omnipotence of God creates and effects in man awakened to conversion a true ability.

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764 CD 4/2, 574-77.

765 CD 4/2, 575.

766 CD 4/2, 580.

767 CD 4/2, 581.

768 CD 4/2, 578.



In the exercise of freedom man does not stay where he was, but lives for the future, still as the man he was, already as the man he will be, and so he fulfils his conversion. As a result of this, repentance is inseparably connected to the faithfulness and mercy of God.<sup>769</sup>

Secondly, the dynamic principle of movement of conversion is the truth, revealing to man that God is for him, and that, in virtue of the fact that God is for him, he is for God. So the conversion of man is a decision of God for man, which not only makes possible a corresponding decision of man for God, the free act of his obedience, but makes this act and obedience real, directly causing it to take place. And God precedes and sets man in the movement in which he follows.<sup>770</sup>

Thirdly, conversion is not a mere suspicion, neither hypothesis, nor construct, nor axiom of philosophical metaphysics, nor dogma of theology, but is really the case with unassailable objectivity. And it “must be merely the manifestation of a real event which takes place with incontestable objectivity.”<sup>771</sup>

For Barth, conversion is not the ultimate purpose of redemption, but one of the steps towards the ultimate redemption. But in spite of its relativity “it is a real change.” And it is “not a possibility but the new actuality.”<sup>772</sup> Conversion is a changing of direction and it changes Christians who were living in the old way. But the man who is involved in the act of conversion is no longer the old man. He is not

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769 CD 4/2, 578-9.

770 CD 4/2, 579-80.

771 CD 4/2, 581.

772 CD 4/2, 530-1.

even a corrected and revised edition of this man. He is a new man.<sup>773</sup> Therefore, conversion is an event of mystery and miracle by God. Conversion is not improvement but alteration<sup>774</sup> and newness of life. Conversion means, for Barth, the turning on an axis.<sup>775</sup> This axis turns the man into a new man because we are the possessions of God and he is a proprietor of us.<sup>776</sup> If anything is not brought under this axis, we have nothing to do with God because if a man still remains in the continuity of his previous being as the old man, “he can be and have and do it only *per nefas*.”<sup>777</sup>

Barth maintains the ideas of Calvin, who abandoned the medieval term *poenitentia agite* (do penance), taking up instead the Greek words *μετάνοια* and *ἐπιστρέφειν*, in order to explain that conversion signifies the conversion of the mind and that the whole man is renewed and made another man.<sup>778</sup> Barth uses, as Calvin did, the biblical term *μετάνοια* to explain his doctrine of repentance. For him, therefore, repentance, like conversion, is a change of direction and a turning away from old thoughts. In Barth’s explanation of the term *μετάνοια* we may take as our starting point the fact that “literally it speaks first of a change of mind, of a shift of judgment, of a new disposition and standpoint.”<sup>779</sup> For Barth, conversion is a change of man’s whole aspect and attitude, therefore he prefers man to be transformed by the renewing

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773 CD 4/2, 563.

774 CD 4/2, 560.

775 Ibid.

776 CD 4/2, 561-3.

777 CD 4/2, 563.

778 Comm. on Acts. 2:38.

779 CD 4/2, 564.

of the mind.<sup>780</sup> Conversion is also more than a mere change of situation, but a change of direction for the future and for consummation. And conversion is always the presentation to new life.

Conversion is not a purely outward movement, but it is “a matter of his heart, his thinking, his will, his disposition and also of his consequent action and abstention on the same ultimate basis.” It is a matter of his “disposition and action together, of the two as a totality.”<sup>781</sup> Conversion has something to do with inward things. So Barth criticises the past sermons of many preachers on Hos.6:1ff; “*Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.*” In that verse he points out the problem that “there is obviously no lack of deeds, neither of willingness, nor religious zeal, in the performance of them. But there is lacking in this case, not the outward but the inward thing which makes the movement in which they are engaged in conversion.”<sup>782</sup> Even though conversion seems to be a concern of the individual only, in terms of man’s inward and outward change, it is the concern of God alone.<sup>783</sup>

In the fulfillment of the movement of conversion, a man finds himself under a twofold determination. Firstly, through repentance he repents and renounces what he

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780 For Barth repentance is the change of the whole person. So he quotes Rom 12:1-2. This portion frequently has been quoted throughout his Ethics. Especially see, Karl Barth, *The Christian Life*, tr. by J. Strathearn McNab (London: Student Christian Movement, 1962) ; (ye present your bodies a living sacrifice) (be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind)

781 CD 4/2, 564.

782 CD 4/2, 565.

783 Ibid.

was and did and his old ways and he affirms and apprehends him in the future.<sup>784</sup> And secondly, even though he repented he still sins and even though he affirms himself in the future he does “so as the one who has also his past.”<sup>785</sup> But these two moments in conversion, ‘still’ and ‘already’, are coincidental events only in Christ Jesus our head. They are “not the simul of a balancing or co-ordination of two similar factors. Nor are the position of the two moments which are simultaneously present, the old and the new, in any sense interchangeable.”<sup>786</sup> Although a decisive turning point may have been experienced, repentance or conversion is conceived as something that is never past except in such a way that it is always future as well.

Ethics is included in the doctrine of sanctification. For Barth, ethics is indispensable to sanctification. He says that “whoever says *theology* has already said *ethics*.”<sup>787</sup> So, Barth connects the Christian doctrine of God and the concept of the good<sup>788</sup> because in his theology the God of the Holy Scripture “cannot be thought of for one millionth of a second as separate from His Holiness, and when one thinks of a

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784 CD 4/2, 570. According to Barth, “he repents and renounces what he previously was and did, leaving his old way, abandoning himself as he was, boldly enterprising a completely new and different being and action, entering a new this way, affirming and apprehending himself in the future which thereby opens up for him-and all this, commensurate with the powerful cause which sets him in this movement, in the unqualified totality of his existence and being as a man.”

785 CD 4/2, 570-71. According to Barth, “he repents, but he does so as the one who previously knew nothing of repentance. He boldly enterprises a new being, but he does so as one who previously had no boldness to do so. He affirms and apprehends himself in the future indicated by this cause which effectively moves him, but he does so as the one who has also his past.”

786 CD 4/2, 572-73.

787 Bernard L. Ramm, op. cit., 147.

788 Ibid., 149.

Holy God one has already thought of ethics.”<sup>789</sup>

Conclusively, for Barth, repentance and conversion are gifts of God. Conversion especially is a human action which simply responds to divine conversion. Barth called conversion man’s response to God who turns to man. So conversion is not man’s own action as in pietism, but God’s activating action.

For the maintaining of the objective sphere of salvation in the understanding of the *Ordo Salutis*, Barth understands *Ordo Salutis* not as “a series of different divine actions but only as the order of different ‘moments’ of the one redemptive occurrence coming to man in the *simul* of the one event.”<sup>790</sup> But actually his doctrine of repentance in soteriology is antinomianistic and leaves no room for the subjective application of the redemption wrought by Christ.<sup>791</sup>

For Barth, repentance is the inevitable action of God only and in Christ only. Through the *participatio Christi* the Christian has the sanctification of Christ, repentance and conversion. As a result of this event the Christian is called the child of God. Nevertheless, Barth maintains that the Christian must bear witness to repentance with good works, love and freedom in Christ. By taking this position, Barth has balanced the event as an action of God and an action of man. However, there is room for debate that all of this occurs in the time of eternity and *Geschichte*, not in earthly time, although Barth treats it as an act of God only to sustain the objectivity. And in

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789 Ibid ., 147.

790 CD 4/2, 502-3.

791 See, Louis, Berkhof, *Reformed Dogmatics* (WM. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1937), 227-228; Antinomian soteriology in this book.

the strict sense his doctrine of repentance is not confession of the sins of sinners, but a change of direction of the heart that believe the act in Christ. So, Barth's doctrine of repentance is different from Reformed theology since Calvin.

### **2. 3. 3. Repentance, Fruits and Evidence**

#### **2. 3. 3. 1. Inward Change and Change of Thought**

In the doctrine of forgiveness of sins and the doctrine of repentance Barth excludes all kinds of human merits because repentance and forgiveness of sins are absolutely the works of the Son of God, the identity of His people to Him and their conformity to Him, and because it is an act of God only and an event in Christ.<sup>792</sup> Consistently Barth states that no human action is a good work in itself. Human actions can only be good works when they depend on Jesus' merit because no human merit is enough to warrant the forgiveness of sins.

Our faith, our repentance, our obedience, our brotherly love, our patience and zeal, our watching and praying - all these as our work and as our accomplishment and exhibition cannot suffice to display our righteousness before God.<sup>793</sup>

And the faithfulness of God is one of Barth's main ideas: that the faithful God wants to save His people from the dead in His faithfulness. Nevertheless, now He commands men everywhere to repent.<sup>794</sup> Through Jesus Christ "the righteousness of

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792 Otto Weber, *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 199. "als ob wir es in ihr nun doch mit dem menschlichen Beitrag zu seiner Versöhnung mit Gott zu tun bekämen."

793 Karl, Barth, *Credo*, 158.

794 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 94.

God has been exposed and presented to us and through Him the mercy of God to be the end of all things and the new beginning.” For Christians the mercy of God means that “we must be led unto repentance.”<sup>795</sup> This correlation provides that God’s faithfulness and requirement of repentance are not contradicted in Him. Even though repentance is not principally an action of man, man does not connive at the importance of repentance and the worth of the commandment of God.

Sanctification of man takes place not only among spirit, nature and soul, but also in body. Barth derived this idea from the Cross and resurrection of the body of Christ and incorporated it as a main theme of his theology, that “the Cross is the dying of His body and the resurrection is the awakening of His body.”<sup>796</sup> Barth called it the change of the whole man.<sup>797</sup> Inward illumination of a human subject is itself conceived as the great transformation.<sup>798</sup> If so, does forgiveness of sins according to Barth relate to all aspects of sinners? For Barth, repentance and forgiveness of sins change all facets of man.

For Barth, the mercy of God is firstly related to inward change, like the doctrine of repentance of Calvin,<sup>799</sup> and the necessity of repentance is, first of all, related to the change of the inward man as well. So by the mercy of God our inward man increases

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795 Ibid., 106.

796 Karl, Barth, *The Christian Life*, 34-35.

797 Ibid.

798 It occurs “not with new and special organs, but with the same organs of apperception with which we know other things, yet not in virtue of our own capacity to use them, but in virtue of the missing capacity which we are now given by God’s revelation.” CD 4/3, 509.

799 Comm. on 1Cor. 1:30; Inst., 3.3.5.

and grows, and God's mercy not only has no end but also grows and increases.<sup>800</sup>

And repentance is based on the change of thought and faith. The origin of change is faith that Jesus died for our sins. From this our transformation takes place. Repentance is a renewing and changing of our thought (*das Um-denken*). Repentance is fundamentally a return to correct thinking. It involves a renewal of reason and understanding. Repentance is the commencement of new thinking.<sup>801</sup> In this expression, however, thought plays a decisive role in repentance. The reason is installed as the place where unceasingly a renewal is to come about, where this turning is to be affected, the turning from and the turning to, because we cannot act without thinking. In repentance change of thought precedes the change of doing. The great demand that the mercy of God imposes on us is primarily the demand of right thought and a knowledge out of which then the right action must come. Repentance means that effect must be given in our thought to the knowledge, which puts our will in motion, which we have to be thankful to God.<sup>802</sup>

Repentance is, for Barth, an act of thinking and thought of eternity, which is a "thinking of the thought of grace, of resurrection, of forgiveness, and of eternity."<sup>803</sup> And these thoughts "exhort others to think eternity; to summon them to a renewal of mind and to demand repentance."<sup>804</sup> And when we have this thought, our thinking is renewed. Barth referred to this thought as transformed repentance. For Barth, this

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800 Karl, Barth, *The Christian Life*, 31.

801 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 415-6.

802 Karl, Barth, *The Christian Life*, 60-61.

803 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 437.

804 Ibid.



thinking of the thought of eternity is never a thing completed in human time, for it is full of promise. As an act of thinking it dissolves itself; it participates in the pure thought of God, and is therefore an accepted sacrifice, living, and holy, acceptable to God. And its thought actually takes place because “it is the *KRISIS* of all our other thoughts.”<sup>805</sup>

For Barth, transformation of thinking is primary ethics but transformation of action is secondary ethical conduct. First of all repentance is connected with primary ethics as the act of rethinking and it directs man to secondary ethics as the new behaviour.

Repentance is the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what the will of God is, even what is good and acceptable and perfect.... Repentance, as the ‘primary’ ethical action, is the act of rethinking. This transformation of thought is the key to the problem of ethics, for it is the place where the turning about takes place by which men are directed to a new behaviours.<sup>806</sup>

### **2. 3. 3. 2. Good Works**

According to Barth, throughout Scripture the existence of good works is counted on markedly. But a good work always “follows the acts of God and their consequences.”<sup>807</sup> That the works of God are good shows us what is meant by the fact

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805 Ibid.

806 Ibid., 436.

807 CD 4/2, 587.

that the works of man are good. In the witness of Scripture the work of God stands in a primary and basic relationship to man.<sup>808</sup> Therefore when we want to see what is the possibility and actuality of good works on the part of man we must start from the completed good works of God.<sup>809</sup> In the theology of Karl Barth, God's good works are directed towards a specific goal: His covenant with man, His own glory in this covenant and the salvation of man.<sup>810</sup> According to Barth, our good works are subordinate under the works of God on the basis of the first chapter of Genesis. God accomplishes His works in Jesus Christ who becomes the *vere homo*, and manifests it in totality, in history, in creation, in Himself. In this work He is good in Himself only as He is good to man<sup>811</sup> and it is actualised only with man's salvation.

Barth actually mentioned the basis of the good works of man referring to the Johannine saying, "My father worketh hitherto, and I work." As a brother of Jesus, man can work in this history. Barth criticises the action of religious men that are repenting in dust and ashes, wrestling in fear and trembling within the sphere of human activity, contrary to God's works<sup>812</sup> because he believes that repentance is the work of God, not the work of man and these men have neglected the completed works of Christ.

The difference between the life of the one in conversion and that of others is not

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808 CD 4/2, 588.

809 CD 4/2, 589.

810 CD 4/2, 588.

811 Ibid.

812 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 252-254.

that the former moves itself but “that it has an axis on which to turn.”<sup>813</sup> But conversion, as Barth has emphasised, characterises sanctification as a “real happening which takes place to men here and now in time and on earth.”<sup>814</sup> It is real because it takes place in fellowship with the life of the holy Son of Man. And Christian works are inevitably related to the particular relationship to God and to Jesus Christ, who is the true God, the true man and the Head of us. Christian works are not processes and products of organic nature but primarily the acts and the fruits of human operation.<sup>815</sup>

Good works attest to the fact that we are co-workers in the work of God. But it is possible neither by our nature nor by ourselves.<sup>816</sup> In the particular goodness of the work of God a man may participate in his own good works.<sup>817</sup> Therefore, this is God’s free gift if his work is a real declaration of God’s work, and in the performance of it he may genuinely share in the annunciation of proclamation of Jesus Christ. Good works flow from the forgiveness of sins by Christ Jesus. The goodness of man’s works is to declare what God has done, the goodness in which He has turned to man and given Himself for him.<sup>818</sup> “The work of God which has taken place for them as for

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813 CD 4/2, 560-61.

814 CD 4/2, 553.

815 CD 4/2, 584.

816 CD 4/2, 593.

817 CD 4/2, 594.

818 CD 4/2, 590: CD 4/2, 598. *Q. 91.* But what are good works? *Answer*-Only those which of a true faith take place according to the Law of God and to His glory, and are not grounded in our own opinion or the evaluation of men. In Barth’s *the Heidelberg Catechism for today* he summarizes these related section. A command is given just to the man who, as a living member of the Christian church, may believe that God’s righteousness in Jesus Christ has already been fulfilled for him. The command is that he should live in accordance with the decision about the right of God and of man which was made in the death and resurrection. See. Karl Barth, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today*, 114.

all men also takes place in them in the form of this illumination, with the result that as the men they are they have a share in it only as its witnesses, but such a real share.”<sup>819</sup>

When God works with men’s works, Christians can and should and may and will bear witness to the works of God and it will be their good works.<sup>820</sup> According to Barth, this is not abstract but real and concrete because God the judge will ask “for then you surely have been merciful as well and have forgiven your debtors”<sup>821</sup> So Barth connected Christian life with sacrifice (Rom 12:1-2) and he argues that God wants our “will and obedience as a witness of obedience rather than sacrifice itself.”<sup>822</sup>

According to Barth, if we do not have such works, “we have no evidence of a real alteration of the human situation effected by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>823</sup> Repentance bears witness to the works of God in the history of forgiveness of sins. So, “the historical framework is broken through when the secret of history is laid bare.”<sup>824</sup> And “we have no occasion to deny the plain meaning of history, since it is history which bears witness to the many of the one forgiveness of sins.”<sup>825</sup> Barth regards good works as one of the factors of certainty of salvation.<sup>826</sup> And in faith we

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819 CD 4/2,592.

820 CD 4/2, 597.

821 Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 152

822 Karl, Barth, *The Christian Life*, 35-40.

823 CD 4/2, 529.

824 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 139.

825 Ibid., 139. cf. As proof Barth submits Acts 11:18; *When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life."*

826 CD 4/2, 598. *Heidelberg Catechism Q. 86*. As we are redeemed from our plight by grace through Christ without any merits of our own, why should we do good works? *Answer-* because Christ,

can and may and will grasp it.

Barth regards the work of love and faith<sup>827</sup> as the fruits of the good tree and fruits of conversion.<sup>828</sup> For Barth, the essence of sanctification is love. Christian faith is the human response to God's justifying judgement and Christian love is the human response to God's indication for man. This love follows from the obedience of faith and the obedience of love. Faith is the work of the Holy Spirit and through this faith man can do good works. Furthermore the believing man will certainly also do good works in faith.<sup>829</sup>

The good work of man is always a work of repentance, a work that is done in repentance and distress and with a cry for the mercy of God.<sup>830</sup> And good works are "works of conversion, works done on hearing the appeal to the new man that I am, not in myself, but in Christ."<sup>831</sup> Man's works are good only in their participation in the good work of God. They are good in Jesus Christ, good purely because they come from the grace of God. Repentance is a substitute achievement, which is an improper making-good of our infinite fault before God, which cannot be made by us.<sup>832</sup> So

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having bought us by His blood, has also renewed us by His Holy Spirit, that we should show ourselves grateful to God for His benefit with our whole lives, and that He should be magnified through us. Also in order that we may have assurance of our faith from its fruits, we win our neighbors to Christ by our godly conversation.

827 According to Barth, the works of God will be explained briefly and clearly as believing in him who he has sent.

828 CD 4/2, 595.

829 Karl, Barth, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today*, 92.

830 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 109.

831 *Ibid.*, 111.

832 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 411.

repentance of man cannot “support our reconciliation with God or complete it.”<sup>833</sup>

In the section on the praise of works Barth shows a twofold meaning of praise, that “God praises them, affirming and acknowledging and approving them; and that their works praise God, affirming and acknowledging and approving Him.”<sup>834</sup> This twofold meaning converges to good works. God is pleased by the good works of man. That Christians should do good works in twofold sense<sup>835</sup> is their obligation. Even though we are sanctified by the mercy of God we must present our bodies as concrete and observable and historical existence as a sacrifice. Barth calls this sanctification and its purpose is to give glory to God.<sup>836</sup> But the works of Christians can be seriously called ‘good’ on the presupposition of justification by faith alone because our salvation can be considered as the justification in Jesus Christ.

### 2. 3. 3. 3. Neighbours

God’s existence, for us, is not merely partially but a total reality in the process of repentance.<sup>837</sup> Barth criticises the individualistic approach of repentance of the modern Church that has emphasised the “personal conversion, renovation of life, or renovation of human society, or the knowledge of higher words, or of heroic piety.”<sup>838</sup> Repentance takes place both inwardly and outwardly in sinners, therefore repentance

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833 Ibid.

834 CD 4/2, 584.

835 CD 4/2, 585.

836 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 430-433.

837 George, Hunsinger, *How to read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology*, 162.

838 Karl, Barth, *Credo*, 151.

is “not only our relationship to God but also our relationship to others, not only our inward position but also our outward action, not only our private affairs but also our public responsibilities, all these are at stake in the movement from the old form of life to the new.”<sup>839</sup>

Barth almost follows Calvin’s idea on repentance. And he reduces that idea from the first and second articles of Luther’s 95 Theses; Jesus Christ willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance. But he rejects both the notion of conversion of the Romanists, who regards it as a form of reception, and of the pietists and Methodists, who believe in simple or complex experience of conversion, because their ideas are not identical with biblical concept of conversion to God and because, Barth argues, as Calvin did, that conversion is a “totality of movement of sanctification which dominates and characterises human life.”<sup>840</sup> At the same time it implies that the repentance of a whole life can be extended to obedience to God and service to neighbours. Conversion necessarily involves the relationship of brothers. Barth’s anthropology makes it clear that “man is not man without his brother.” Barth writes that the self-denial of conversion expresses itself in society as “humility, gentleness, a readiness to serve, responsibility, and loyalty.”<sup>841</sup> It consists of an “affectionate love which does not humiliate or bind others but exalts and liberates them” because it is a “matter of the *Gloria Dei* in the life of the new man.”<sup>842</sup>

Actually Barth tries to connect repentance with sacrifice and service to

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839 CD 4/2, 563-566.

840 CD 4/2, 567.

841 CD 4/2, 563.

842 CD 4/2, 564.

neighbours because for him they are co-subordinate factors of repentance. Repentance is a service to the neighbour and obedience to the order of God when obedience is related to repentance as subjection.<sup>843</sup> It gives rise to a new idea that our repentance has to be connected with forgiveness of our neighbours' trespasses because Christ forgives our sins and He commands us to forgive our neighbours' sins. So, for Barth, to forgive the sins of others is a sign of repentance and of obedience to God.

Barth identifies the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification with the transformation of relationships among and through the people of God. Barth's personalistic understanding of reconciliation regards it as a change in relationship and not the importing of a new *habitus* of soul. Sanctification becomes the exercise of love by and through the grace of God made available through our neighbours in the communion of saints.

Therefore Barth's notion of sanctification is extended from the sanctification of the individual Christian to the Christian community. So, for Barth, there is no "individual sanctification apart from the work of Holy Spirit within the communion of saints."<sup>844</sup> This is worthy of consideration in the present protestant church. Sanctification comes to individuals, but only in their common life, not only as individuals.<sup>845</sup> The holy person is not the end or purpose of sanctification. In his doctrine of sanctification Barth prefers the usage of 'saints' to the individual 'saint'<sup>846</sup> because Barth found a plurality of this term in the New Testament. Thus he connects

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843 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 400.

844 CD 4/2, 126.

845 CD 4/2, 513.

846 Ibid. ; For Barth the saints of New Testament exist only in plurality, not as individuals.



this idea with the Christian community. The conversion of man is his conversion to God “when in and with it he adds himself as *sanctus* to the *communio sactorum*.”<sup>847</sup>

Barth is concerned with the sanctification of a community of saints. Barth regards the covenant life of the church as an essential element in the process of sanctification. It shows that Barth sees the event of Jesus’ resurrection as already achieved, but at the same time puts it in the process of sanctification within the Christian community.<sup>848</sup> The Holy Spirit is the living Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the work of the sanctification of His particular people in the world, of His community and all its members.<sup>849</sup>

Through this idea one can more easily recognise the idea of the doctrine of repentance in the theology of Barth. This shows that even though repentance is the act of God alone, it has external proof like sacrifice and service to neighbours.<sup>850</sup> For Barth, God’s absolution requires our “penitence and sorrow, the confession of sin, the work of contrition, the work of self-denial and faith, and the work of sacrifice.”<sup>851</sup>

Barth makes an effort to escape from the abstraction of the concept of repentance because, if not, it is nothing but a working hypothesis of theology. So he wants to give the reality of it to Christians in relation to their neighbours. The concept of repentance would be an abstraction if the required sacrifice were understood only in its relation to

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847 CD 4/2, 566.

848 O. G. Otterness, op. cit., 127.

849 CD 4/2, 522.

850 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 403.

851 *Ibid.*, 412.

God and not at one and the same time as service to our fellow man as well.<sup>852</sup>

Therefore, throughout his works, Barth makes occasional use of the terms ‘repentance before God’ and ‘service to our neighbours’ to explain the truth and actuality of repentance. Repentance is expressed as act and expression before God. For Barth, the service to God and the service to man in repentance is *sine qua non* to each other. So, we can “neither lose repentance before God in service to the neighbours nor service to the neighbour in repentance before God.”<sup>853</sup> Neither of them can be genuine without the other. One must say of the former that it acquires its concreteness and seriousness only through the latter. But one must say of the latter something even more far-reaching, namely, that it has meaning and is possible only against the background of the former. But they are not the same. Nevertheless, we can not deny that repentance before God “comes first and service to the neighbour must follow.”<sup>854</sup>

Barth solves the problem concerning repentance and service in relation to the concept of sacrifice in the Old Testament and in the event of Christ. Christ accomplished the sacrifice with the office of a Mediator and High-priest as *vere Deus* and *vere homo*. The ministry of Christ gives the satisfaction to God and to the necessity of man.

Christ is not only the proper sacrifice but also the complete and perfect sacrifice because the sacrifice of his life at one and the same time offered *to God*, an act of repentance that makes good our human disobedience, and also offered *for men*, an act of

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852 Ibid., 418.

853 Ibid.

854 Ibid., 419.

service to the neighbour whose whole plight Christ carries and whose need he meets with his obedience.<sup>855</sup>

For Barth, repentance solves the relation with neighbours and opens up “the path to service”<sup>856</sup> to them even though he criticises the social Gospel of North America and the Thou-and-I theology of Bultmann and Gorgarten. But Barth connects this repentance only with the church. So he says that our repentance can “take place only in the church, as there is faith only in the church.”<sup>857</sup>

#### **2. 3. 3. 4. Obedience**

The reason why the saints do good works is that we have no other alternative but to be thankful. Nothing is left of our existence but whatever exists in Christ. No other possibility remains except for us to be thankful.<sup>858</sup> Good works are an expression of thankfulness to God who saved us from the dead and gave us sanctification.

In *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today* Barth argues that the thankfulness to God is “reception of grace which automatically is new life.”<sup>859</sup> These good works are out of gratitude to God. Sanctification is essentially nothing more than being thankful for grace because grace has been made concrete here and now through Jesus Christ alone. So sanctification of thankfulness is just as concrete in us. The obedience of

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855 Ibid., 420.

856 Ibid., 424.

857 Ibid., 426.

858 Karl, Barth, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today*, tr. by Shilrey C. Guthrie, Jr. (Worcester and London: The Trinity Press, 1964), 138.

859 Ibid., 139.

man in sanctification is the reflection of God's self-giving love and thus a witness to God's reconciling work. Barth emphasises that the chief part of gratitude is prayer. Sanctification is proved by the Word and Spirit of God, and by prayer on the human side. It is not mere prayer, but prayer for the mercy of God. Therefore prayer for the mercy of God should be the external figure of repentance on the human side.<sup>860</sup>

Another fruit of repentance is obedience to God. Obedience, which is one of the main fruits of repentance and which is sometimes repentance itself, is the submission to authority that is the commandment of God or law. And when the fellow man comes between man and God with his claim, repentance and humility are final words to describe obedience.<sup>861</sup>

According to Barth, to be free means to be under the command of God and to allow the command to determine one's action. The genuine freedom is freedom for God, that is, obedience to God. Barth maintains that obedience<sup>862</sup> can never take on the character of merit or virtue because man has no claim upon God and true obedience is claimless obedience.

And in sanctification, obedience and repentance are connected with each other intimately. The action of man is good "in so far as he is the obedient hearer of the Word and command of God." The one called is empowered to hear and obey, to move from one form of existence to another through the self-giving of Jesus Christ. There is

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860 Karl Barth, *Ethics*, 113.

861 *Ibid.*, 483.

862 For Barth obedience is a means of repentance and sanctification, and it is a figure of repentance at the same time.

no other basis than the obviously all-sufficient basis of his call.<sup>863</sup> This becomes our sanctification and the word of God is “measure and source of this sanctification.”<sup>864</sup> According to Barth, Obedience is congruous to the Gospel of Salvation. Therefore obedience is a proof of true change of the whole person by the power of God.

Obedience is the sense for the specific peculiarity of the Divine and for the Wholly-Other-ness of God, the King, the monarch, the Despot. It follows from this that obedience means being committed to a particular course of action, a readiness to surrender individual freedom of movement to the free movement of God, a readiness to offer up everything that the known man of the world supposes to be important and necessary and right, a readiness to retreat from every concrete position which we have occupied, from every undertaking, alliance, compromise, or daring venture upon which we have embarked; in fact, from every method of thought or manner of behaviour.<sup>865</sup>

But Barth contends that God will not give this obedience to all. God never gives repentance to all people, but only to those who are known. However, the Church continues to provoke men to repentance in fear and trembling because she has neglected the freedom of God as a secret of Him.<sup>866</sup> The guilt of the Church is that she has neglected the freedom of God. When we find it we are concerned only with obedience.<sup>867</sup>

According to Barth, obedience means repentance and repentance means preparedness to enter upon the divine, eschatological possibility, to bow before the

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863 CD 4/3,530.

864 CD 3/4, 4.

865 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 386-387.

866 Ibid., 385-389.

867 Ibid., 386-389.

wrath of God and before the exclusive claim which God makes upon men.<sup>868</sup>

It is repentance, for Barth, to have the forgiveness of sins in *participatio Christi* and by doing as Jesus Christ did; in repentance man forgives brothers and world. Freedom in *participatio Christi* is the basis of Christian ethics or obedience. Freedom is a result of Christ's works because Christians are no longer sinners required to sin. By the freedom of Christ, the Christian can do His works because the Christian is no longer a slave of sins. Christians do not sin any more because they have been freed from the compulsion to sin in Christ.<sup>869</sup> Freedom in Christ which is given from the Holy God is not based on law but on freedom, therefore freely they can be obedient to God through this freedom.<sup>870</sup> The Holy One actually gives His chosen people the freedom to be free.<sup>871</sup>

The freedom which the Holy God gives to His people to be free takes place in Christ and this is the foundation of Christian ethics. Freedom is not given as a law or ideal proclaimed in the void. You can make use of the freedom in which you have been made free in Christ. Freedom is a presupposition of Christian ethics. "Without this assumption (you are free) there would be no such thing as Christian ethics even for us."<sup>872</sup>

In the light of the relationship with predestination, God elects His saints who will be disciples in Jesus Christ by grace, and through this grace the saints become

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868 Ibid., 386.

869 CD 4/2, 532

870 Ibid.

871 Ibid.

872 Ibid.

disciples. Therefore, to be called to discipleship means to believe Jesus.

(Discipleship) is not the recognition and adoption of program, ideal or law, or the attempt to fulfill it. It is not the execution of a plan of individual or social construction imparted and commended by Jesus.... In practice the command to follow Jesus is identical with the command to believe in Him.<sup>873</sup>

Self-denial as part of a Christian life<sup>874</sup> in faith is the one evidence of repentance in the theology of Barth. Of course, first of all the prerequisite of self-denial is faith in Christ. The relation between obedience and self-denial is intimate. The Disciples of Christ cannot deny themselves without faith in Jesus.<sup>875</sup> Anybody who wants to be a disciple of Christ must deny himself in word and in deed because this self-denial will be obedience to Jesus Christ. The self-denial as well as the brave act of faith is the only possible obedience to Jesus' call to discipleship.<sup>876</sup>

Accordingly, wherever Jesus calls man in His discipleship, there can be no avoiding genuine self-denial.<sup>877</sup> For Barth, in genuine self-denial we can have freedom for the world. The self-denial and faith in repentance are true fruits of discipleship. And discipleship, which is one of the hearts of Barth's doctrine of repentance, is one of bases of Christian ethics. The call to discipleship binds the disciple to Christ by whom he is called. When such discipleship is realised, it will testify both to the

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873 CD 4/2, 536.

874 Barth here quotes Luther's axiom for his assertion that "Our lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying 'Repent ye, etc.' meant the whole life of the faithful to be an act of repentance." But he misunderstands this saying. Because Luther used it against indulgence to make rightly penitence like Calvin did. However Barth in here uses it for the whole Christian life.

875 CD 4/2, 538.

876 CD 4/2, 540.

877 Ibid.

sovereign grace of God and the responsible action of man.

So, what Jesus wills with His ‘follow me’ can be chosen only in obedience to His call by Christians.<sup>878</sup> And God demands faith in the form of obedience to Himself because this is the commitment to Him which constitutes the content of the call to discipleship.<sup>879</sup> “There is no discipleship which does not consist in the act of the obedience of this faith in God and therefore in Him.”<sup>880</sup> And discipleship and the call to Him is a coincidental event and faith also cannot be excluded from this event.

All these are inseparable moments of the one occurrence. There is no discipleship without the One who calls to it. There is no discipleship except as faith in God as determined by the One who calls to it and frees for it.<sup>881</sup>

Barth regards baptism as one element of conversion because it can be treated as a form of obedience to God. Conversion is understood as “the obedience and hope which inseparably constitute the meaning of Christian baptism.”<sup>882</sup>

And baptism is the conversion which is grounded in knowledge of the work and word of God. So the conversion in baptism is the decision of man and these decisions and this action are connected with God “as the basis, origin and norm.”<sup>883</sup> Barth tries to connect the witness of holy baptism and daily repentance because he thinks that baptism shows that we were sinners in our sins and at the same time through daily repentance we confess them.

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878 CD 4/2, 536.

879 CD 4/2, 537.

880 Ibid.

881 Ibid.

882 CD 4/4, 135-136.

883 CD 4/4, 139-140.



Baptism can attest nothing but what the Holy Spirit attests, but as a baptized person I may myself be the witness to the Holy Spirit and restore myself by this witness. Baptism recalls me to the service of witness, since it recalls me to daily repentance. It is a signal set up in our life. As the motions of swimming come again to one who has fallen into the water, so baptism recalls us to witness.<sup>884</sup>

Baptism to Barth is a representation of Christ's death in the midst of our life. And it is a "correspondence to our conversion as it is already accomplished in Jesus Christ," but daily repentance is "a free fulfillment of this correspondence."<sup>885</sup>

### **2. 3. 3. 5. Bearing the Cross**

Barth also connects repentance with the bearing of the cross. It is intimately related with faith because when we believe that Jesus Christ bore the Cross for us, the benefits which we receive from the bearing the Cross of Christ – sanctification, discipleship, conversion, and doing good works – become ours. By Jesus' bearing of and suffering on the Cross, Christians are called to "discipleship and set in conversion and freed for the doing of good works" and by the fact of Jesus' Cross Christians also "come to bear and suffer their cross."<sup>886</sup>

The cross borne by a Christian is not identified with Jesus' Cross, but throughout works of Barth, it is marked and characterised by its influence and effects. It is not possible for one's own sake but for Jesus' sake. That Jesus bears and endures the cross

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884 Karl, Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, 150-151.

885 CD 4/2, 305.

886 CD 4/2, 599.

is “opening the way for actualization of the election of all men.”<sup>887</sup> So the special fellowship of Christians with Christ involves participation in the passion of His Cross. Their obedience will never be more than the work of the freedom which they are given.<sup>888</sup>

For the Christian the bearing of the cross strengthens his faith and obedience and love and it is Christian-particular verification. It brings the Christian’s life to the praise of God. Therefore the Christian shows particular figures externally. “There may be particular good works of faith and love, works which are particularly well-pleasing to God and which redound particularly to the praise of God.”<sup>889</sup>

For Barth, this cross is persecution and isolation. The irruption of sufferings into the life of Christian is the sign of fellowship with Jesus. In this fellowship with Jesus we have to reckon seriously with the fact that “our cross will take, and may never lose.”<sup>890</sup> But to bear the cross is provisional and cannot compare with future glory. To bear the cross, therefore, is a gift of God.<sup>891</sup>

The process to good works from justification is well summarised in Barth’s work where he says that sinners are saved from their sins by Christ and as a result of salvation they can do good works: 1. The Christian is a disturbed sinner. In contrast to the unreconciled man who is still undisturbed in his sin, the sanctified man under the direction of the Holy Spirit experiences a radical awakening. He is a sinner, but he

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887 CD 4/2, 603.

888 CD 4/2, 607.

889 CD 4/2, 608-9.

890 CD 4/2, 612.

891 CD 4/2, 528.

recognises his sin. 2. A limit has been set to his sin. The direction of God encounters the sloth which binds man. 3. The sanctified man is also one who continues to look in faith to Jesus in whom he is sanctified. As a result of this turning, real and concrete changes take place in the life of sanctified man, but his covenant relationship with God is only relative because it is not glorification. 4. The direction of the Word has the power to give man the freedom to live for God and his neighbour. If he continues to sin, it is only because he has not availed himself of this new freedom.<sup>892</sup>

Notwithstanding Barth's endeavours, it is difficult to find the 'how' of good works; for him it is only the "what" of good works. Jesus completes the work which is the acts of God as the Lord. But it is not important to know that man's good works are secured ontologically and eschatologically, for this does not reveal *how* it is actually realised in man's present warfare. It is, however, true that Barth neglects the practical action in his doctrine of sanctification because he regards practical acts as only dimension of ethics.<sup>893</sup> Actually, his ethics is exposed as practical impossibility, although Barth sees sanctification as an event in history and as a fact in the common life of all men.<sup>894</sup>

Good works for Barth are different to Calvin's view on good works. That is to say, it means that God's work predestined is shown in human life by the event of Jesus as a work, but is not related to good work as the real works of sinners. So, in the strictest sense, Barth's good works are nothing but the declaration of God. The distinction of a human work is that it is to declare the occurrence of the good work of

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892 CD 4/2, 530.

893 CD 4/2, 518.

894 CD 4/2, 529.

God. By the works of the Man Jesus sinners can do good works.<sup>895</sup> The completed work of the Lord can cleanse them in spite of their sin and “works can be good only as they declare what God has done and accomplished the goodness in which He has turned to man and given Himself for him.”<sup>896</sup> For this reason the good works of man are a declaration of the work of God. In the strictest sense Barth’s idea is the same as Eduard Thurneysen’s, a close friend of Barth. Thurneysen “had rejected the perceptibility of the work of faith” and abandoned the idea of fruit in the New Testament.<sup>897</sup>

In the Scripture, although Jesus Christ completed the forgiveness of sins on the Cross, He required our repentance, and although his disciples saw the resurrection of Christ and the completeness of the ministry of Christ, they showed their repentance by going to God and taking the first step by believing in the name of Christ.<sup>898</sup>

In Barth’s old age, he gives more room for human response to God’s grace in his doctrine of salvation than in his early writings.<sup>899</sup> Barth saw that the Reformation had no real penitence or good works. So he criticised it, saying that “even the regenerate and the converted stand in absolute need of forgiveness and justification in all their works of penitence and obedience, in which of themselves cannot possibly justify

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895 CD 4/2, 589.

896 CD 4/2, 590-1.

897 Klaus Bockmuehl, *The Unreal God of Modern Theology*, 88.

898 We must remember that the later book of the Gospel the Pauline and Johannine letters require repentance. This shows us that his disciples and Paul, in spite of the completeness of the ministry of Christ, preached the necessity of repentance.

899 David L. Mueller, “Karl Barth and the heritage of the Reformation” *Review and Expositor* 86 (W 1989): 52.

them.”<sup>900</sup> In his view, the repentance of the Reformation pursued the human action in it, so it cannot be true repentance. There are great differences between Calvin and Barth in their Pneumatology. Barth does not treat the doctrine of sanctification in the light of synergism, but it has a gulf in the light of *sylogismus practicus* to prove faith and salvation.

Even though he argues throughout his books that good work is concrete and objective and real, it is not worthy of good works in salvation. His main aim was to set aside the bad effects of nineteenth century liberalism and the legalism of pietism. It is not easy to evaluate Barth’s theological approach under the Reformation leaders of the sixteenth century, such as Calvin and Luther, or of the seventeenth century because he does not define his approach according to their theological situation.<sup>901</sup> Barth’s son, Markus Barth, says that “my father was not the complete anti-Pietist sometimes presumed.” As evidence he gives “lengthy discussions between Barth and Billy Graham based on the many things they held in common.”<sup>902</sup>

Furthermore, Eberhard Busch also gives as evidence that although his father was pietist Barth did not neglect his father’s faith in pietism.<sup>903</sup> For Barth, his main enemy is not true pietist but the subjectivity of pietism and its bad effect. He achieved his intention to set aside the bad effect of nineteenth century liberalism and the legalism of pietism, but he did not do full justice to the reality of repentance on earth.

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900 CD 4/2, 506.

901 Bernard L. Ramm, ed. *After Fundamentalism: the Future of Evangelical Theology* 1<sup>st</sup>. (San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1983), 12.

902 Ibid., 54.

903 Eberhard Busch, Memories of Karl Barth in *How Karl Barth changed my mind*, ed. McKim, Donald (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 9.

Subjectivity is not always good, but it has merits that remove the abstraction between God and us. Contrary to Barth and the exceeding objectivism of salvation, Berkouwer argues that “theological subjectivism did not err” because it stressed too heavily the living relationship of divine truth to human faith. And, more positively, Berkouwer surely argues the objectivity of salvation, added that “this relation is so essential that theological reflection dare not for a moment turn it into an abstraction.”<sup>904</sup>

## SUMMARY

The problem with Barth’s doctrine of repentance, as well as his other theological spheres, is caused by his Christo-centralism. His Christo-centralism is also centered in his understanding and horizon of hermeneutics. Repentance is obviously the work of God and His work alone. And genuine repentance takes place in Christ only and it is possible by the grace of God.

Christians can participate in the event of Christ and when they believe that Christ did everything for them in faith, repentance in Christ becomes their repentance. Therefore there is no human merit in repentance, but, as opposed to justification, it takes place in human life on earth.

Repentance is a perfect and concrete change obeying the calling of Christ and this is a sign of salvation which only takes place in Christians. But only through faith

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904 FJ, 16.

can Christians receive repentance and see it as a fact. Therefore in faith Christians receive repentance as well as justification as a gift of God. But repentance is accompanied by concrete change of life. By repentance, inward change happens and the man who is changed does good works, in other words, gratitude, obedience, self-denial, bearing the cross and service to neighbours.

On account of repentance, Christians obey the will of God and never forget thankfulness in persecution and sufferings and bear the fruits of life. But in the strictest sense, Barth does not present the direction of concrete action because his theology is concentrated on the objectivity of salvation in order to escape subjectivity.

## **Chapter 3. The Doctrine of Repentance in the Theology of G.C. Berkouwer**

### **3. 1. The Necessity of Repentance in Soteriology**

#### **3. 1. 1. The Position of Berkouwer in Reformed Theology**

G. C. Berkouwer (1903-1996) has been widely regarded in the Netherlands and in the field of Reformed theology as one of Reformed theology's most influential theologians of the twentieth century.<sup>905</sup> Although evangelical theologians have been evaluating whether he is evangelical theologian or not, he has an eminent position in the history of the Dutch Church and the Gereformeerde Kerken in particular<sup>906</sup> and Reformed theology in general. In 1957, Carl Henry wrote that Berkouwer was the "most impressive living theologian of the Netherlands in the field of dogmatics."<sup>907</sup>

Berkouwer was the successor of the dogmatic theology of the great Reformed theologians A. Kuyper and H. Bavinck. But, according to A. A. Hoekema, Berkouwer's theology has a unique position in Reformed theology because he tried to re-evaluate the traditional doctrines. And his theology is not simple, but deep and profound. Therefore the influence of Berkouwer's theology on Reformed theology should never be overlooked.

If one wishes to find neatly packaged and concisely phrased answers to theological questions, one should not read Berkouwer. If, however, one wishes to explore theological

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905 Dirk, van Keulen, *Bibliografie: G. C. Berkouwer* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2000), 25.

906 Ibid., 26.

907 Alvin L. Baker, *Berkouwer's doctrine of election* (Phillipsburg, N. J: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1981), 23.



problems in depth (without necessarily finding a satisfactory solution), and to engage in animated dialogue with a number of past and present theologians on various facets of a doctrinal topic, Berkouwer is the man to read.<sup>908</sup>

Another reason for making an in-depth study of Berkouwer's theology in relation to repentance in soteriology is that Berkouwer was "one of the few contemporary theologians who, possessed of a fine, perceptive, and judicious exegetical skill and acquainted with the exegetical literature in the requisite language, weds systematics to exegetics."<sup>909</sup> The reason that Berkouwer wedded systematics to biblical exegetics is that he believed that "systematic theology ought to act as the quality control and compass of Biblical teaching, but not be the dictator of the exegesis of any passage."<sup>910</sup> He also thought that exegetical foundations of systematic theology "must always be open to view; human and therefore fallible systematizing must be open to further correction and refinement from Scripture itself."<sup>911</sup>

Berkouwer freed "theology from the letter of the confession"<sup>912</sup> not because he wanted to deny the traditional confession, but because he wanted to give a modern answer regarding Scripture and confession to contemporary Christians. He committed

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908 Anthony A. Hoekema, "Sin, by G. C. Berkouwer" a Review, *Calvin Theological Journal* 8 (Ap 1973): 80-84.

909 S. Lewis Johnson, "G C Berkouwer and the doctrine of original sin" *Bibliotheca sacra* 132 (O-D 1975): 324.

910 Paul Helm, "Proof Texts-II," *Presbyterian Journal* (August 8, 1973: 10. cited from S. Lewis Johnson. "G C Berkouwer and the doctrine of original sin" *Bibliotheca sacra* 132 (O-D 1975): 324.

911 Ibid. This is evaluated in two aspects, one is that he endeavors to save the confession of Reformation; another is that his attitude to it shows compromise between confession and contemporary theology.

912 Lewis, B. Smedes, *G. C. Berkouwer: Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Philip E. Hughes (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), 92.

his life to the new interpretation of confessions of the Reformed tradition. His new explanation for the confessions of the Reformed tradition met the needs of his time.

Throughout his writings, Berkouwer argues that “a theory (*a priori*) corresponds to reality” and “reality is a different dimension from theories and logic and systematics.”<sup>913</sup> Thus, when we approach Berkouwer’s doctrine of repentance we must distinguish between reality and theory justly and must understand his real intention, which he has mentioned consistently.<sup>914</sup> The basic starting point of Berkouwer’s theological method changed from historical to *noumenal*, therefore we must look to understand his theological concepts in this light.<sup>915</sup> This gives us a new view-point for understanding his ideas, especially in relation to sin and repentance. Van Til criticises Berkouwer’s basic methodology, saying that Berkouwer’s theological world is not based on the reality and actuality of things. His main theological concern (as is true for Karl Barth) is the world of *Geschichte*.

This man lives and moves and has his being in Kant’s noumenal realm. The existentialist philosophers and their theological followers today often speak of this realm as being that of *Geschichte*. The realm of Kant’s phenomenal world is now often called *Historie*.<sup>916</sup>

Van Til regards Berkouwer’s terminology as identical to that of neo-orthodoxy and therefore he places Berkouwer within “the Kantian framework of modern

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913 Carl William Bogue, *A Hole in the Dike: Critical Aspects of Berkouwer's Theology* (Cherry Hill, N. J: Mack Publishing, 1977), 12.

914 *Ibid.*, 8. Carl Bogue suggests real intent of theological matters as one of the keys.

915 *Ibid.*, 10-27.

916 Cornelius, Van Til, *The Sovereignty of Grace: An Appraisal of G.C. Berkouwer's View of Dordt* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1969), 86.

theology.”<sup>917</sup>

The key concepts of Berkouwer’s theology are reality and correlation. Correlation, in particular, is very important since it is, as Smedes says, a “guiding principle” and “perhaps the single most influential principle”<sup>918</sup> in Berkouwer’s theology. His correlation is picked up from Melancthon’s Apology that “the promise and faith are to be correlated,” and “the promise of mercy must be correlated with faith, for it cannot be apprehended without it”<sup>919</sup> In every consideration of relationship or correlation, various forms of subjectivism begins to dominate the structure of correlation. But Berkouwer’s use of the word *correlation* for his guiding concept differs from others’ usage of it because in his theology it is “an objectivistic conception of Divine revelation (that leaves) no room for a genuinely human subjectivity.”<sup>920</sup>

However, the meaning and intent of such correlation can only be derived from the total context. Correlation, as De Moor says, has “nothing to do with polarity, interdependence, subjectivism, and existentialism.”<sup>921</sup> It is very difficult to analyse the real meaning of correlation because Berkouwer had a particular, special usage for the term “correlation.”

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917 Carl William Bogue, *A Hole in the Dike: critical aspects of Berkouwer's Theology*, 20.

918 Ibid., 10. Cited from Lewis, B. Smedes. *G. C. Berkouwer: Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, 65.

919 J.C. De Moor, *Towards a Biblically Theological Method: A structural analysis and a further elaboration of Dr. G. C. Berkouwer's hermeneutic-dogmatic method* (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. kok, 1980), 65.

920 Ibid., 61-63.

921 Ibid., 65.

But according to G. L. Watts, Berkouwer's concept of correlation is regarded as similar to that used by Barth and T. F. Torrance.<sup>922</sup> The influence of Barth in Berkouwer's correlation theology cannot be denied, but Berkouwer had a unique balance between faith and sanctification in his concept of correlation because, whereas Barth only emphasised the objective side of salvation, Berkouwer tried to obtain a balance between subjectivity and objectivity in soteriology. Nevertheless, he did not overcome the limit set by Barth with regards to the relationship between God and man in the area of the doctrine of repentance, and he did not show the real figure of repentance. In the strictest sense, for him repentance is nothing but proposition or tautology, and, therefore, he never show the method or concrete activity of it.<sup>923</sup>

For the understanding of true repentance, the kingdom of God and hell, election and reprobation are necessary. They are the source of grace and the result of sins. At the same time they support the necessity and urgency of repentance. For Berkouwer, the Scriptures are asymmetrical in its witness on election and reprobation and there is no reprobation because he thinks that it is nothing but a logical corollary.<sup>924</sup> Certainly,

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922 For her argument she quoted Torrance's statement that "It is this interlocking correlation of faith with the intelligible, objective reality of God's self-revelation in the incarnation and resurrection, that does not allow us to make 'faith' itself the ground of our 'belief' in the incarnation and /or resurrection. The only proper ground of faith is the reality to which it is correlation as its objective pole." T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and resurrection* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 19. Cited from Gary Lynn Watts, *The theological Method of G. C. Berkouwer*, Diss., Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981. 130.

923 Carl William Bogue, *A Hole in the Dike: critical aspects of Berkouwer's Theology*, 10-27.

924 Lewis, B. Smedes, *G. C. Berkouwer: Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, 78; According to summary of Lewis B. Smedes "Perhaps the most significant contribution that Berkouwer has made to the doctrine of election is his rescue of it from the doctrine of reprobation as its logical corollary. The notion of reprobation as a logical consequence of election is inescapable, as long as election is

“unless one is prepared to state that hell exists, all warnings continue to be hollow threats.”<sup>925</sup> Berkouwer dislikes speaking of hell as an independent topic, for which reason M. J. Arntzen, who is one of Berkouwer’s Dutch critics, doubts whether Berkouwer believes in the reality of hell.<sup>926</sup> Thus, in his soteriology, only election has its position, and the judgment of God of the result of sin is weakened in the significance of salvation.

### 3. 1. 2. Repentance and Sin

Like other Reformed theologians, salvation and forgiveness of sins are central ideas in Berkouwer’s theology.<sup>927</sup> Following Lord’s Day 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism,<sup>928</sup> Berkouwer classified the genuine progress of sanctification into four

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viewed as an arbitrary selection of individuals. To Berkouwer this is as objectionable as it is logical.”

925 Alvin L. Baker, *Berkouwer's doctrine of election* (Phillipsburg, N.J: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1981), 13.

926 M. J. Arntzen, *De Crisis in de Gereformeerde Kerken*, 2de druk (Amsterdam: Buitjen & Schipperhejn, 1965), 56ff. cited from Alvin L. Baker, *Berkouwer's doctrine of election* (Phillipsburg, N.J : Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1981), 12-13.

927 G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 181.

928 Heidelberg Catechism. Lord's Day 44

Q. 113. What does the tenth commandment require of us?

A. That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never rise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness.

(a) Q. 114. But can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments?

A. No: but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; (a) yet so, that with a sincere resolution they begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commandments of God.

(b) Q. 115. Why will God then have the Ten Commandments so strictly preached, since no man in

elements: Firstly there is an increasing knowledge of one's sinful nature. Secondly, there is an increasing earnestness in seeking for the forgiveness of sins. Thirdly, there is the eschatological perspective in which the goal of perfection is sought. Lastly, there is the pneumatological underpinning which is always seminal to sanctification. It consists of prayer to God for the grace of Holy Spirit<sup>929</sup> and a constant endeavour to be renewed more and more in the image of God.<sup>930</sup>

This summary of sanctification includes all of the elements of repentance. Moreover, repentance consists of “the confession of guilt and prayer in humility and faith and in actively doing the will of God.”<sup>931</sup> So the proper understanding of hamartiology is necessary first of all for the understanding of Berkouwer's doctrine of repentance. And when we examine three elements of sanctification in detail, the elements of the true doctrine of repentance will become clear. They are the elements of sanctification and repentance, and at the same time they are the steps of the procession of sanctification and repentance.

Actually, Berkouwer rejected the *Ordo Salutis*, which is described as a human experience of salvation in the subjective Christian life, regarding it rather as the

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this life can keep them?

- A. First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know (a) our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ; (b) likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come. (c)

929 G. C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, 128; For Berkouwer the perfect prayer of the believer asks first for forgiveness of God.

930 FS, 110.

931 *Ibid.*, 212.

description of the fullness of the Christian Life because, for him, all of the facts, sanctification, justification, conversion, faith, and good works, of the *Ordo Salutis* are placed on the same level.<sup>932</sup>

In order to understand genuine repentance, we must first understand sin and its seriousness with regards to man and God. And first of all God is not the author of sin.<sup>933</sup> One of Berkouwer's master themes regarding sin is that "sin is the ultimate irrational fact of the universe in which we live,"<sup>934</sup> "the origin of sin is a mystery"<sup>935</sup> and "sin itself, in its source and cause, can never be explained."<sup>936</sup> Even though its origin is a mystery, by the revelation of the Gospel and the law of God we can see the fatality of sin and the atonement for sinners. "By the law sin is revealed in its damnable guilt" and by the good news man can know "how much it costs to redeem us from our sin."<sup>937</sup> We can know the essence of sin only "in the light of knowledge of the true God and in repentance."<sup>938</sup> Repentance is not a mystical or an abstract miracle but "the radical and the decisive process from death to life" and it is tied up with the preaching of salvation and guilt.<sup>939</sup> Therefore, for Berkouwer, repentance is an important instrument which allows us to know who God is and which makes us

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932 Gary Lynn Watts, *The Theological Method of G. C. Berkouwer*, 126-27.

933 G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952) 152; in relation to the author of sin he emphasises the abandonment of speculation.

934 S. Lewis Johnson, "G C Berkouwer and the Doctrine of Original Sin" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (O-D 1975): 317.

935 Ibid.

936 Ibid.

937 Ibid., 318.

938 Ibid.

939 G.C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, tr. Philip C. Holtrop (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 220. Hereafter SIN.

convert from sin to God.

Berkouwer does not define sin in one idea; rather he approaches the idea of sin in all its different aspects as it is found throughout the Bible because he believes that preference for any single term may become a failure to appreciate the richness of the biblical languages. “No one has ever defined our sin in a way that embraces the multiplicity of the biblical expressions.”<sup>940</sup> So, for Berkouwer, sin is defined together with lawlessness, lovelessness, violence against God, evil against God and man, anarchy, disobedience, rebellion, pride and selfishness, unthankfulness unrighteousness, unbelief and faithlessness.<sup>941</sup> These ideas or terms are mutually illuminating and ought to be seen as such. Berkouwer’s concept of sin covers the whole Bible and he does not set it within an artificial system of theology, but rather leaves it as restatement of the Bible itself.

Sin is not the abstract but the personified (Rom. 7:8; 7:9; 7:11-12) and the real matter that was never unreal in relation to man and God.<sup>942</sup> And sin itself cannot be analysed as a phenomenon but can be understood in relation to “the life and glory, the day and the light of God.”<sup>943</sup> Sin is “loss, destruction, severance.”<sup>944</sup> And it “presupposes the creation of man and his standing in fellowship with God.”<sup>945</sup> So man cannot escape from this responsibility and curse. In this world, for us, Christ and repentance are required.

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940 SIN, 254-55.

941 SIN, 267.

942 SIN, 264-65.

943 SIN, 267

944 Ibid.

945 SIN, 269.



In Berkouwer's theology, sin can first of all be understood in relation to God: it is "enmity, rebellion, disobedience and alienation from God."<sup>946</sup> And Berkouwer treats sin against man and sin against God in the same way, even though they are not exactly the same. For him, "never is a sin against our fellowman any less serious than a sin against God."<sup>947</sup> He sees two sides to repentance and reconciliation, the first aspect of which is repentance to God and reconciliation with God in Christ, and the second aspect of which is action after repentance to God and reconciliation with neighbours in Christ. Thus one solution for the problem of sin is found in Christ. And Berkouwer has a unique and concrete solution to the problem of sin.

Because of the influence of Karl Barth, Berkouwer's doctrine of sin is Christocentric, as was Barth's concept. So in Berkouwer's doctrine of sin, it is difficult to avoid the same problem found in Barth's doctrine of sin, that "if sin is not conditioned in some manner by temptation outside of man, (then) it would seem that man's guilt is unforgivable."<sup>948</sup> But for Berkouwer sin is "never an abstraction but is only real in *concreto*."<sup>949</sup> And "sin is dissolved, if not in reality, at least in possibility."<sup>950</sup> Therefore, "sin works and it manifests itself in reality."<sup>951</sup> Thus we can see that Berkouwer's doctrine of sin is different to Barth's in this sense, that is to say, his doctrine of sin stands in *concreto* as did Calvin's, whereas Barth's is more abstract. According to Berkouwer's doctrine, sin is concrete and concrete repentance is

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946 SIN, 242.

947 SIN, 244.

948 Dale, Moody, "Sin" *Review and Expositor* 69 (Spr 1972): 239-240.

949 SIN, 61.

950 SIN, 97.

951 SIN, 64.

necessary for the forgiveness of sins

Berkouwer refuses the transmission of original sin and the imputation of original sin in his writings. In its place he presents the “corporative” point as the way to solve the problem.<sup>952</sup> He argues, as do H. Wheeler Robinson and the Dutch theologian De Fraine, that the idea of “corporative” is the best way to explain the problem of original sin and it was because of the “Old Testament covenant alliance, which was foreign to all individualism and atomism, that the union of the individual and the community was so strong”<sup>953</sup> and because “the entire group could be regarded as acting as the ‘representative’ of the group.”<sup>954</sup> In this way, “the group participates in what the individual Adam does” and one man represents the whole of humanity, since, as Paul says, “all have sinned.”<sup>955</sup> In short, the concept here is a concept of the “representation of an individual who includes within his person all those individuals of whom he is the representative.”<sup>956</sup> His ‘corporateness’ is useful in terms of the atonement of Christ for sinners. It implies that we were with Adam, our representative, and we are with the second Adam, Jesus. The term ‘corporateness’ or ‘corporative’ is given in Romans 5:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:14.<sup>957</sup> According to Berkouwer, realism and *imputatio* of

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952 S. Lewis Johnson, “G C Berkouwer and the Doctrine of Original Sin” *Bibliotheca sacra* 132 (O-D 1975): 323.

953 Ibid.

954 SIN, 513.

955 S. Lewis Johnson, op. cit. 323; Rom. 3:23.

956 SIN, 516.

957 SIN, 517; “Within this corporative mode of thought, it is entirely impermissible to adopt the conclusions of *either realism or federalism*. This is because realism converts the words of Paul into an anthropological concept in which the corporative aspect can only be cancelled out (speculatively) by an assumed ‘pre-existence’ in man’s Ur-reality. On the other hand, federalism shows numerous similarities to the corporative idea but lies, nonetheless, on a very different plane. That fact is evident

federalism are lacking in the Reformed confessions, but the corporative concept of original sin “may be the guide that can lead the Calvinists out of the cave of confusion.”<sup>958</sup> Even though Berkouwer sharply points out the weakness of both realism and federalism and gives wise counsel to the federalist, he is “not successful in providing a fruitful alternative,”<sup>959</sup> as John Murray has commented.

However, Berkouwer stresses “the necessity of confessing in our doctrine of original sin that it is *our* sin.”<sup>960</sup> Berkouwer argues that we must repent for our original sin because even though we were washed by the blood of Jesus Christ we had participated in the original sin with Adam. For the original sin Berkouwer presupposes that *Deus non est causa, auctor peccati*. To Berkouwer God is the ‘cause’ of salvation; man is the ‘cause’ of unbelief and hence of rejection.<sup>961</sup> This fact is proved through the self-proof of man, through Christ and through the Scriptures consistently.<sup>962</sup> The idea of atonement in the theology of Berkouwer cannot be understood apart from the concept of penal satisfaction. And in this respect, Berkouwer opposes not only his own pupil, Wiersinga, but also Barth and Pannenberg.<sup>963</sup>

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when the concept of ‘representation’ is worked out (by means of *imputatio*) in a concept of being ‘held responsible,’ in and with Adam, for his first sin. In this being ‘held responsible’ (as a forensic judgment) the very idea of a ‘corporate reality’ is already rejected in principle. Moreover, this surely the case when we relate the *imputatio* to something which, as a matter of fact, is *not real*.”

958 SIN, 517.

959 John Murray, “Review of Sin” *WTJ* 35(Win 1973): 230.

960 S. Lewis Johnson, *op. cit.*, 325.

961 G.C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 181ff.

962 SIN, 26-34.

963 S. Lewis Johnson, *op. cit.*, 318.

The sin against the Holy Spirit is “antipathy against the acts of Christ by means of the Spirit and the finger of God.” In Fitzer’s view, that sin is the “conscious and radical renunciation of the Holy Spirit and his Work,”<sup>964</sup> and, sometimes, despising Christ is treated in this light as “outraging the Spirit of grace.”<sup>965</sup> Berkouwer tries to distinguish or articulate meaning between sin against the Holy Spirit and sin against the Son of Man, although both kinds of sins have to be treated as one sin because through the Scripture Christ is identified with the Spirit.

Actually, Berkouwer rejects the sin against the Holy Spirit as a riddle or a mystery or an isolated special vice. Instead, he asserts that the sin against the Spirit is “rather a real menace to be guarded against in the concreteness of our living before the gracious face of God and the critical gaze of our fellows.”<sup>966</sup> In this vein, he suggests that pastors must deliver the word of God in comfort and consolation because “false preaching can lead to serious traumatic disturbances.”<sup>967</sup>

Berkouwer maintains that the sin against the Holy Spirit “must not be equated with the outraging of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews”<sup>968</sup> because the sin against the Holy Spirit in the Gospel has special historical reference. He says that “the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not offer a view concerning the apostasy of the saints, but he comes with his earnest admonition to the endangered Church and calls her to keep the faith and to avoid all toying in her thoughts with possibilities to the right or to the

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964 SIN, 329-340.

965 Ibid.

966 SIN, 344-45.

967 SIN, 345.

968 Ibid.

left,<sup>969</sup> and because the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the same book suggests that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ, our high priest.<sup>970</sup> Actually, Berkouwer believed that Hebrews 6 and 10 are not the unforgivable sin, but simply admonition and warning.

### **3. 2. The Roles of Repentance in Soteriology**

#### **3. 2. 1. Repentance and Faith**

Berkouwer's doctrine of repentance starts with faith. Faith is the central idea and has the main position in his idea of correlation. Salvation in Christ is the center from which the lines are drawn to every point of the *way of salvation*. Berkouwer calls these lines 'faith'. They connect every step on the way of salvation to salvation in Christ.<sup>971</sup> Repentance is "a boon companion of true faith; the man justified by faith is justified not as an innocent man, but as a guilty sinner, and, thus, repentance is also related to justification."<sup>972</sup>

According to Berkouwer, sin and guilt are a mystery and only through faith in Christ can they be known. "For it is within faith that repentance is real. And only as repentance is real does knowledge of sin and guilt become real."<sup>973</sup> Without faith man does not know that he is a sinner and there is no urgency for repentance.

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969 FP, 120.

970 FP, 121.

971 FJ, 29.

972 FJ, 179.

973 Lewis, B. Smedes. *G. C. Berkouwer: Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, 88.

Therefore, Berkouwer, following Herman Bavinck, asserts that faith precedes repentance and faith is the basis of repentance. He argues that “Calvin also recognized a *poenitentia* which precedes faith, but that this was gradually driven to the background as he increasingly emphasized the repentance which flows from faith and has its place *within* the Christian life.”<sup>974</sup>

Faith is an instrument through which we can receive the grace from God. In fact, Berkouwer does not consider faith as a subjective activity of man, but as an objective activity of God because he thinks that throughout the Scriptures faith is regarded as gift of God and an instrument of grace to man. He recognises that faith which is under the grace of God has the inclination to flow to solifidianism, therefore the doctrine of repentance and sanctification needs to be careful.<sup>975</sup>

Even though faith is “neither creative nor meritorious but completely receptive”<sup>976</sup> in correlation to God’s grace, the doctrine of repentance is not completely receptive in it.<sup>977</sup> Sometimes Berkouwer considers faith as man’s faith, as opposed to Barth, but he does not allow it flow to extreme subjectivism. But Berkouwer knew well that although justification requires only divine action, faith requires human activity. He holds an objectivistic belief but this is balanced in faith because Scripture has a

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974 Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, III, 521ff. cited from FJ, 183-84.

975 FJ, 61-89.

976 Gary Lynn Watts, *The Theological Method of G.C. Berkouwer: Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, 198.

977 SIN, 195; it is important to take note of Berkouwer’s definition of *μετάνοια*: “It is clear that *metanoia* is not exhaustively defined by the term repentance. *Metanoia* is conversion, changing one’s course of direction, contrition in acts, in which the direction of this activity is evident, as in the case of the Old Testament “turning to Jehovah.”” See foot note 23.

balance between objectivity and subjectivity in faith.

The great levelling process in which faith and justification became “two subjective or psychological poles of interdependence also affected repentance.”<sup>978</sup> For Berkouwer, sanctification without faith degenerates into a humanism without God. Berkouwer, of course, never regards self-sanctification and moralism as sanctification because sanctification is generated by faith alone and “faith is the pivot on which everything resolves”<sup>979</sup>, although it is not the power itself. Berkouwer argues that faith is never interdependent from repentance, but it is bound inseparably to repentance.

Berkouwer rejects the subjective factor of repentance that is the meritorious factor, and rejects the meritoriousness of faith as well because repentance is a boon companion with faith as an absolute work of God. He is inclined to neglect the actual daily sins and the necessity of repentance in daily life, as well as living faith, because he regards repentance as wholly a ministry of God. And he neglects the concrete factor in repentance when compared with Calvin’s doctrine of repentance. Berkouwer’s critique of the penance of Roman Catholicism shows us why he tried to argue the appropriateness of the doctrine of repentance of Reformed theology. His criticism was that “penance and nomism are parasites on the true relation between repentance, sorrow, and grace.”<sup>980</sup>

Berkouwer expresses concern regarding unsound repentance that destroys the simplicity of the Gospel. For him, the true significance of the Reformation is the

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978 FJ, 180.

979 FS, 93.

980 FJ, 180.

rediscovery of the correlation between repentance and faith and the simplicity of the Gospel,<sup>981</sup> so he never considers repentance as a preliminary condition which we must fulfil, unlike Calvin who criticised Roman Catholicism in which faith is a presupposition of repentance. Berkouwer criticises repentance as a payment which man offers to God and also the psychological act of penance. Following Calvin, Berkouwer writes that repentance and forgiveness of sins are intimately related, but the action of repentance is not the cause of forgiveness of sins. And the act of repentance itself is not the cause of forgiveness of sins, but rather the cause of forgiveness of sins is faith in the grace of God. He denied the absolute necessity of repentance in salvation because the cause of judgment is not concerned with repentance but with faith.<sup>982</sup>

And faith and sanctification are indissolubly bound in Berkouwer's soteriology. The Scriptures always speak of "sanctification in the existential sphere of faith" and "never presented apart from faith." Therefore the holiness of Christians is never a "second blessing" placed next to the blessing of justification, rather it must feed on "the first blessing, the forgiveness of sins."<sup>983</sup> Berkouwer maintains only the real sanctification through faith, but he opposes synergism.<sup>984</sup> Berkouwer knew the importance of faith and repentance in salvation, but he rejects the idea of repentance as a meritorious action.

Berkouwer thought that "the Reformation lives or dies with the contrast between

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981 FJ, 182.

982 FJ, 180.

983 FS, 64.

984 FS, 90.



*humilitas* and *superbia*, between penitence and the works of supererogation.”<sup>985</sup>

Genuine repentance is, as Luther says, humility, and it denies all meritoriousness of man. So a proper definition of repentance was the Reformers’ first task. Berkouwer knew well that the Reformers proclaimed *sola fide* to attack the problem of penance in the Roman Catholic Church. And he thought that “*sola fide* was smirched by a meritorial idea of faith” and so “the true nature of penitence was corrupted into an obligatory human pre-requisite.”<sup>986</sup>

Faith is not mere intellectual assent; it thrusts man, as a sinner, before God’s holiness. So now, by means of faith the sinner knows that he cannot escape from judgment because in faith he must accept that God’s judgment is just. Thus, faith “is bound inseparably to repentance; and meritorial worth is ostracized as much from the realm of penitence as from that of faith.”<sup>987</sup>

In many parts of his doctrine of repentance Berkouwer follows the ideas of Calvin. Calvin’s main issue in his doctrine of repentance is forgiveness of sins in Christ. Forgiveness of sins is given through the grace of God and the grace of God is given in the way of repentance. The source of repentance is only the grace of God, therefore any kind of human merit is useless in salvation.

The believer receives forgiveness, Calvin says, in the way of penitence. This phrase in the way of is the customary Reformation response to any idea of meritorial penance, as it is to any misformation of the faith-justification relationship.... Repentance is necessary to the correlation, but it never earns or merits grace. Grace is given *in the way of penitence*, but it

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985 FJ, 182.

986 Ibid.

987 Ibid., 183.

is always independent and undeserved.<sup>988</sup>

The term *in the way of* is neither the way of salvation nor the condition of salvation.<sup>989</sup> Repentance is a *sine qua non* in salvation, but it cannot be a meritorious condition of salvation. For Berkouwer, as for the Reformers, the only power for the conversion of the lost is that of God Himself.<sup>990</sup> Berkouwer never considers faith as a meritorious work of man because “faith is not a human act that complements God’s act of grace”<sup>991</sup> and God is the only One who affects the salvation of man.

### 3. 2. 2. Repentance and the Word

For Berkouwer, the essential heart of the word of God, both in the Gospel and in the law, is repentance.<sup>992</sup> Berkouwer never depreciates the worth of the law in repentance because it allows us to know what the sin is and it is “a source for the knowledge of our sin.”<sup>993</sup> So, both the law and the Gospel are necessary in repentance.

For Berkouwer, not only the Gospel is the cause of repentance, but also the law. Many theologians have argued that the Gospel is joy and hope but the law is desperation and hopelessness, and through the Gospel we can know grace, but through the law we can see our guilt. But the law and the Gospel as a Gospel, make us

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988 FJ, 184.

989 FJ, 184-85.

990 Gary Lynn Watts. *The theological Method of G. C. Berkouwer*, 120.

991 FJ, 80

992 SIN, 195. “The concept of *metanoia* (repentance) is essential to the entire Gospel message,” and “*metanoia* (repentance) has everything to do with both the law and the Gospel.”

993 SIN, 184.

know our sins and will be summoned to the repentance. And repentance is the echo of the proclamation and the response to the calling of the law and the Gospel.

Berkouwer agrees with Luther that one of the causes of repentance is the adoption as children of God; another cause of repentance is the word of God. Berkouwer asserts, like Luther, that the foundation of sanctification is “the adoption to son.”<sup>994</sup> Repentance, and also sanctification, is to live as a child of God with Him. That is to say, the man who is adopted as a child of God by the power of Holy Spirit has repentance and by the word of God the sinner is able to recognise that he is a sinner. Therefore, the word of God is an important external means of repentance. For Berkouwer, repentance, as has been mentioned, occurs not by the mystical power or by our recognition of sin, but by the word of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. He writes that even Zinzendorf, the German pietist, did not regard “the dread of law and the pangs of sin” as an essence of conversion. Rather, he thought that “true repentance springs up from the Gospel.”<sup>995</sup> A motive for the repentance of sinners is “the word of God, that is to say, Gospel.”<sup>996</sup> In fact, man can only have the knowledge of sin in the preaching of the Gospel because, as Calvin writes, “we never hate our sin unless we have previously been seized with a love of righteousness”<sup>997</sup> through the Gospel.

And where the Gospel speaks about Jesus as a judge of the final seat, this incurs repentance and conversion because eschatological preaching stimulates the act of

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994 FS, 33.

995 SIN, 190.

996 Ibid.

997 SIN, 192-93.

repentance and conversion.<sup>998</sup> True repentance is caused by the Gospel but “it does not automatically subdue our hearts.” True repentance takes place when the preacher supports it with constant prayer because, even though “the call to repentance and conversion must be urgent and real,” the Gospel is addressed to sinful, confused, and very stubborn men.<sup>999</sup>

In this doctrine, Berkouwer for the most part follows Calvin’s ideas and uses Calvin’s concepts in support of his ideas. There is no repentance that stands apart from the Gospel, and faith and repentance are intimately bound as “*extra controversiam*” for the members of the Church.<sup>1000</sup> In Berkouwer’s theology, both repentance and the Gospel are for the salvation of man. Although repentance is necessary to salvation, as is the Gospel, repentance is not the cause of salvation. Therefore he warns that “the man who severs the bond between repentance and the Gospel can only lose both of these.”<sup>1001</sup> We cannot neglect that aspect of repentance that calls for confession of our sins because “sin is only removed when sin is fully confessed.”<sup>1002</sup> Even though we repent of our sin by the word of God and faith and revelation in Christ, our repentance is necessary for the removal our sins.

For Berkouwer, the proclamation of salvation means “the summons to repent,”<sup>1003</sup> and true repentance is comprehended in relation to the forgiveness of sins and the word of God because true repentance is the password for the kingdom of

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998 SIN, 225-26.

999 SIN, 210-11.

1000 SIN, 197.

1001 SIN, 194.

1002 SIN, 229.

1003 SIN, 194.

God.<sup>1004</sup> True repentance “can only be viewed within the scope of the Kingdom of heaven and can only be preached within the message of that Kingdom, not as its presupposition but as its consequence.” And conversion and repentance are not “the *anticipation* of the Kingdom to come but the decisive attestation that we have *already entered the Kingdom*.”<sup>1005</sup> Berkouwer understood “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt 3:2, 4:17) to mean that even though the kingdom of heaven and repentance are closely tied up with each other, repentance is not the first condition to enter the kingdom of God. Rather repentance itself is motivated by the approaching of the kingdom of God.<sup>1006</sup> So both repentance and forgiveness of sins can be called an essence of the word of God and at the same time repentance is a consequence of the proper preaching of the word of God.

### 3. 2. 3. Repentance, Christ and the Holy Spirit

Berkouwer tries to exclude the fact of human experience from salvation. So salvation in Berkouwer’s soteriology is, first of all, recognised as an act of God alone, even though it is in correlation between God and man. Throughout his writings, Berkouwer deals with sanctification within a broader framework than Barth, and he regards the Trinity as the operator of the salvific process

In his book *Sin* Berkouwer defines confession of sin and forgiveness of sin such that they are indissolubly bound. He does not want to depreciate the confession of sins,

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1004 SIN, 19-95.

1005 SIN, 195-196.

1006 SIN, 193.

but confession of sin (repentance) is “not the ground or the cause of God’s pardon: but it does form the avenue or way along which salvation is received and experienced.”<sup>1007</sup>

By the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus man repents his sins and converts to God totally, so the forgiveness of sins through Christ and the Holy Spirit is the foundation of human conversion. Therefore the baptism of repentance through Christ and the Holy Spirit is the very forgiveness of sins and, as Calvin writes, is “the act of total and radical conversion and never an isolated fact or a merely preparatory stage on the road to salvation.”<sup>1008</sup>

Even though Luther distinguishes between mortal sin and venial sin (the former has no possibility of repentance but the latter has the possibility of repentance), Berkouwer, like Calvin, writes that “every sin in itself is mortal sin” and can therefore not be cleansed by human merit, but only washed by the “divine grace in Christ.”<sup>1009</sup> To Berkouwer all sins are equally mortal and the redemption of man was accomplished by the grace of God in Christ.

Repentance is necessary for salvation because without repentance, returning to God’s countenance, one cannot have the consolation of soul as expressed by the Canons of Dort.<sup>1010</sup> Nevertheless, repentance is not the means of restoration of the lost

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1007 SIN, 156-57.

1008 SIN, 194.

1009 FP, 63-65.

1010 FP, 28. Canons of Dort. V. v. “By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilty, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God’s favor for a time until on their returning into the

grace of God, but rather obedience and thankfulness to God in perseverance of the saints and the irresistible grace of his chosen people. This renewal of human life in gratitude and love has always been considered the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1011</sup> In this context, Berkouwer thinks of repentance as total humiliation. This means that it is absolutely the work of God and excludes the meritoriousness of man. True humiliation is “one with faith, confronting and opposing every earned merit.”<sup>1012</sup> Like justification by faith alone, repentance is total humiliation in the confession of guilt and sorrow for sin, not just the act of confession but the whole life of Christians, and it is the main message of Scripture and the constitutional and essential message in the religion of faith.<sup>1013</sup>

Berkouwer rejects the idea of any meritorious acts of man in repentance because he considers repentance to be a work of God and the grace of God. For him, repentance is neither the preliminary act of faith nor the condition of salvation, although faith and repentance are bound firmly together. And faith “simply and finally excludes human merit and understands that we are drawn by the power of the Holy Spirit to a living fellowship with our Lord.”<sup>1014</sup> The assurance of salvation rests on the *sola gratia* of God. Berkouwer’s concept is very close to that of the Reformers, especially Calvin. He believes that the assurance of salvation does not rest on the human decision and the agreement of Christians,<sup>1015</sup> as pietists and Roman Catholics

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right way by serious repentance, the light of God’s fatherly countenance again shines upon them.”

1011 FS, 78.

1012 FJ, 180.

1013 FJ, 180.

1014 FS, 96.

1015 Gary Lynn Watts. *The theological Method of G. C. Berkouwer*, 123.

believe, because “assurance came from a secure trust in God’s grace which is infinitely far beyond our human weakness and lays the foundation of God’s preserving faith for ever and ever in the consolation of such grace and God’s promise.”<sup>1016</sup>

In Berkouwer’s theology, “repentance (*penitence*) was opposed to the earning of grace by penance”<sup>1017</sup> as suggested by Roman Catholic dogma. Therefore, like other Reformers, Berkouwer criticised the penance of the Roman Catholic Church<sup>1018</sup> thoroughly because the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the sacrament of penance plays a big role in salvation and the grace of God is held in the man who has lost that grace and he is restored to a state of grace through this penance.

The sufficiency of Christ’s reconciling work “made it impossible to speak any longer about penitence and penance as *satisfaction* for sin.” Berkouwer goes on to say that in the Canons of Dort, in the way of penitence, in which God’s fatherly countenance once more appears, “there is no suggestion that this penitence is meritorious and satisfying.”<sup>1019</sup> So, in his theology God has an initiative in repentance.<sup>1020</sup> Therefore only repentance by the will of God and His good pleasure work for salvation.<sup>1021</sup> Berkouwer thinks that repentance is a gift of God.<sup>1022</sup>

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1016 G. C. Berkouwer, *The conflict with Rome*, tr. David H. Freeman (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), 122.

1017 FJ, 137.

1018 FP, 48.

1019 FP, 53.

1020 FS, 23-25.

1021 FP, 91.

1022 Ibid. Romans 11:29. Berkouwer connects “the gifts of grace of God without repentance” with



Like Calvin and Barth, Berkouwer's main idea in the doctrine of repentance is the Cross of Christ<sup>1023</sup> because this idea shows us what sin is in relation to God and its event completes our salvation. He writes that "the cross of Jesus Christ motivates and defines the call to repent,"<sup>1024</sup> a belief shared by other Reformed theologians in terms of the doctrine of repentance. And the message of Christ Jesus gives us every reason to repent. Without this starting point, repentance just becomes human meritoriousness, a meaningless matter in relation to Christ. For Berkouwer the cross as the mid-point of the Bible is the key to the solution of the problem of sin and the mystery of reconciliation,<sup>1025</sup> for it manifests the love of God and the justice of God, and then summons the necessity and nature of repentance and conversion from sin.<sup>1026</sup>

Berkouwer understands the whole doctrine of repentance as the expression of God's sovereign and gracious act of forgiveness. The Holy Spirit is the giver of life and the One who renews the life of man. Since the Holy Spirit calls us into adoption with Christ, sanctification reveals itself in this adoption and in the growing awareness of sonship; a renewal that conforms itself after the image of God.<sup>1027</sup> Sanctification shows itself to be our adoption as children of God in the Spirit, and simultaneously our growing awareness of this sonship. And the Holy Spirit alone can perform the miracle of making man walk on the way of sanctity without a sense of his own

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man's conversion in the same idea.

1023 SIN, 60.

1024 SIN, 196.

1025 SIN, 60.

1026 Ibid.

1027 FS, 110.

worth.<sup>1028</sup>

The word of God is appropriated in faith only by the power of the Spirit. This indicates that the word of God has power and strength only through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the doctrine of repentance, repentance will happen with the power of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit. We cannot overlook the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit removes false and feigned repentance and it shall show the emergency and reality of repentance.<sup>1029</sup>

In the biblical message the motivation of forgiveness is “not set in the context of watering down or relativizing man’s sin,”<sup>1030</sup> but only concerns God’s attitude to men and their sins. So Berkouwer rejects Max Scheler’s synthesis between the “self-eradicating power of repentance and forgiveness as the act of God”<sup>1031</sup> because, although men have always been concerned about the relation of forgiveness and repentance, and their interest has been motivated by the real lines of connection which the Scripture itself draws between these two, sinners never deduce the “divine forgiveness (as a taking away of guilt) from the mere phenomena of penance and remorse.”<sup>1032</sup> Furthermore, in any part of the Scripture, remorse and contrition of man are neither the cause of forgiveness nor “the foundation of forgiveness.”<sup>1033</sup> And “communion depends on God’s own free and very gracious pardon, which is known

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1028 FS, 78.

1029 SIN, 213-217.

1030 SIN, 388.

1031 SIN, 390.

1032 Ibid.

1033 SIN, 391.

and experienced in the *penitence of man*.”<sup>1034</sup> Berkouwer also argued with the Heidelberg Catechism’s explanation of the Lord’s Prayer, saying that “no ground is given as a *motivation* for forgiveness.”<sup>1035</sup> Even though he does not reject the essential correlation between God and man, he maintains that the forgiveness of sin does not depend on the sinner who repents, but only on Christ Jesus.<sup>1036</sup>

Actually, for Berkouwer sanctification has no foundation in man and the Reformed confessions never teach that “believers, having gone through the gate of justification, now enter upon a new territory where they must, without outside help, take their sanctification in hand.”<sup>1037</sup> More clearly, he argues, with the Canons of Dort, that “God moves believers to repentance, to sincere and godly sorrow for their sins that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator.”<sup>1038</sup> Both repentance and sanctification are only God’s work and work in Jesus Christ the Mediator.

Berkouwer asserts that both the theology of Kuyper and the Canons of Dort were unfairly incriminated in this theological debate as a result of the type of terminology contained in their expositions. The work of the Holy Spirit in man must be tied to the orientation of man’s faith in divine grace, since this orientation is effected by the Holy Spirit and not by man’s independent will. He wrote that “the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is designed precisely to prevent us from viewing man as an

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1034 Ibid.

1035 Ibid.

1036 SIN, 391-92.

1037 FS, 77.

1038 FS, 77.

independent dynamistic unit.”<sup>1039</sup>

Berkouwer rejected the inwardness and mysticism that were the foundation of repentance of Roman Catholic penance. Only the internal grace of God is the foundation of true repentance. The doctrine of internal grace is “a continual warning against the hubris of activism, against sanctification without forgiveness, against a ‘Christian’ life without the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1040</sup> Conversion is the working of God and the miracle of the Holy Spirit in the faith of sinners. God changes sinners’ hearts, wills and minds powerfully by His grace.<sup>1041</sup> Conversion is not the illumination of the mind as suggested by amyraldism, but a “radical turn-about: a transformation from apostate pseudo- independence to a meek and active faith in God’s mercy.”<sup>1042</sup>

Berkouwer tries to correct Barth’s one-sided theology. Actually, Barth deals with sanctification as justification in such a way that it is a declarative act in Jesus Christ. Berkouwer, on the other hand, tries to overcome both objectivism and subjectivism with the concept of correlation in his doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification is not a “moral quality of a Christian which arises from their own actions and achievements” but is a divine sanctifying action. Therefore repentance is also, for him, related to a divine action calling man to repent. Berkouwer thinks of repentance as having a twofold aspect: “Being sanctified and therefore to be sanctified.”<sup>1043</sup> The repentance of

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1039 FS, 83.

1040 Ibid., 86.

1041 FS, 94.

1042 Ibid.

1043 FS, 25.

man has its roots “in the sanctifying action of God.”<sup>1044</sup> In other words, repentance or sanctification is not a combination of gift of God and obligation of Christian.<sup>1045</sup> Berkouwer holds the balanced position with the initiative of God in the doctrine of sanctification.

As Berkouwer held, forgiveness of sin is absolutely the ministry of Christ (Mark 2:5), and at the same time Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, the apostles and the prophets preach that man has only to repent to receive the forgiveness of sins. In repentance, the subject of forgiveness of sins is, of course, Christ Jesus and clearly there is no other way to achieve forgiveness of sins, but God waits for the penitent and converted sinners to come to Him. The only fountain of forgiveness of sins is Christ Jesus, but he does not neglect the repentance of man and the fruits of this repentance (Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8; Mk. 1:15; LK13:3, 5; Acts: 8:32) because God requires sinners to pray for the forgiveness of their sins. So the subject of forgiveness of sins is Christ only, but the value of the repentance of man must not be ignored. In this vein Berkouwer fully follows the teachings of Scripture concerning repentance.

### **3. 3. The Characteristics of Repentance and Sanctification**

#### **3. 3. 1. Repentance and Justification**

Berkouwer knows well the problem of justification-salvation; the way of salvation from sanctification to perseverance has often been lost because theology

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1044 FS, 23.

1045 FS, 22.

went wrong at the point of justification.<sup>1046</sup> As Calvin, Berkouwer regards justification not as a one moment but as the whole life of the saints. For him, justification is not “one specific phase among many on the way of salvation,” but rather a whole way of the salvation of the saints. For Berkouwer, the doctrine of justification is forensic and declarative justification, as it was for the Reformers, because “reconciliation through Christ’s cross broadcasts God’s righteousness”<sup>1047</sup> and sanctification begins with justification. Berkouwer rejects the idea of synergism in the salvation of man. So for him the imperative calling to repentance is also considered in the forensic justification because God’s act, forensic justification, is the only cause of forgiveness.

That the reformation, its stress on the imperative of real conversion and renewal of life notwithstanding, preserved the forensic nature of justification only underscores how well it understood justification as the forgiveness of sins.<sup>1048</sup>

Berkouwer knows that sanctification always depends on justification, but nevertheless he pursues a balance between justification and sanctification on salvation because he wants to avoid the error of Holl and Roman Catholic Theology.<sup>1049</sup> Berkouwer thought that once this doctrine is understood correctly the confession of true sanctification is rescued.<sup>1050</sup>

In Christ, justification and sanctification are “inseparable” but need to be distinguished from one another. Taking the same position as Calvin, Berkouwer

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1046 FJ, 18.

1047 FJ, 89-100.

1048 FJ, 94.

1049 FJ, 18.

1050 FJ, 89-100.

rejects Osiander's view on justification<sup>1051</sup> as well as that of the Roman Catholic Church; essential justification and infused justification because he believes that these two positions should be explained as well as how in both cases sanctification becomes the basis of justification.<sup>1052</sup>

In fact, Berkouwer does not treat sanctification and justification separately, but regards them as one thing. Neither sanctification nor justification is prior to other in faith, although sanctification follows justification in order.

The 'sola-fide' of justification made it possible, once-for-all, to regard justification and sanctification as almost identical acts of God, operative, in concentric circles of increasing radius, on the plane of individual human life.<sup>1053</sup>

Sanctification is "not a corollary or afterward of human faith, but an act of God received in faith. So it is also with the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints."<sup>1054</sup> Berkouwer knew and made use of Barth's dialectical method for solving the tension between sanctification and justification. And he knew the difficulty of distinction between justification and sanctification. "A widely voiced fear was that sanctification would be absorbed by the act of justification and that, on this view, the distinction

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1051 Andreas Osiander (1496-1552). In his *De Justificatione* (1550) he opposed Luther's doctrine of justification by faith maintaining that justification was not a mere imputation of Christ's merits, but a substantial transference of His righteousness to the believer. E. A. Livingstone, *Concise dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002), 420.

1052 FJ, 89-100.

1053 FS, 27-28. cf. Gary Lynn Watts. *The Theological Method of G.C. Berkouwer: Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, 198.

1054 Ibid.

between the two was hardly warranted.”<sup>1055</sup>

According to Berkouwer, sanctification is not the spark and seed that is generated in justification, but is rather the works of God through Christ in faith. He never derives sanctification from justification because they start from Christ together. Sometimes sanctification seems to be a work of man. The heart of sanctification is “the life which feeds on his justification.” Therefore “there is no contrast between justification as act of God and sanctification as act of man.”<sup>1056</sup>

### **3.3.2. Moment and Progression**

For Berkouwer, concern regarding the regularity of repentance has two aspects: once-and-for-all and progressive. Repentance is spoken of on the way of salvation, not only during the first stage of conversion, but, as Christ becomes more wonderful to us, in crescendo.<sup>1057</sup> Repentance occurs once as a ministry of God, but it is progressive in that God changes man from sinner to righteous and the Holy Spirit is indwelling in the heart of sinners.

Real conversion is once-and-for-all and is a change, from death to life. There can be a “reminder of the once-and-for-all of the transition, of conversion, of the passage from death to life.”<sup>1058</sup> In the change from death to life, “God’s grace is mirrored.”<sup>1059</sup>

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1055 FS, 13.

1056 Ibid., 93.

1057 FS, 112.

1058 FP, 121.

1059 Ibid.



Conversion has to do with far more than human subjectivity as a human attitude.

But according to Scripture, repentance has the characteristic of progression. And Berkouwer does not regard the progress concept in the Bible as a dilemma: he accepts both sanctification as being holy through the Spirit of faith and sanctification as a process of becoming holy through the indwelling operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1060</sup>

Berkouwer regards repentance as a process, but this process or progress is not a moral process but rather “it is being holy in Christ and having part, through faith, in his righteousness.”<sup>1061</sup> But even though he does not deny the value of moral activity, for Berkouwer sanctification is not a process of human works, neither enthusiasm, nor even ascetic practices.<sup>1062</sup> This process includes regeneration, rebirth, sanctification and repentance. The reason for the logical distinction in the *Ordo Salutis* is that he wants to help others to understand it more easily.

But ‘progressive’ in sanctification does not mean working out man’s own salvation under man’s own impulse and effort. On the contrary, it means “working out one’s own salvation with a rising sense of dependence on God’s grace.”<sup>1063</sup> And

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1060 John Newton Johnson, *Intimations of a Pneumatology in the Dogmatic Studies of G.C. Berkouwer*, Diss. M. Th, university of Durban-westville (1985), 84; Johnson presents a progressive concept of sanctification in his dissertation. Firstly, it is an increasing knowledge of one’s sinful nature; secondly, there is an increasing earnestness in seeking for the forgiveness of sins; thirdly, there is the eschatological perspective in which the goal of perfection is sought; fourthly, there is the pneumatological underpinning which is always seminal to sanctification. Cf. FS, 109.

1061 FS, 104.

1062 Lewis, B. Smedes, *G. C. Berkouwer: Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, 90.

1063 FS, 112.

Berkouwer states that “to be able to walk on this road is the work and miracle of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1064</sup> For this reason he places regeneration<sup>1065</sup> with faith in the first step of sanctification because “faith simply and finally excludes human merit and understands that we are drawn by the power of Holy Spirit to a living fellowship with our Lord.”<sup>1066</sup>

Berkouwer supports Abraham Kuyper’s argument that we must have “the simultaneous growth of sanctification and the consciousness of sin”<sup>1067</sup> because a simple and evolutionistic doctrine of sanctification would never harmonise with an increasing sense of guilt and would be unthinkable, and more, such a process would rather diminish the devout man’s sense of guilt.

Sanctification is a kind of progress, not from justification, but within justification. This growth and progress leads man “in grace to confession of guilt, to constant prayer, to a deepening sense of dependence on the faithful mercies of God” in faith.

<sup>1068</sup>

### 3. 3. 3. Repentance, Fruits and Evidence

Although salvation is the perfect work of God, God requires man’s responsibility

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1064 FS, 121.

1065 In here his idea of regeneration is narrower than the meaning of the Bible because he intends only logical order in them.

1066 FS, 96.

1067 Abraham Kuyper, *Uit het Woord*, first series I, 219; cited from G. C. FS, 117,

1068 Lewis, B. Smedes. *G. C. Berkouwer: Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*,90.

in salvation. But this does not mean nomism or salvation by human meritoriousness or synergism because it presupposes that God gives the power and opportunity for true repentance to the justified children.<sup>1069</sup> And Berkouwer connects repentance and the holiness of man's actual life because he believes that this occurs in the forgiveness of sin among neighbours and in our daily life.<sup>1070</sup> Although the confession of sins in repentance only seems to be related to God, the confession of sin has to appear in concrete love for neighbours. The doctrine of repentance as a solution to the problem of sin must be not only connected with God, but also with fellow man because sin is not only connected with God but also with fellow man. Even though it is not easy to find the concrete application of repentance to neighbours in Berkouwer's theology, naturally, it proceeds to confession, love and good works.

Sanctification has two phases, namely, "sanctification as being holy through the Spirit of faith" and "sanctification as process" which is "a becoming holy through the indwelling operation of the Holy Spirit."<sup>1071</sup> Both of these have a ground in Scripture. The former is treated like justification in Christ Jesus and the latter is treated as the bearing of fruits in the Holy Spirit. Berkouwer especially connects the bearing of fruit with fleeing from sin.<sup>1072</sup> The doctrine of repentance in the theology of Berkouwer can be treated as the "becoming" aspect of sanctification. Thus, for him, sanctification is not just objectivity; he never lost the indwelling operation of the Holy Spirit.

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1069 FP, 63-65.

1070 SIN, 230.

1071 FS, 104; It will be evaluated as his contribution in the doctrine of sanctification. In modern Reformed theology he uniquely has emphasized the indwelling operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian.

1072 FS, 105-108.

For Berkouwer the basic idea both of justification and sanctification is “being sanctified and therefore to be sanctified.”<sup>1073</sup> But God’s sanctification and self-sanctification of the believer are “two equipoised, mutually limiting magnitudes.”<sup>1074</sup> Hence the sanctification of the believer “is never an independent area of human activity” and “the sanctification of the believer is a corollary of his faith.”<sup>1075</sup>

Scripture fully honours man’s activity but never makes it part of a synergistic synthesis. For Berkouwer, synergism<sup>1076</sup> steals honour from God. He rejects the synergism in soteriology because synergism reduces God’s election to the “level of a human decision,” and it makes God’s decision depend upon man’s decision.<sup>1077</sup> With

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1073 FS, 25.

1074 FS, 26.

1075 Ibid.

1076 Concerning the definition of synergism, I wholly agree with B.B. Warfield: Accordingly, Peter exhorts us (II peter 1:10), to make our ‘calling and election sure’ precisely by diligence in good works. He does not mean that by good works we may secure from God a decree of election in our behalf. He means that by expanding the germ of spiritual life which we have received from God into its full efflorescence, by ‘working out’ our salvation, of course not without Christ but in Christ, we can make ourselves sure that we have really received the election to which we make claim. The salvation of God, being a ‘salvation in sanctification of the Spirit,’ ought, when worked out, to manifest itself in such forms as faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love, love. By working out the salvation which we have received into such a symphony of good works we make sure that it is the very salvation to which God has chosen his people. Good works become thus the mark and test of election, and, when taken in the comprehensive sense in which Peter is here thinking of them, they are the only marks and test of election. We can never know that we are elected of God to eternal life except by manifesting in our lives the fruits of election...” B. B. Warfield. *Selected Shorter Writing of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), 1:129; cited from Alvin L. Baker. *Berkouwer's doctrine of election* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1981), 162.

1077 Alvin L. Baker, *Berkouwer's doctrine of election* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1981), 50.

*corruptio totalis* Berkouwer argues that man is still a sinner in the image of God and man cannot generate faith in Christ on his own, but by the Holy Spirit man can be called to believe and be generated.<sup>1078</sup> For this reason the cause of good works is Christ and the Holy Spirit because we are totally corrupted and have no hope of salvation in us, but by the grace of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are regenerated. Therefore, our action is no more than gratitude and obedience to the grace of God. With regards to sanctification, Berkouwer never deviates from the Reformers' emphasis on the sovereignty of grace.

Shunning all one-sidedness and steering clear of all besetting heresies, we must cling through faith to God's grace alone. Then we shall be able to do justice to the real beginning of sanctification: the regeneration by faith of which Calvin and the Confessions speak.<sup>1079</sup>

Berkouwer regards obedience as an essential feature of repentance.<sup>1080</sup> This obedience is the cause of good works.<sup>1081</sup> He agrees with Calvin and the Lutheran idea that confession of sin represents a new obedience and the fruits of gratitude, as previously mentioned. The word of God sets us under a new law and makes us live in a new subjection. The subjection or obedience to the new commandments and the new law is evidence of true repentance, and this is our freedom in Christ and Christ's right in us.

How little this diminishes from the importance of the law is apparent when we see that Christ's fulfillment of the law actually set the lives of believers under a "new law." Therefore we read of repentance and conversion and a joyful subjection to this "new

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1078 Ibid., 50-51.

1079 FS, 18.

1080 SIN, 197.

1081 FS, 39.

commandment” which is “not burdensome” (I John 5:3). This subjection is the clearest evidence of true repentance. In repentance God has every right to expect of believers that they fulfill his “new law.”<sup>1082</sup>

And Berkouwer argues continuously that we have to see repentance as an event in which one takes up one’s cross and follows Jesus. Of course, this also is one of the main themes in Calvin’s doctrine of repentance. Repentance is for man to bear his cross, and it becomes the discipleship of Christ. And this is the central idea of Christian life and piety. Berkouwer knew well the heart of the messages in the early church, which is “the repentance and contrition unto the forgiveness of our sins.”<sup>1083</sup> True repentance, as true obedience, is not the submission of the lips, but the submission of the heart. To this extent, Berkouwer’s idea can be connected with Calvin’s idea of repentance as an inward change of man.

Berkouwer does not substitute the *syllogismus Practicus* for faith in Christ as the fountain for certainty of salvation, and for him “sound understanding of the *Syllogismus Practicus* does not imply a second foundation but, instead, implies the realization of sanctification in everyday life.”<sup>1084</sup> Berkouwer thought that if the *Syllogismus Practicus* were to be distorted it would become a form of natural theology, where men deduce, apart from faith, their own election.<sup>1085</sup> Especially, Berkouwer’s balanced view of the *Syllogismus Practicus* is in agreement with the teaching of Scripture.

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1082 SIN, 196.

1083 SIN, 212.

1084 G. C. Berkouwer, *Divine Election* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 303.

1085 Alvin L. Baker, op. cit., 162-163.

According to Berkouwer, assurance of salvation deduced from good works can have value only “if it is exercised in the midst of a life of faith, prayer and struggle.”<sup>1086</sup> But as with the Puritans, his theology has always emphasised the importance of sanctification and it was his belief that Christian faith “always bears fruit in the practical affairs.”<sup>1087</sup>

Good works are spoken of as the fruits of a good tree.<sup>1088</sup> “If faith will but lift up its blossoms to catch the sunlight of God’s grace, the fruit will be a life imbued with holiness.”<sup>1089</sup> As true faith produces good fruit and good works, true repentance bears “the fruits of repentance” and “moral improvement”<sup>1090</sup> because, throughout the Bible, there is no possibility of an ungodly life in salvation.<sup>1091</sup> But this does not mean sanctification is a process of moral perfection in the life of the Christian.<sup>1092</sup> Hence he writes that “true faith is the key to good works” and “good works witness to that faith.”<sup>1093</sup> He believed that faith is “not merely an intellectual affirmation of a distant and alien righteousness but that it is a power which renews man and expresses itself in good works.”<sup>1094</sup> True faith is to be “the foundation of good works. And it follows from the nature of faith which clings to divine grace that it cannot possibly be

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1086 Ibid.,165.

1087 G. C. Berkouwer, “The Gospel in the world” *Christianity Today* 12 (sep. 27, 1968): 1296.

1088 Ibid., 79.

1089 Ibid., 193.

1090 FS, 36.

1091 FS, 40; “With an appeal to Scripture the possibility of salvation conjoined with an ungodly life is rejected.”

1092 FS, 104.

1093 FS, 36-8.

1094 FS, 39.

fruitful.”<sup>1095</sup>

Repentance “proceeds always from faith to works and thence back to faith.”<sup>1096</sup> Therefore *sola fide* and repentance have a significant bond with each other. And by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctification comes to us only through our faith and may not be separated from it. In Reformation theology, *Sola fide* “was not one-sided sectarianism or a weakening of the reality of salvation but by grace alone are we saved.”<sup>1097</sup> Therefore the *Sola fide* is the only sound foundation for sanctification. Berkouwer writes that the relation between faith and good works is homogeneity. So, works do not cooperate with faith but “faith with works.”<sup>1098</sup> True faith “is experienced in the daily reality of human life.”<sup>1099</sup>

In reference to good works, Kuyper distinguishes between eternal life and rewards, saying that the former is a gift to whomever believes in Jesus Christ, while the latter is an additional or “extra gift”. His idea is the same as the biblical concept about rewards. And Bavinck says that the reward is differing levels of glory. He agrees with Kuyper to that extent in this phase. “The reward of grace can hardly be the same as the eternal life given to the entire host of redeemed souls. It must be a special gift, something additional.”<sup>1100</sup> But for Kuyper, the “reward is given, not of merit, but of grace.”<sup>1101</sup> Berkouwer criticises both Kuyper and Bavinck, saying that in

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1095 FS, 41.

1096 FS, 42.

1097 FS, 43.

1098 FS, 137.

1099 Ibid.

1100 FJ, 119.

1101 FJ,120.



this sense they are incapable of scriptural defence. Contrary to Kuyper's idea of reward, Calvin, Ridderbos and Grosheide hold out that the reward in scripture is eternal life flowing from the merit of Christ's sacrifice. It is not important whether rewards are a result of a certain things or not. The importance here is in the intention of the Bible regarding rewards. If we distinguish between eternal life and additional grace, we may make the mistake that divides justification and rewards of good works. According to Berkouwer's idea of reward of good works, rewards come from the merit of Christ, therefore there is no human merit or reward because it comes from Christ as well as faith.

Confession of sins of sinners is one of external evidences of true repentance. Berkouwer sees repentance as having two phases: repentance is the work of God and, at the same time, it requires man's confession before God. The former is totally by the grace of God, but confession of sin is the fruit of true repentance.<sup>1102</sup> Apart from confession of sins our repentance is nothing but fraud and "has nothing to do with the Kingdom."<sup>1103</sup> In the true confession our knowledge of sin is a concretisation of our guilt. And by confession of sin man is living not only for God but also for his neighbours. In the act of confession the way is opened up for a man to live for others and not for himself.<sup>1104</sup>

According to Berkouwer, in Church history the Church did not reject good works as signs and witnesses of faith, but he rejected good works as a law. In his theology, sanctification occurs only by the power of God and our faith and does not come about

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1102 SIN, 229.

1103 Ibid.

1104 SIN, 229-30.

through man's meritorious action. Berkouwer acknowledges himself to be in line with traditional Reformed teaching which rejects the Catholic concept of grace as a *donum superadditum*, a new dimension in the world. Nevertheless, the problem in Berkouwer's doctrine of sanctification is that it is theoretical because he bypasses the concrete problems of this life.<sup>1105</sup>

Sometimes Berkouwer uses the terms 'conversion' and 'repentance' with the same meaning. When we approach his doctrine of repentance we must consider this. For Berkouwer, as for Calvin, repentance and conversion are works initiated by God. To an extent, Berkouwer rejects Calvin's concepts of faith, rebirth, and new creation, as hints of a meritorious transition because he, as we see in the Canons of Dort,<sup>1106</sup> thinks that Calvin's concept did not admit wholly "the priority of grace" in this.<sup>1107</sup>

Therefore, repentance requires the humility of man. So, "true humility and repentance are the portion of those who live in the Kingdom of God and the very criterion of their entrance"<sup>1108</sup> because humility is the greater gift of the Holy Spirit and therefore it is identified with conversion and the gift of conversion. Even though

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1105 D. Ivan Dykstra, "Faith and Sanctification" *Theology Today* 10 (Jl 1953): 263-266.

1106 Synod of Dort, THIRD AND FOURTH HEAD: ARTICLE 3. Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation.

1107 FS, 95.

1108 SIN, 228.

humility is the evidence of conversion, “conversion can never be regarded by a humble man as the product of his own achievement or the condition for his gaining salvation.”<sup>1109</sup>

## SUMMARY

Berkouwer’s doctrine of repentance is not easy to summarise in a single word because sometimes he follows the traditional orthodox Reformed line and sometimes he has his own unique interpretation.

Berkouwer has no serious knowledge of sins and sense of guilt even though he explains sin in terms of concreteness and in relation to God. Therefore there is no reprobation and hell because he regards them as a corollary of salvation.

But, as with other Reformed theologians, the starting point of Berkouwer’s doctrine of repentance is the grace of God and faith in Christ. Thus he deals with the doctrine of repentance in his book, *Faith and Justification* because he wants to treat it in terms of the correlation between faith and repentance and he wants to show the position of repentance in faith.

Faith and repentance are not interdependent, but closely connected in the grace of God in Christ. By faith the sinner knows that he is a sinner and understands the necessity of repentance. Since, to Berkouwer, faith is the only means of salvation, he did not want repentance to deal in meritoriousness. Repentance is an act of God

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1109 SIN, 227.

received in faith. Repentance is a means of strengthening faith.

Repentance is a *sine qua non* in salvation, but it cannot be a meritorious condition of salvation. Berkouwer never considers faith as a meritorious work of man because sinners never deduce the divine forgiveness from human repentance. God is the foundation of repentance and the cause of repentance. God moves believers to repentance.

Repentance is an essential element of the Gospel and the law of God; Law gives us the knowledge of sin and through the Gospel we can know the grace of God and Christ. So repentance and forgiveness of sins can be seen as the essence of the word of God, and, at the same time, repentance is a consequence of the proper preaching of the word of God.

True repentance is understood in the scope of the Kingdom of heaven and is preached in the message of the Kingdom of God, but repentance is not the anticipation of the kingdom but its consequence.

Repentance occurs once as a ministry of God, but it is progressive in that God changes man from sinners to righteous people. Repentance is a kind of progress, not from justification, but within justification.

The presupposition of sanctification is 'being sanctified and therefore to be sanctified.' The foundation of man's good work is the grace of God and it is gratitude and obedience to God. Obedience to God is an essential element of repentance. This is our freedom in Christ. As true faith produces good fruit and good works, true repentance bears the fruits of repentance and moral improvement. True faith is the key

to good works and good works witness to that faith. But this never becomes synergism.

Berkouwer tries to overcome the offset by Barth in the relationship between God and man in the doctrine of repentance with a great wealth of knowledge of the Bible, but he does not overcome it. Therefore one does not find sufficient specific guidelines with regard to the manner in which repentance should be dealt with in pastoral ministry.