

PART TWO

Chapter 4. The Doctrine of Penance in the Theology of the Roman Catholic Church

4. 1. The Necessity of Penance in soteriology

4. 1. 1. A Short Historical Background of Penance

The Roman Catholic Church argues that the early church believed that true Christians never sin against God after receiving the baptism that was given to them by Christ. So, most Christians, according to the Roman Catholic Church, have tried not to sin in their lives and they have even postponed their baptism till their deathbeds to prevent them from post-baptismal sin. This idea was the trend of the early Church and was one of main traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.

First century Christians believed in repentance as being once-and-for-all on account of impending eschatology of the Lord's imminent return, but during the persecution under the Roman authorities, the Church needed new ways for those who had fallen from the way of salvation. As a result "the view that God always forgives the person who is repentant"¹¹¹⁰ was brought into the second century Christian beliefs.

The reason that penance came about was that with the fading of the intense

1110 Karl Rahner, *Penance in the Early Church: Theological Investigations*, Vol. XV, tr. Lionel Swain (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 9. Actually many theologians have almost the same view about the history of the evolution of penance of the Roman Church. For further information of the history, methods, and kinds of penance, See, McNeill John T. and Gamer, Helena M., *Medieval Handbooks of penance*, no. XXIX (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938).

eschatological expectations of primitive Christianity, many of them were afraid of grave post-baptismal sins because they could find no absolution from them. So through this they were provided with the institutional means and paedobaptism to solve the “problem of post-baptismal sins.” Thus they believed that baptism was given as a permanent seal or character, but as a solution for grave and venial sins that would unavoidably be committed penance was required.¹¹¹¹

And on account of the relaxation of “the extreme rigorism of those who would not allow any repentance or forgiveness for sins committed after baptism”¹¹¹² both the Church and the penitent had to mitigate discipline. The sacrament of penance was the result of this.

During the period of persecution under the Roman Empire, the Church had defined items of unforgivable sins. But in spite of trends in the early Church, the Church condemned Montanism and Novatianism that had rigorism against a gradual erosion of the unforgivable nature of capital sins and defined the items of unforgivable sins: impurity, murder, apostasy. Since this was so, penance was an important issue from the beginning of the Church.

Thus, step-by-step, sinners could not only participate in the Eucharist but also re-enter the Christian community after confessing their sins to a bishop and receiving penance from him. Especially for the perfect reconciliation with the Church particular dress, particular place in celebration of the liturgy and penitential obligations, such as

1111 John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 89-93.

1112 *Ibid.*, 93

fasting of the penitents were required.¹¹¹³

The sacramental nature of penance, according to Karl Rahner, was externalised into public Church penance and official celebration but there was no receiving of subjective penance. Post-baptismal sins were regarded as destroying the grace of baptism; therefore one should submit to Church penance.¹¹¹⁴ For that reason penance and reconciliation as a way of restoration became an important means of salvation and especially “peace with the Church (*pax cum ecclesia*) is considered the means of reconciliation with God.”¹¹¹⁵ The Church believed that this authority came from Christ’s commission.

Rahner criticized the thoughts of Poschmann concerning penance, claiming that in “*Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*” he did not adequately indicate the characters of public penance in early Church. According to Rahner, “Christian penance developed primarily and exclusively as *paenitentia publica* with all its external and juridical character.”¹¹¹⁶ As we know from Rahner’s criticism, the penance of the early Church is the public penance.

But for now it is important for us to understand how we can connect with the doctrine of repentance of Reformed theology and penance. So as Poschmann presents it, when we deal with the sacrament of penance we must treat the following elements prominently: the necessity of subjective repentance for sins committed after baptism

1113 Karl Rahner, *Penance in the Early Church*, 10.

1114 Ibid., 8.

1115 Ibid., 12-13.

1116 Ibid., 20

as a factor in the remission of sin, the relation between subjective repentance and cooperation with the Church and intercessory prayer of the priests for sins.¹¹¹⁷

The reason why the Roman Catholic theology has a different view about penance as compared to Reformed theology is that the Roman Catholic Church believes in the loss of interior grace that is given to man through Christ Jesus and for the restoration of this grace it is necessary for there to be an impulse from outside.¹¹¹⁸ But a loss of interior grace after baptism or the loss of grace through sin, according to Rahner, does not appear in the Bible and early apostolic documents, but it rather appears very clearly in documents of the later apostolic fathers, especially in the second letter of Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas.¹¹¹⁹

In fact, in the book of Hermas *μετάνοια*, according to Rahner, is penance on the occasion of baptism, once and for all and it has an unrepeatable character. And the problem of what is forgivable and unforgivable, for him, depends on whether it is true repentance or not.¹¹²⁰ And Hermas had a positive view towards post-baptismal penance and opens the possibility of it. But he held a negative position towards the possibility of Church-penance. Because even though there are some exceptional cases and methods, he thought that in general it is difficult for Church-penance to exist.¹¹²¹

Irenaeus, according to Rahner, clearly expressed the connection between sins, the

1117 Ibid.

1118 Cited from Ibid., 27-28.

1119 Hugh Connolly, *Sin: New Century Theology* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 41-49.

See for more information of sin and penance in the early Church.

1120 Karl Rahner, *Penance in the Early Church*, 79-80.

1121 Ibid., 81.

loss of grace and exclusion from the kingdom of God. Nevertheless it was nothing more than exhortation in Irenaeus' days but after Tertullianus this theme became an object of the explicit and direct truths of the faith. For Tertullianus, some sins cause the loss of the grace of God but there is only one baptism for sin.¹¹²² Tertullianus classified sins as forgivable sins or unforgivable sins, and he argued that some kinds of sins can not be forgiven. Therefore, in the Roman Catholic Church, for a Christian who commits serious sins that cause the loss of grace of God after baptism penance became a second baptism that restored the grace of God to sinners.¹¹²³

Some kinds of sins, Hermas mentioned, can destroy the grace of God and baptismal seal, while by the second baptism any kinds of sins can be forgiven. For Hermas penance is an important means to restore the baptismal seal of the saints and it is equivalent to baptism.¹¹²⁴

In the book of Shepherd of Hermas, J. Grotz argued, "penance as a church-sacramental event and penance of excommunication are identical," but such an understanding, according to Rahner, is contradicted by the sources. Rahner argues that the penance of the early Church is nothing but an external event of church discipline. But in spite of Rahner's argument, penance of the early Church is totally different to

1122 In Tertullianus' idea for baptism it is clear that man is redeemed by Christ's unrepeatable suffering on the Cross. This redemptive offering is appropriated by man at baptism which, however, he is able to receive only once. For him the passion of Christ on the Cross and baptism are unrepeatable because they are once in salvation. Specifically, unforgivable sinners who commit the capital sins cannot be tolerated in the community of the Church because these kinds of sins annul the effects of baptism. Tertullianus presented martyrdom, "the baptism of blood," as the only means for forgiveness of these sins. *Ibid.*, 47-49.

1123 *Ibid.*, 42.

1124 *Ibid.*, 68.

the sacramental and institutional penance of modern Roman Catholicism in intention and method because it was not yet institutionalised as well as being an admonition to sinners.

The Roman Catholic Church institutionalized it to gain authority for the Church but excluded the assurance of salvation and peace for the Christian. Nevertheless the intention of the inception of penance may have been the keeping of the spiritual safety of Christians and the Church. This shows us that the initial intention of penance was a practical answer for Christians who committed sin under the persecution. So we can conclude that sacramental and institutional penance were not a product of Scripture, but an invention of the later Christian Church. Even though the Roman Catholic Church has asserted that the starting point of the sacrament of penance is Biblical, actually the starting point of it is traditional especially where it is related to the treatment of apostates who were brought to martyrdom and persecution.¹¹²⁵

From early Church history the power of the bishop in penance was absolute. In penance the power of the bishop, according to Tertullianus, was decisive and penance began with “the excommunication of the sinner which was necessarily expressed by the bishop.”¹¹²⁶

Concerning this idea Rahner argued that even though Tertullianus acknowledged subjective penance he also acknowledged penance through the Church because in fact, he presupposed that Christ and Church have an indissoluble relationship and it is supported by the power of the Holy Spirit. And Rahner argues that if he

1125 John M. T. Barton, *Penance and Absolution* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), 30-45.

1126 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 138.

acknowledged personal penance he, then, inevitably becomes semi-pelagian or Stoic.¹¹²⁷ But, however, as a matter of fact, Tertullianus did not avow penance through the Church but he acknowledged subjective penance or personal penance between God and man through Christ and the Holy Spirit as the only form of penance. Tertullianus regarded subjective penance or the penance of personal satisfaction exclusively as the work of man. Therefore the sacrament of penance through the Church was to come into being after Tertullianus.

The characteristics of penance which is from the Apostles' era to the early of sixth century, according to Regis A. Duffy, can be classified into four areas: First, reconciliation with the official church is considered necessary for salvation;¹¹²⁸ secondly, the Church uniquely possesses the Holy Spirit as a mediator of penance; thirdly, impact on the community is stressed rather than analysis of sin *per se*; and fourthly, in canonical penance, conversion is implicitly treated not as a once in a lifetime experience but “as a life long process.”¹¹²⁹ The classification of Regis A. Duffy shows the change of method of penance from “once in a lifetime” to “life long process.”

And, especially, in the third and fourth centuries under the persecution by Roman authorities, many Christians had beliefs about ‘apostasy of Christians’ and ‘their readmission into communion’ that “martyrs had the power to win forgiveness from

1127 Ibid., 150-51. He may criticize the doctrine of repentance with this idea but for Reformed Church the starting point is always objectivity of God.

1128 Regis A. Duffy, *Penance: Systematic Theology*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 235.

1129 Ibid., 237.

Christ for the sins of others”¹¹³⁰ and by the power of martyrs they could enter again into the Church and live without obstacles.

Cyprian objected to this situation as he wanted to keep the purity of the Church, and that “admitting the lapsed to communion, even under the patronage of martyrs, was not only inappropriate but extremely dangerous” because he believed that persecution by Roman authorities was a means of God to cleanse the church and to remove the unfit members. Therefore he rejected the readmission of the lapsed to the Church without “repentance or the fuller performance of their religious duties.”¹¹³¹ Nevertheless the Church opened its door for the lapsed that made public confessions and for indulgence because she believed that public confession can reverse the prior failure of apostates.¹¹³²

“Irish tax and tariff penance” that was personal and repeatable, adopted by Irish missionaries from the sixth century, was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church.¹¹³³ Originally auricular confession began with public scandal, but after the Synod of Toledo of AD. 589 it became a legal obligation for all Christians.¹¹³⁴ On account of this new penance, penitents came to confess their sins to priests and priests gave

1130 J.P. Burns, *Confessing the Church: Cyprian on Penance*, ed. Maurice F. Wiles, et al *Studia Patristica. XXXVI*, Critica et philologica, Nachleben, First two centuries, Tertullian to Arnobius, Egypt before Nicaea, Athanasius and his opponents. International Conference on Patristic Studies, 13th, Oxford, 1999. Louvain: Peeters, 2001, 340.

1131 Ibid.

1132 Ibid., 141.

1133 For the tariff penance and the beginning of private penance, see, Michael S. Driscoll, *Penance in Transition: Popular Piety and Practice: Medieval Liturgy*, ed. Lyzette Larson Miller, Garland Medieval casebooks; Vol. 18, (New York: Garland Pub., 1997), 121-163.

1134 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 13.

satisfaction and absolution¹¹³⁵ to penitents. Because of this, penance was changed from once to repeatable, community-centered to personal-centered and Church-centered to priest-centered. Therefore the idea of reconciliation with the Church community through the sacrament of penance through public confession was weakened.

As far as the sacrament of penance is concerned, the discomforts and humiliation that once attended it gradually disappeared. Confession of sins became a private matter between the penitent and priest therefore “both the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of reconciliation were in danger of losing their seriousness and of becoming matters of routine.”¹¹³⁶

Since the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 seven sacraments had been formalised; penance became a requisite element concerning those guilty of mortal sins and Christians had to do obligatory penance at least once a year. Therefore “from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, private penance steadily grew in importance and other forms of ecclesial penance declined in the estimation of theologians.”¹¹³⁷

The Council of Trent re-intensified a system of auricular penance for the Roman Catholic Church as opposed to Reformation, and the Council of Trent clarified her own view about penance. Therefore, some theologians have criticised the Council of Trent for not being able to provide a balanced theology to the Church because it was

1135 Dallen argued that there was no absolution in the period of Irish penance but Rahner mentioned absolution in that period.

1136 John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, 93

1137 James Dallen, *The Reconciliation Community: The Rite of Penance* (New York: Pueblo Publishing company, 1986), 139.

exceedingly inclined towards anti-Protestantism.¹¹³⁸

The reason why the Roman Catholic Church asserts auricular confession in the presence of a priest was that she believed that she had the power of forgiveness of sins which were committed to the apostles of Christ. Another reason was that because sin was not only breaking a relationship with God, but also with the Church, penitents had to reconcile with the Church through a priest who was seen as its formal representative, as well as with God. And the reason for the necessity of penance, according to Roman theology, was that through the sacrament of penance the penitent was reconciled with God and was given peace and conviction and at the same time it had the effect of prevention of sins.

We can summarise the reasons for the necessity of penance of the Roman Church: Firstly, through it penitents were forgiven from sins and reconciled with God and neighbors. Secondly, the penitent was spared God's punishment on him, that is, eternal punishment and temporal punishment. (Eternal punishment is punishment that is breaking the relationship with God and temporal punishment is the punishment which if penitent does not compensate to the satisfaction of the priest on this earth he must compensate for it in purgatory.) Thirdly, it liberates the penitent from the swamp of sin. Fourthly, his merit before God is lost by sin but when his sins are forgiven by penance he can restore his merit of good works. Fifthly, the penitent gains the conviction of having been forgiven through the priest's absolution and he may live as a child of God in peace and hope. Sixthly, he can decide to sin no more and resist the flesh, secular pleasures and the temptation of Satan by the grace of God. Seventhly,

1138 Regis A. Duffy, *op. cit.*, 238.

by confession of sin the penitent receives the grace of God and by admonition of the priest he can do good works. He can turn his heart to good because he has been forgiven. Finally by penance the penitent does not carry the seriousness of sin any more and the life of Jesus Christ dwells in his body. Thus, often penance elevates the Christian to the level of saints. Even though the Church does not hold with the deification of the Eastern Orthodox Church it nonetheless pursues perfect sanctification through penance.

4. 1. 2. Penance and Sin

A study of the hamartiology of the Roman Catholic Church supplies an important key to understanding the sacrament of penance because through her hamartiology one can know the original cause and necessity of penance which started with the problem of forgiveness of sins. Her hamartiology is not only concerned with God but also with the Church.

Sin is “an offense towards God,” Andrew Cuschieri wrote at Vatican Council II, and “hurts the church; thus sin also assumes the nature of infliction of pain upon the Church.”¹¹³⁹ Therefore penance, which is related to the problem of forgiveness of sin, inevitably concentrates on the restoration of the relationship with God and the Church. Generally, sin is man’s self-estrangement from God.¹¹⁴⁰ And one’s sin affects oneself,

1139 Andrew Cuschieri, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation: A Theological and Canonical Treatise* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 61.

1140 Mark Searle, *Penance: Pastoral Liturgy, A Symposium* ed. Harold Winstone (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1975), 199.

other neighbors and the church and even society. So sinners have a responsibility to all the above as it destroys the relationship with them. Therefore, the sacrament of penance became a way of reconciliation with God and the church. An ecclesial aspect of sin and confession was endorsed by many theologians and Vatican II.¹¹⁴¹ As in the disposition of sin we know, it is closely connected with God and Church.

No concept of sin could ever be comprehensive unless it is formulated within the context of the two great commandments and their intimate inter-relatedness. These two commandments are distinct, yet inseparable; so intimately connected that one necessitates the other, one cannot be implemented without the other; disobedience to one has repercussions over the other. By reason of this intimacy, sin cannot but embrace these two commandments at the same time.¹¹⁴²

But actually concerning sins, the Roman Catholic Church gives weight to a relationship with the Church rather than with God.

As to the classification of sin, the Roman Church has various opinions. Mortal sin is described as “any great offence against the law of God,” as trespass against the law of God, and it destroys love in our heart and betrays God who is our end and happiness. It damages the relationship with God irreparably, causes rebellion against God and finally turning away from God. But venial sin is “small and pardonable offences against God, or our neighbor.”¹¹⁴³ In general apostasy, murder and adultery are classified as mortal sin. In more detail, mortal sin includes the so-called “seven deadly sins”: “pride, covetousness, lechery (lust, lewdness), anger, gluttony, envy, and

1141 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 17.

1142 Andrew Cuschieri, op. cit., 61.

1143 Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968), 199-200.

sloth.”¹¹⁴⁴ These are not only sins themselves, but also reason for inducting other sins. But the dividing point of these sins is that the individual is conscious of mortal sins and deliberately commits these sins, knowing that it will lead to a break in his relationship with God. These sins prevent sinners from entering the kingdom of God and finally they go to Hell. Therefore sinners who have committed mortal sins cannot participate in the Lord’s Supper.¹¹⁴⁵ But it does not mean that unintentional sin does not require penance.

The Dutch Catechism clearly explains the relationship between mortal sins and venial sins in the Roman Catholic theology. For it the main differentiations between them are rather relationship with the law, knowledge and the person’s moral intention, than matters of sins.

We commit mortal sin if we transgress the law of God in an important matter with full knowledge and completely free will. We commit venial sin if we transgress the law of God in a small matter, or if we transgress God’s law in an important matter, but without full knowledge or complete free will.¹¹⁴⁶

But the definition of mortal sins by the Roman Catholic Church has room for problems because sometimes “violations of the rules of the Church are treated as mortal sins, while transgressions of the commandments of God are treated as venial sins.”¹¹⁴⁷ But Scripture does not divide sins into mortal and venial but rather Scripture

1144 H.V.S. Eck, *Sin: The Oxford Library of Practical Theology*, ed. W. C. E. Newbolt and Darwell Stone (London, New York, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 117-138.

1145 Pierre, Remy, *Theology of the Sacrament of Penance: The Sacrament of Penance* (Glen Rock: Deus books Paulist Press, 1966), 56.

1146 F. J. Heggen, op. cit., 72.

1147 H.V.S. Eck, *Sin*, 86-144.

regards all sins as the same. (Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:4; Jas. 2:10) Therefore, this classification of sins is arbitrary and absurd in the light of the Bible because it comes not from Scripture but rather from tradition.¹¹⁴⁸

The Roman Catholic Church argues that at all times penance is necessary for all “who have stained themselves by some mortal sin.”¹¹⁴⁹ Mortal sin necessitates the full and immediate sacrament of penance, but there is no obligation to do penance for venial sin. Venial sin can be forgiven without penance and Holy Communion, but penance for venial sin will be a source of receiving the greater grace of God. The confession for venial sin is not necessary but useful for piety and the souls of Christians.

As a matter of fact the dividing line between mortal sins and venial sins is obscure because the church has not classified what is mortal or venial and what is intentional or unintentional accurately. Therefore it is very difficult for the individual to understand the kinds of sins. Even though the Roman Church suggests reflection of the conscience as a dividing line, when one considers the total corruption by sins and total depravity, it is very difficult to accept that the human conscience has become the criterion for judging them because due to the depravity of original nature mankind lost his ability to do judge right and wrong for himself. The reason that the Roman Catholic Church has argued that the individual can judge the dividing lines between

1148 F. J. Heggen, *Confession and the Service of Penance*, tr. Peter Tomlinson (London, Melbourne: Sheed and Ward, 1967), 71.

1149 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 14, Teaching concerning the most holy Sacraments of Penance and last Anointing, of Council of Trent 1551: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils. Vol. II, Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 703.

sins is that she believes that human beings can be restored to that perfect and holy condition by baptism. But ultimately the dividing line between sins depends on “the definition of the priest who is successor to the apostles and has the power of forgiveness of sin and the nature of the purpose to be served.”¹¹⁵⁰

The Roman Catholic Church classified the conditions of sin in three forms: The first condition is bad conduct; that it is conduct and a heart that does not conform to the will of God. This is a breach of the law of God, ethics and the authoritative commandment of the Church. Second condition is its intention; if the sinner is conscious of his bad conduct it becomes a sin but if not, it is not a sin. Lastly it must be “freely agreed sin.” In other word even though it is bad conduct and intentional sin it can not be sin if the sinner does not freely agree to commit the sin. If the sinner knowingly commits sin but is coerced by external forces; as in situations of oppression by authorities, it is not a sin.¹¹⁵¹

With regards to penance, Rahner, classified sins into three forms based on the effects of sins: firstly, “the juridical-ethical or moral approach.” In it sin is considered “a transgression of the divine law.” The second is called the “end-of-time or eschatological approach.” And finally it is from the point of view of grace that “the person who sins destroys the life which he has received in baptism; he expels the Spirit from his innermost being and destroys the seal which he received in baptism.”¹¹⁵² But all three, according to Rahner, correspond necessarily to the very nature of sin and have “the same value in practice for a dogmatic proof in a particular

1150 Loraine Boettner, op. cit., 264.

1151 H.V.S. Eck, *Sin: The Oxford Library of Practical Theology*, 61-85.

1152 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 24-25.

question, and one can take the place of the others.”¹¹⁵³

In general Roman Catholic theology has taught that the sins of a Christian are forgiven by baptism so he lives a holy life but in spite of this teaching Christians have committed sins continuously and it is a menace to the justified and regenerated; hence the necessity for penance and beginning of Christian repentance.

On original sin, the Council of Trent wrote that by the transgression of Adam he was lost his “holiness and righteousness in which he had been established,” and his transgression of disobedience against the law of God incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and his original sin transmitted to all mankind by propagation.¹¹⁵⁴ But through baptism man can have remission of sin which he lost in Adam.

The Council of Trent disclaimed the merits of good works of man without the grace of God and the merits of free will without grace through Jesus Christ. But it also disclaimed salvation by the grace only without free will. It never underestimates the free will of man in soteriology. It shows that even though man lost his righteousness he does not lose his free will all.¹¹⁵⁵ Sin can be defined in other words as an action of man and the will of man that destroys and hurts the relationship with God by offending the will of God. Sin is man’s action that resists the justice of God therefore penance which is the counterpart of sin is an action of man to bring about the restoration of the justice of God.¹¹⁵⁶

1153 Ibid., 25.

1154 Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 262.

1155 Ibid., 263.

1156 Andrew Cuschieri, *op. cit.*, 131.

Consequently the Roman Catholic Church rejects justification by faith alone because she acknowledges the value of cooperation works of human beings in soteriology. Moreover, good works in her theology are not fruits of justification but have their own independent role in soteriology. So the Roman Church anathemised the saying “that justification once received is not preserved and even increased in the sight of God through works; but that these same works are only signs of justification, not the cause of its increase.”¹¹⁵⁷ To the church sin is the free act of man against God and as such is guilty in the presence of God. Therefore penance which is the means of restoration of the grace of God is necessary for salvation in Catholic theology. So penance is the action of man and at the same time it is the action of God upon men that forgives sin.¹¹⁵⁸

The Roman Catholic Church forgives post-baptismal sins through the act of penance.¹¹⁵⁹ The process starts with contrition and confession and is completed with satisfaction. The sacrament of penance forgives both mortal sin and venial sin and through forgiveness of sins the penitent restores lost merits and he receives a special grace to avoid sin in the future. In the Roman Catholic Church however the supreme judge of sins is the priest and he has the power of forgiveness of the post-baptismal sins of penitents in the sacrament of penance. The priest judges the kinds of sins, and the level of penance and method of carrying it out arbitrarily. The reason why he imposes penance is that even though he has the power of forgiveness of sins he has no power of abolishing penalty; so to be rid of sin’s penalty he imposes penance to

1157 Henry Bettenson, *op. cit.*, 263.

1158 Karl Rahner, *op. cit.*, 4.

1159 H.V.S. Eck, *Sin: The Oxford Library of Practical Theology*, 167-175.

penitents.¹¹⁶⁰

On the basis of Matt. 16: 19 and John 20: 21-23 the Roman Catholic Church asserts that she has the apostolic succession and is entrusted with the power of forgiveness of sins from Christ, therefore the priests as her servants have the power of forgiveness of sins. As a result, all Roman Catholic Christians must confess their sins to a priest at least once a year.¹¹⁶¹ If the penitent omits one of them his confession is, then, meaningless. So he must confess his sins in detail and openly. But exegesis of these verses must be interpreted figuratively rather than literally because these verses are connected with the preaching of the word of God.

The interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church concerning of Heb. 6:4-6, Mt. 12:12 and 1Jn 5:16 on unforgivable or irremissible sin is different to the ideas of the Reformers because all sin can be forgiven by the sacrament of penance since there are, in fact, no unforgivable sins in its theology. Although, for the Roman Catholic Church as well as Calvin, these sins are not any particular kind or class of sins but rather the state of the heart of sinners towards God.

Actually, examination of the passage that seems to refer to an irremissible sin suggests that the emphasis is not on any particular class of grave fault, but upon the obduracy and hardheartedness of the sinner, who is unwilling to seek pardon and reconciliation with God.” And “it is not the sin itself that is beyond pardon; rather the state of mind of the sinner makes it exceedingly hard for him to ask for pardon, and to be again converted to God.¹¹⁶²

1160 Mark Searle, op. cit., 190-191; Austin Flannery, ed. *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: Vatican Council II*, Vol. I (New York: Costello publishing company, 1975), 39-40.

1161 James Dallen, *The Reconciliation Community: The Rite of Penance*, 139.

1162 John M. T. Barton, *Penance and Absolution* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), 28-29.

Therefore concerning unforgivable sins and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Roman church has noted that these are not a reference to irremissible sins but “challenge and warning about obstinacy to God that contradicts baptismal commitments.”¹¹⁶³

In conclusion, penance is only one way to solve the problem of forgiveness of post-baptismal sins and the priest has the power of forgiveness of sins. And therefore irrespective of the kinds of sins and the levels of sins, penance ordered by the priest can forgive sins.

Recently the Roman Catholic Church was faced with the problems of the modern world so her hamartiology clashes with the problems of the twenty-first century: “our knowledge of the age of the planet; our sense of the evolution of the species; our growing knowledge of our continuity with other forms of life; sexuality and emotion; the inadmissibility of guilt without responsibility.”¹¹⁶⁴ But she solves this problem of sin with the position of the Council of Trent because she thinks that the latest official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church concerning sin is the teaching of the Council of Trent and it preserved reinterpreting the sins of modern times. Therefore in the light of hamartiology she never changes her position of the Council of Trent.

1163 Regis A. Duffy, op. cit., 234.

1164 Roger Haight, *Sin and Grace: Systematic Theology, Roman Catholic Theology Vol. II*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 78-89.

4. 1. 3. Penance and Baptism

From the early Church baptism has been associated primarily with forgiveness of sin, reconciliation, conversion and penance. Especially in reconciliation baptism is a primordial principal.¹¹⁶⁵ On the basis of Matthew 18, the Roman Catholic Church pointed to the parallel between baptism and penance.

In Roman Catholic theology the cause and the necessity of the sacrament of penance are different from repentance of Reformed theology. In Roman Catholic theology penance is a valuable means or sacrament to take hold of grace and restore the penitent once again to the state of grace.¹¹⁶⁶ Sometimes Roman Catholic theology treats penance and baptism as a chain of events where baptism is the bestowal of new life and penance is restoration of the bestowed new life. Therefore they can be treated as the same in meaning to life.

It is thus also incorrect to assume that penance affects a man who has lapsed in the same way that baptism affects the unbaptized. True enough, penance as well as baptism is called a sacrament of the dead, and the seriousness of sin and of falling into mortal sin must be fully recognized; but it is given to those who have this ‘unindelible character.’¹¹⁶⁷

But in the Council of Trent the points of difference between the sacrament of penance and the sacrament of baptism are cleared. Baptism, in the Roman Catholic

1165 Robert J. Kennedy, *Reconciliation: The Continuing Agenda*, ed. Robert J. Kennedy (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 48.

1166 G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Perseverance*, tr. Robert D. Knudsen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 48.

1167 *Ibid.*, 50-51. In his footnote 23 of chapter 3, Berkouwer criticized that “Sacraments of the dead (penance and baptism) are distinguished from sacraments of the living (the other five). The former effect justification; the latter increase grace which is already present. Trent said that both of these were functions of the sacraments, but later theologians arrived at the above distinction.”

Church, is grace that is given through Christ but penance is the decision of it through a priest. Characteristically, baptism occurs once and there is no repetition but penance occurs often and is repeatable. Baptism is for the unregenerated but penance is for those who have fallen after Baptism. Finally through baptism “we put on Christ and become in him an entirely new creature, gaining full and complete remission of all sins” but penance is a product of great weeping and labor, so that it is called “a laborious kind of baptism.”¹¹⁶⁸

Penance is “the response given by the baptized believer to a situation of mortal sin; it is manifested in a laborious ascetic process of penance, in order to recover that first of conversion and grace of baptism, through which the sinner is reborn by forgiveness and is accepted and welcomed into full communion with God and the Church.”¹¹⁶⁹

The justification which is obtained through baptism can be lost by committing sins. In other words, grace through Christ can be lost by apostate and mortal sins, which are fornication, adultery, wantonness, sodomy, theft, avarice, drunkenness, slander, plundering and so on. Those involved in these sins are “severed from the grace of Christ.”¹¹⁷⁰

1168 Norman. P. Tanner, op. cit., 704.

1169 Dionisio Borobio, *Sacramental Forgiveness of Sins: Forgiveness*, tr. Dinah Livingstone, ed. Casiano Floristán and Christian Duquoc; English language Editor. Marcus Lefébure. Concilium 184 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 97.

1170 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 6 of Council of Trent 1546: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils. Vol. II, Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 677.

The Roman Catholic Church accepts baptism as the first conversion and penance as the second conversion. Baptism is given freely to man from God and penance is brought about by works of penance by the penitent. The latter is called ‘a second raft after a shipwreck’¹¹⁷¹ and implies the restoration to the first status.

Nevertheless both baptism and penance play a more important role than other sacramental elements. Baptism is a means of forgiveness of original sins and all sins before believing in Christ but penance is a means of reconciliation with God whenever they fall into sin after baptism.¹¹⁷² By Baptism children are “snatched away from the dominion of the devil and adopted as children of God.”¹¹⁷³ In this baptism the Roman Catholic Church sees the victory of Christ against sin and by the baptism of Christ “the old man is crucified with Christ” so that we may serve sin no longer. And we are raised with Christ and live for this new life in the baptism. Through this belief the Roman Catholic Church emphasises the importance of one baptism for the remission of sins.

The Roman Catholic Church adopted the forgiveness of sins through baptism in the Creed of the Council of Trent in that “I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.”¹¹⁷⁴ This is an exceptional confession that was never mentioned in

1171 Norman. P. Tanner, Session 14, 711.

1172 Henry Bettenson, op. cit., 264.

1173 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Bull of Union with the Corps, Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence-Rome-1442: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils. Vol. I, Nicaea I to Lateran V* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 576-77.

1174 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 3 of Council of Trent 1546: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils. Vol. II, Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 662.

the original form of Nicene Creed¹¹⁷⁵ and the Apostle's Creed. The Roman Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox Church promulgate this article to facilitate forgiveness of sin by penance which is concerned with sin after having received baptism in the Church. Therefore she argues that anyone who denies that the righteousness through Christ is applied to us by the sacrament of baptism becomes an anathema.¹¹⁷⁶ (Let him be an anathema).

On the basis of “unless a person is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” of John 3:5, the righteousness of Christ, who is the Son of God and our Savior, is applied to us by the waters of rebirth and we become adopted children.¹¹⁷⁷ For Roman Catholic theology baptism of water is used as an important means of salvation. In the sacrament of baptism, for her, water is not a metaphor but true and natural water because those who are baptised are not only obliged to be faithful but also to observe the whole law of Christ.¹¹⁷⁸ Baptism is necessary for salvation and even a baptism by priests in the state of mortal sins is also

1175 The original form of the Nicene Creed, as adopted at Nicaea, 325 and the Latin Version of Hilarius Pictaviensis, between 356 and 361 had had no “I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins (*Confiteor inum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum*) but *Formula Recepta Ecclesiae Orientalis* and *Formula Recepta Ecclesiae Occidentalis at Nicaea, 381* added it to original form of Nicene Creed later. See, Philip Schaff, ed. *Symbolum Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum: The Creed of Christendom, Vol. III*, 57-61; Philip Schaff, ed. *The Nicene Creed: The Creed of Christendom, Vol. I*, 24-29; Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 24-26.

1176 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 5 of Council of Trent 1546: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils. Vol. II, Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 666.

1177 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 6 of Council of Trent 1546*, 672.

1178 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 7, Canons on the Sacrament of Baptism , of Council of Trent 1547: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils. Vol. II, Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 684.

effective.

Penance, as well as baptism, is, according to the Roman Catholic Church, instituted faithfully by Christ but in essence they are different sacraments. Baptism itself is not the sacrament of penance¹¹⁷⁹ and they have distinct roles in the sacrament.

But penance and baptism in Roman Catholic theology have an important relationship. If one is baptised, his sin that was committed before baptism is forgiven and he becomes a new man, yet the problem of post-baptismal sin is serious. Especially for mortal sins it is necessary for the forgiveness of sins to be tangible. As a result of this problem the Roman Catholic Church requires confession of sin and penance in respect of mortal sins, and furthermore it is not mere inward change but accomplished by external duty because she believes that this can prevent future sins. For this reason the Christian who is baptised confesses his sins to a priest regularly and the penitent will receive approval of forgiveness of sins from the priest in the sacrament of penance.

Calvin considered repentance as a process of a lifetime, but the Roman Catholic Church divided Calvin's term 'repentance' into baptism and penance; baptism is the ultimate decision or change of life and death to sin (*mortificatio et vivificatio*); penance is the action for forgiveness of post-baptismal sins. Baptism is based on the grace of God, but actually penance, although, like baptism, it presupposes the grace of God and the Cross of Christ, focuses on man's external attitude. Although the Roman Catholic Church has emphasised the internalisation of penance, her main interest is

1179 Henry Bettenson. op. cit., 265.

the external means of penance in relationship with the Church because she believes that by concentrating on the inward manifestation to sin one may be placed in danger of forgetting about the sin itself.¹¹⁸⁰ This is based on the ideal classification between penance and baptism. Consequently, penance is not included in baptism but it has a continual character of baptism even though it is dealt as an independent sacrament from baptism.

By the baptism of the Church infant and adult Christians are saved; Christians who are consecrated by the waters of baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity are saved.

The sacrament of baptism is consecrated in water at the invocation of the undivided Trinity-namely Father, Son and Holy Spirit and brings salvation to both children and adults when it is correctly carried out by anyone in the form laid down by the church. (*Sacramentum vero baptismi, quod ad invocationem individuae Trinitatis, videlicet Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti, consecratur in aqua, tam parvulis quam adultis in forma ecclesiae quocumque rite collatum proficit ad salutem.*)¹¹⁸¹

Furthermore, salvation through baptism can be restored by true penance even though sin has been committed. “If someone falls into sin after having received baptism, he can always be restored through true penitence. (*Et sin post susceptionem baptismi quisquam prolapsus fuerit in peccatum, per veram poenitentiam semper potest reparari.*)”¹¹⁸² For that reason, the relationship between baptism and penance in

1180 Dom Hubert van Zeller, *Approach to Penance* (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), 1-12.

1181 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Constitutions of IV Lateran Council 1215: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils: Vol. I, Nicaea I to Lateran V* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 230.

1182 *Ibid.*, 230-31.

the Roman Catholic Church is obvious. As the fourth Lateran Council promulgated, the Church as an institution of salvation performs Eucharist and baptism, and by baptism one is saved and through penance the Church forgives sins after having received baptism.

In the Council of Trent, repentance, to turn from sin, to turn against sin, has been presented as a condition of preparation for baptism. In the Roman theology repentance and penance are different because in its theology repentance, as a turning from sin and turning to God, precedes baptism and baptism precedes penance. In other words, repentance must occur before baptism, which hates sins and detestation for the sake of Christ. (*Deus sibi propter Christum propitium fore, illumque tamquam omnis iustitiae fontem diligere incipient ac propterea moventur adversus peccata per odium aliquod et detestationem, hoc est, per eam poenitentiam, quam ante baptismum agi oportet*).¹¹⁸³ Consequently penance is a means of restoration of grace after having received baptism, and repentance and conversion, turning from sin and turning to God, are preliminary steps for baptism that is a means of salvation from God.¹¹⁸⁴

For that reason penance as a “second plank for the grace shattered in a storm” is necessary to the one who is baptised by Christ and wants to be restored to the grace of God. Surely this penance is different from repentance placed before baptism. “The repentance of a Christian after a fall is very different from repentance at baptism.”

1183 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 6 of Council of Trent 1546*, 673.

1184 Through this understanding of terms, we can clearly understand her definition of those terms. Repentance and conversion, in her theology, are attitude and mind to turn to God but penance is satisfaction and absolution by priests. Therefore both penance and repentance in their direction and on relationship with Church are clearly different because repentance emphasizes the action of man to God but penance focuses on the action of the priest to satisfy the penitents.

*(Christiani hominis poenitentiam post lapsum multo aliam esse a baptismali).*¹¹⁸⁵

Therefore penance can be called second repentance and second baptism.¹¹⁸⁶

Since it is so, penance or second repentance “includes not only ceasing from sins and detestation of them, or a humble and contrite heart, but also confession of them in the sacrament of penance, to be made with an open heart and in due season, to receive absolution by a priest, and also satisfaction by fasting, almsgiving, prayers and other devout exercises of the spiritual life,”¹¹⁸⁷ Penance is given variously according to circumstances of men because they have different ways of participation in the suffering of Christ from each other and their own crosses that they must bear are different.

According to the Second Vatican Council, by baptism men are grafted into the paschal mystery of Christ, receive the spirit of adoption as sons and called God as “Abba, Father.”¹¹⁸⁸ The sacrament of baptism is a starting point of the sacraments of the Roman Church and becomes a prerequisite of the sacrament of penance.

So, the first institutor of penance as a victor over sins, in Roman Catholic theology, is Christ Jesus. This penance is a means of receiving grace and reconciliation with God. Penance, as well as baptism, is a very important sacrament in the Roman Church because she believes that “the Church has both water and tears: the water of baptism, the tears of penitence.”¹¹⁸⁹ In “its innermost nature it (penance) is a

1185 Ibid. 677.

1186 Lawrence E. Mick, *Penance* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 18-19.

1187 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. Session 6, op. cit., 677.

1188 Austin Flannery, op.cit., 4.

1189 Austin Flannery, ed. *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: Vatican Council II*, Vatican

complement of baptism.”¹¹⁹⁰

Both penance and baptism are necessary for salvation even though their essences are different in that baptism is a means of regeneration but penance is means of restoration to grace.¹¹⁹¹

4. 2. The Characteristics of Penance in the Sacrament

4. 2. 1. Contrition

For Roman Catholic theology the sacrament of penance is “a process of conversion,” and in penance both the Church and God play a decisive role; nominally in their different ways.¹¹⁹² Conversion is not a sudden event but a hard and intense process manifested through “an ordering of elements and a particular formal structure.”¹¹⁹³ Inward conversion is accompanied by the external form in penance and after passing many steps or elements, penitents reach the grace of God. For Roman Catholic theology internal and external conversion are parts of the same whole. Nevertheless, principally it emphasises the priority of internal conversion as an essence and priority. For that reason, conversion is “the pivot and centre of penance

Collection Vol. II (New York: Costello publishing company, 1982), 36.

1190 International Theological Commission, “Reconciliation and Penance,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 51 (1985): 172. Regis A. Duffy, op. cit., 247.

1191 John M. T. Barton, op. cit., 103-104.

1192 Dionisio Borobio, op. cit., 97.

1193 Ibid., 98.

from the subject's point of view,¹¹⁹⁴ and authenticity of penance depends on it. And by it "penitential confession and satisfaction become authentic" because for it conversion is its embodiment, "its personal, ecclesial visible shape and its sacrament."¹¹⁹⁵

The sacrament of penance, according to the Council of Trent, is defined: it requires contrition and repentance. And on the basis of Jn. 20:22ff Christ established this sacrament, which consists of contrition, confession, satisfaction as roles of penitents and the absolution of priests. A penitent must enumerate items and the kinds of sins and confess what situation he committed the sins in. The forgiveness of sin confessed is not only a proclamation of the priest of forgiveness of sins but also a judgment which takes effect on the forgiveness of sin as juridical judgment of the judge. Finally satisfaction is the punishment of sins and it helps the penitent to break the habit of evil and has the effect of prevention in that he sins no more.

The Roman Catholic Church has classified penance into steps concretely. The first step is reflection about what his fault to God and neighbors is, and looks at his state. The second step is contrition; that he sorrows for his sin and repents of his sins, for the glory of God. The Roman Catholic Church classifies it into contrition (*contritio* for sorrow in general) which is sorrow that is for the glory of God and attrition (*attritio*, or *contritio imperfecta*) which is sorrow from fear of the penalty of sins.¹¹⁹⁶ Generally the Roman Church regards contrition as a principal element of

1194 Ibid., 99.

1195 Ibid.

1196 Bernhard Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*, tr. and revised Francis Courtney (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 198; For more information of differentiation between

penance but attrition is the least condition of penance.¹¹⁹⁷ The third step is resolution; that resolves to sin no more and strives towards the life of a Christian in its fullness.

The fourth step is confession to a priest. Although the sinner might feel remorse and confess to God, if there is no confession to a priest, it is not a true confession. Sins in Reformed theology are confessed in the presence of God, whereas sins in the Roman Church are confessed before a priest. Priests have argued that repentance is not useful without confession before priests because they alone received this power from Christ. One can not imagine any forgiveness of sins without this step where the penitent confesses their sins one after another, fully and truly before God.

The fifth step is satisfaction and absolution. Satisfaction is given to penitents according to his circumstance and the degree of sins. And the penitent is forgiven through the absolution of the priest but only when he hears the absolution of the priest and comes out from confessional is he forgiven. The final step is compensation. The idea of compensation is based on the church's ecclesiology: that is, through baptism, according to her ecclesiology, penitents become children of God and a member of the holy Church.¹¹⁹⁸ Therefore sin is not only in relation to God but also with the Church and neighbors because through the sin, the sinner broke the relationship with God and brought disgrace on both church and neighbors. Since The second Vatican Council,

contrition and attrition, see, 202-09.

1197 Mark Searle, *op. cit.*, 195.

1198 A. H. Dirksen, *The New Testament Concept of Metanoia*, Diss. of St. Charles Seminary, Carthagen, Ohio. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1932. Through his dissertation he sustained Roman Catholic position that contrition, confession and satisfaction are supported by OT, NT, and Church history. But the problem of his position is started from the misinterpretation of Scripture and dependence on Catholic tradition.

the Roman Catholic Church has emphasised the communal aspect of the sacrament of penance rather than the personal aspect.¹¹⁹⁹

In general, Reformed theology considers self-examination, contrition,¹²⁰⁰ decision and confession as one in repentance but the Roman Church is not satisfied with this idea of Reformed theology. Penance is a means of reconciliation with God and by this the Christian is given a clear conscience.

Furthermore contrition is “made perfect by charity.”¹²⁰¹ Contrition properly so styled is motivated by the love of charity and perfect contrition, not attrition, “brings about forgiveness of all sin whether mortal and venial.”¹²⁰² But attrition has two aspects that firstly, it is insufficient to justify a man and secondly, it is “sufficient to obtain justification in and with the help of the sacrament of penance.”¹²⁰³ Nevertheless it can not effect essential change in sinners because it is fundamentally different to contrition with the starting point being fear of punishment.

Contrition is “a grief for and detestation of the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin in the future.” So, for pardon of sin sorrow is necessary because, the church believes, it is linked with and is a pre-condition to receiving the mercy of God. Contrition, according to John M. T. Barton, has four characteristics: “it must be

1199 Regis A. Duffy, *op. cit.*, 242-48.

1200 Following of scholastic distinction Trent distinguished between contrition (sorrow for sin motivated by the love of God) and attrition (whose motivation was less the love of God than fear of punishment).

1201 Bernhard Poschmann, *op. cit.*, 198.

1202 John M. T. Barton, *op. cit.*, 54-55.

1203 *Ibid.*, 55-56.

sincere, interior contrition,” “it must be a *supernatural* sorrow,” “the sorrow must be supreme in so far as the penitent should persuade himself that sin is the greatest of all evils,” and “sorrow must be universal, that is, it must extend to all mortal sins” and to all venial sins,¹²⁰⁴ adding that the submission of sinners to ecclesial penance is evident proof of true contrition.¹²⁰⁵

Therefore the Council of Trent declares that contrition “includes not only ceasing from sin, the resolve of a new life, but also a hatred of the old in accordance with the words.”¹²⁰⁶ But attrition which is an imperfect contrition, according to the Council of Trent, does not “make a person a hypocrite and even more a sinner, but that it is even a gift of God and impulse of the holy Spirit, not yet actually dwelling in a penitent, but only moving him, helped by which he prepares himself for a path towards justice; and although it cannot of itself and without the sacrament of penance lead the sinner to justification, yet it disposes him to beg and obtain the grace of God in this sacrament of penance.”¹²⁰⁷

Reformed theology puts emphasis on confession of sins before God in the doctrine of repentance but for Roman Catholic theology confession of sins is not at the core of penance. Rather the cores of penance are contrition and satisfaction

As an initial approach to penance, the Second Vatican Council requires a contrite heart.¹²⁰⁸ The word *μετάνοια* is chosen to explain the contrition needed in the

1204 Ibid., 60-62.

1205 Peter Riga, op. cit., 108.

1206 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 14*, 705.

1207 Ibid.

1208 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Second Vatican Council-1962-1965*, op. cit., 1048.

sacrament of penance, that is, “heart-felt sorrow and detestation of sin, with a firm purpose not to sin again” and a profound change of the whole person. Penance has an interesting positive aspect to it in as much as contrition is different from remorse and regret because contrition is “forward-looking rather than backward looking” and “more concerned with others, God, than with oneself and one’s feeling.”¹²⁰⁹ Sorrow that is not aided by the Holy Spirit is not true penance.

One of the most important aspects in the sacrament of penance is a change in those who have sinned and it is possible through contrition because true contrition requires “the intention to amend lifestyle,”¹²¹⁰ but its concern regarding penance is more concentrated on external proof than inward change.¹²¹¹ And penance requires visible works that have been assigned by a priest rather than an inward change of heart or changing of direction from the heart. This has come about by the misunderstanding in the interpretation of *paenitentiam agite*. She emphasises ‘*agite* or doing’ in the penance.

4. 2. 2. Confession

In this step confession of sin before a priest is done by the penitent who confesses his sins in detail. As mentioned the penitent must enumerate items and kinds of sins and confess the situation in which he committed the sins. From this step the penitent first confesses his sin before a priest and declares his sins to others. In

1209 Mark Searle, op. cit., 195.

1210 John M. T. Barton, op. cit., 12.

1211 Ibid., 14.

this step, the subjectivity of contrition in penance changes to the objectivity of confession in penance. Actually the problem of penance in the Roman Catholic Church comes out of this element of penance.

When Christians reach the age of discernment they are bound to go to confession to see a priest at least once a year and individually must confess all their sins in a faithful manner.¹²¹²

By the institutionalisation of confession in the Roman Catholic Church, reconciliation with the Church means reconciliation with God. This being so the Church is both the subject of reconciliation and at the same time the object of reconciliation.

One of reasons why the Roman Church requires a full confession before a priest is that “it is clear that priests could not exercise judgment in cases where there were unknown factors, nor could they have preserved fairness in imposing penances if the faithful had declared their sins only in general.”¹²¹³ In other words, a priest is a human being and as such can not know the penitent’s sins without hearing his confession.

The content of confession is the mortal sins which he has committed after baptism which must be confessed to a priest, including sins of thought; because these sins seriously damage the soul and cause them to be children of the wrath of God. Venial sins are forgiven without confession because “we are not cut off from the grace

1212 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Constitutions of IV Lateran Council 1215*, op. cit., 245.

1213 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 14*, op. cit., 706.

of God as a result of them.¹²¹⁴ In the confessional the penitent's attitude must be open and humble, and without forgetting any sins, he must confess his mortal sins, which will be pardoned by the faithful endeavor of Christ. But absolutely this presupposes the confession before God.

Confession is not just a meaningless list of sins and the penitent must give reasons why he committed the sins because without such information, "the sins themselves are not being completely revealed by the penitents nor made known to the judges, and it is impossible for the latter to rightly estimate the gravity of the faults and to impose on the penitents the penance appropriate to them."¹²¹⁵

According to Roman Catholicism, the root of the sacramental confession is the law of God or the word of God but its manner of confessing to priests secretly is auricular confession.¹²¹⁶ Although it is known that private or secret confession to a priest alone (auricular) began after the sixth century, the Roman Church has argued that this is not a human invention nor did it begin with the fourth Lateran Council, but originates from the Bible and the early Church.¹²¹⁷ The Roman Catholic Church teaches that it is necessary for salvation and it has "always been observed by the Catholic Church from the start down to this day."¹²¹⁸

The Council of Trent as well as the fourth Lateran Council insisted on auricular

1214 Ibid.

1215 Ibid., 707.

1216 Ibid., 712.

1217 Ibid., 707.

1218 Henry Bettenson, *op. cit.*, 265.

confession at least once a year.¹²¹⁹ Through this auricular confession the Roman Catholic Church put Christians in fetters, claiming that all baptised believers must go to confessional at least once a year and confess all of their sins to a priest instead of confessing to God.

The Roman Catholic Church sets the place of confession: normally a church, public oratory and semi-public oratory, according to Canon law, are the place for confession.¹²²⁰ Except in special cases, believers must go to the prescribed place to make a confession. In penance only the confession needs an arranged place because of the need to meet a priest for confession. The place of confession is part of the requirement in the sacrament of penance because the confessional is necessary to confession.

The Roman Catholic Church, in an unavoidable case, allows group confession. This is not an ordinary custom, for this reason the Church encourages avoidance of it where possible. Although through group confession penitents receive communal absolution the Roman Church requires auricular confession for grave sins. This indicates that it is auricular confession-oriented.

In the confession of the Roman Church, penance is intimately related to the priests. Confession presupposes “in the penitent the willingness to open his heart to God’s minister,”¹²²¹ because it presupposes that the priest has the power of the key of

1219 The Council of Trent proclaimed that the best time for penance is the season of Lent. Cf. Hugh Connolly, *Sin: New Century Theology*, 51.

1220 Austin Flannery, ed. *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: Vatican Council II*, Vatican Collection Vol. II (New York: Costello publishing company, 1982), 51. See, footnote 44.

1221 *Ibid.*, 38.

the kingdom of God, that is judgment of the forgiveness of sins and the retention of sins.

Public confession was prevalent in early the Christian Church, where the Church may have required a public compensational period for some grave sins. Public confession of the early Church can be called a “penance of excommunication” because it entrenched the idea of acceptance of sinners to the Church again. But gradually it evolved into individual and private form.

Public confession and auricular confession of the Roman Church, even though both of them confess before a human being, are essentially different because public confession is before neighbors who has been hurt by the penitent and this is admittance about their sin before the community after they have confessed their sins before God. Auricular confession however happened before a priest alone. Auricular confession is different from the repentance and prayer of the Bible in method and in the object of confession.¹²²²

In the Roman Catholic Church confession and public mass are not carried out together because confession must be carried out privately and seriously so principally, confession is auricular.¹²²³

1222 Loraine Boettner, op. cit., 207. Mt. 6:6, 12. Jesus teaches us the method and the object of our prayer and confession of sin that the place for prayer is not a confessional but inner room, the method of prayer is not before priest but “secretly,” and the object of prayer is not a priest but God alone. Lk. 18:13. Jesus criticizes the prayer of a Pharisee but speaks well the prayer of tax-collector. This prayer of tax-collector shows the method and the object of prayer and repentance.

1223 *Responsa ad dubia proposita: Notitiae* (37 No 417-420 Jun-Jul, 2001) 259-260. cf. John Paul II, *Misericordia Dei* (7th of April, 2002)

It is believed that confession is a dialogue and encounter with Christ,¹²²⁴ not a counseling session, and prayer becomes an important instrument within this dialogue. But this is a psychological approach to it, and the difference between confession and counseling is that both penitent and priest stand together in the presence of God as instruments, where both use prayer as a language. In confession each of them prays for the other but because it is for God it is just dialogue or conversation which uses the form of prayer. Actually confession of sin before a priest or auricular confession is not true biblical confession and confession to a priest is a corruption of true confession to God; in the Bible the only source of forgiveness of sin is God and His Son Jesus. Therefore the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church are different from that of the Reformed Church and its interpretation of the Bible.

4. 2. 3. Satisfaction

Usually penance requires three factors for entire and perfect remission of sin which are contrition,¹²²⁵ confession, and satisfaction. The Roman Catholic Church argues however, that they are not sacramental distinctions but three acts performed by a penitent. Of these three only contrition and confession are recognised in Reformed theology. The dimension of satisfaction is a unique idea of Roman Catholic theology.

1224 Mark Searle, op. cit., 202.

1225 David. N. Power, *Contrition with Tears: Church and Theology, Essays in Memory of Carl J. Peter* ed. Peter C. Phan (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 215-40. David. N. Power explains and argues the role and import of contrition in the sacrament of penance of Roman Catholicism. He emphasizes the necessity of contrition in penance. He adds that the cause of contrition is a “proper appreciation of the holiness of God.”

The starting idea of satisfaction, according to Roman Catholic theology, is related with incarnation of Christ as a satisfaction of the wrath of God.¹²²⁶ But in satisfaction she emphasises the satisfaction by man. She requires the external discipline of the penitent for satisfaction in addition to satisfaction by Christ. This shows that the Roman Catholic Church is no longer an inward religion, but an external religion and not a religion of faith but a religion of human meritoriousness.¹²²⁷

Principally the idea of satisfaction began from her idea of sins; that sin is an offence against God and breaks our friendship with God, neighbors and Church because they are also injured by our sins. For Roman Catholic theology, the meaning of satisfaction can be classified as two kinds; restitution, which gives back goods that have been stolen and damaged, and satisfaction which is in the case of an offence and injury to another person. So, penance must have the factor of reconciliation with the Church and neighbors as well as with God. For that reason satisfaction is generally a means of reconciliation and a requirement of reconciliation. It requires the restoration of the relationship with others by a suitable means chosen by the priest.

As such, the priest presents satisfaction to penitents as a means of reconciliation between penitents and the church, penitents and neighbors. Although by confession the penitent is forgiven of sins there still remains the damage that he did to God and neighbors, and as such the penitent can restore the broken relationship to the priest's

1226 John M. T., Barton, op. cit., 80.

1227 The Roman Catholic Church argues that emphasis of Trent on satisfaction is a product of consideration against the emphasis of the Protestant Reformation; true satisfaction is in Christ only, but in the Roman Catholic Church satisfaction is still necessary in salvation. M. E. Brinkman, *Sacraments of Freedom. Ecumenical Essays on Creation and Sacrament, Justification and Freedom* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1999), 110-112.

satisfaction by doing good works, ascetic practice, self-denial, amnesty, attending mass, prayer, reading the Bible, fasting and almsgiving. The Roman Catholic Church adds some kinds of concrete examples of satisfaction that “helping out a poor person; visiting the sick; making a deliberate effort to understand and sympathise with the person against whom one has sinned; taking positive steps to remedy a situation which is conducive to sin; scripture reading; prayers to be said daily over a period of time; renunciation of specific luxuries for a prescribed period; using time or money for some charitable purpose.”¹²²⁸ In the Roman Church satisfaction, as one factor of the sacrament of penance, is necessary. The purpose of this satisfaction shows the gravity of sins and effects of it to the penitent.

As Christ became satisfaction for our sins, according to the Council of Trent, we need to become partakers in satisfaction for our sins. We can see the insufficiency of the atonement of Christ and human cooperation as related with the forgiveness of sins in Roman Catholic theology. The satisfaction of the Roman Catholic Church is the responsibility of Christians because her satisfaction becomes their merits. And she argues that “with his cooperation we can do everything in him which strengthens us.”¹²²⁹ To be sure, the Council of Trent does not totally neglect the power of expiation of Christ.¹²³⁰ But even though the Roman Church says that she depends on the merit

1228 Mark Searle, op. cit., 204-05.

1229 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 14*, op. cit., 709.

1230 Ibid. According to the Council of Trent, she highly evaluates the value of the merit of Christ that “Thus we have nothing of which to boast; but all our boasting is in Christ, in whom we live, in whom we merit, in whom we make satisfaction and *yield fruits that will benefit repentance*, which have their worth from him, are offered by him to the Father, and through him are accepted by the Father.”

of Christ she does not exclude the cooperation of man in satisfaction. The Roman Church emphasises not only the merit of Christ but also the cooperation of “the priest of the Lord” who has the key for releasing and binding because through satisfaction the Roman Church seeks to emphasise the validity of satisfaction and the role of priests. Nevertheless the Roman Church has asserted that she has no intention to obscure and to diminish the merit and satisfaction of Christ.¹²³¹

Satisfaction includes not only the judgment of the priest and volunteering will of the penitent but also God’s judgment through temporal affliction¹²³² so that satisfaction includes temporal sufferings of man and punishment by God. In this one may regard the problem of man as God’s satisfaction.

The Roman Catholic Church denies an assurance of salvation and conviction of eternal life. Therefore Roman Catholic Christians have no conviction of redemption through Christ; they must depend on priests and the Roman Catholic Church continuously because the absolute power and standard of their salvation depends upon the Roman Catholic Church.

Through the suffering of satisfaction, penitents can participate in the Passion of Christ.¹²³³ Satisfaction, for her, is the true fruit of repentance and loyalty to the justice of God,¹²³⁴ but satisfaction can be adapted differently even for the same sins because the priest must consider the ability of the penitent and his circumstances,¹²³⁵ which is

1231 Ibid.

1232 Ibid.

1233 Austin Flannery, ed. op. cit., 36-7.

1234 Andrew Cuschieri, op. cit., 134.

1235 Ibid., 137.

why the Roman church imposes various means of satisfaction, namely, suffering, mercy and charity and so on.

In Roman Catholic theology good works are not a duty and right of the justified by the grace of God but an important means to earn the reward of salvation and to obtain the merit of forgiveness of sins. In other words, good works as a compensation for sins is the cost of those sins and at the same time ensures protection against sins. Good works which are done over and above the requirements of satisfaction become merit; much the same as a positive balance in one's bank account, and as such serve to enhance the salvation of the believer and his relatives. In this manner good works as well as faith become means of salvation in the Roman Catholic Church.

This idea assumes the insufficiency of repentance of sin before God because in Roman Catholic theology temporal punishment for the offence to God still remains after the penitent confesses his sin before God and before a priest. It shows the insufficiency of forgiveness imputed to Christians by Christ because satisfaction requires human compensation and merit for guilt.

The voluntary acceptance or endurance of the penance imposed by a confessor, in order to compensate for the injury offered to God, and for the remission of the temporal punishment that may still remain, even after the guilt of the sin has been pardoned.¹²³⁶

The main purpose of satisfaction is eradication of bad habits and as a deterrent from other sins. Barton highlights the benefits of satisfaction in the position of the Council of Trent that firstly, satisfaction makes penitents know that “sin is the greatest of evils, and worthy of tremendous penalties,” second, it renders “the sinner more

1236 John M. T. Barton, *op. cit.*, 81.

cautious and vigilant, so that he is less likely to fall again into sin,” third, “it is a remedy for the remains of sins and helps to eradicate bad habits of sin that have been acquired,” and last, “it makes us like Christ who is the atonement made for our sins(1Jn 2:1), since we have a most sure pledge that: if we suffer with him...with him we may also be glorified”(Rom. 8:17).¹²³⁷

Satisfaction, according to the Roman Catholic Church, is a requisite factor to complete the sacrament of penance whose aim is the “improvement of life and repair of the damage” caused by sin; it is a real remedy for sins and contributes to renewal of life.

And satisfaction shows the completeness of true conversion which includes amendment of conduct and restoration of injury.¹²³⁸ In the theology of the Roman Catholic Church satisfaction has two kinds of outcomes, one is positive and the other is negative. The positive benefit of satisfaction is providing and protecting new life but the negative side is expiation and punishment of trespasses of the past. Satisfaction which they impose “should not only be aimed at protecting the new life and at being a remedy against weakness, but also be for the atonement and punishment of past sins.”¹²³⁹ For her the emphasis of satisfaction is not God’s wrath for past sins but rather on the direction of new life. Nevertheless in the sacrament of penance the actual emphasis of satisfaction is punishment for past sins.

1237 John M. T. Barton, *Penance and Absolution* (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), 85.

1238 George A. Kelly, ed. *Appendix-Text of the Rite of Penance: The Sacrament of Penance in Our Time* (Boston: the daughters of St. Paul, 1976), 146.

1239 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 14, Teaching concerning the most holy Sacraments of Penance and last Anointing, of Council of Trent 1551: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils*. Vol. II, Trent to Vatican II (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 709.

4. 2. 4. Absolution and Indulgence

The Roman Catholic Church holds that principally for the Christians the most total, meaningful and effective expression of forgiveness of sin is sacramental forgiveness.¹²⁴⁰ So, for her, sacramental forgiveness is “the symbolic culmination of existential forgiveness, the ecclesiological ‘certifier’ of divine forgiveness, the Christian needs for the forgiveness of the Church.”¹²⁴¹ As such, sacramental forgiveness is necessary in the full forgiveness of God, Church, human being and the world.

The last element of penance is absolution, which is emphasised much more than the other elements in the sacrament of penance because in this element the priest as a judge proclaims juridically the forgiveness of sins to the penitent. But nevertheless even absolution and indulgence in the Roman Catholic Church can not give “the assurance of salvation and the sense of spiritual security”¹²⁴² because they are not an assurance of salvation given by Holy Spirit in true faith.¹²⁴³

1240 Dionisio Borobio, op. cit., 96.

1241 Ibid.

1242 Loraine Boettner, op. cit., 265.

1243 M. E. Brinkman, *Sacraments of Freedom. Ecumenical Essays on Creation and Sacrament, Justification and Freedom*, 106-108; Cf. Inst., 3. 4. 13. The Roman Catholic Church has argued recently that Calvin admitted the private form of penance and “ministerial pronouncement of absolution” by a priest. But this is her misunderstanding of Calvin’s idea because Calvin’s idea about “confession to shepherd in Lord’s supper” is totally different with the idea of the Roman Catholic Church in that he wants to use this confession and Shepherd’s admonition for only admonition.

Forgiveness of sin by the righteousness of Christ Jesus in Reformed theology is compared with absolution and indulgence by the Church in Roman Catholic theology. But forgiveness of sin by God through Jesus in Reformed Theology shows perfection of forgiveness of sins whereas absolution by Christ in Roman Catholic theology shows imperfection of forgiveness of sins, rather she believes that indulgence by the Church can show the perfection of forgiveness of sins and conviction of salvation which is better than Christ's.

The Roman Church, like Reformed theology, teaches that turning to God is to turn to God with the whole heart but actually for her outward appearances are more emphasised than inward attitudes even though she says that “conversion must affect a man inwardly.”¹²⁴⁴ Absolution and indulgence are representative and formal external figures of forgiveness of sins.

Absolution is a sign of forgiveness of sin through the priest in true conversion to God. This is the final step of the sacrament of penance, and by this action of the priest penance is completed. This is especially a visible sign of the absolution of God and restoration of the broken covenant.¹²⁴⁵

The Roman Catholic Church has two positions about the absolution by a priest. Firstly, according to declaratory theory, the priestly absolution is “the authoritative expression of the forgiveness which has already been given by God alone,” and

1244 Austin Flannery, *op. cit.*, 38.

1245 *Ibid.*; K. Lehmann and W. Pannenberg, eds., *The Condemnations of The Reformation Era: Do They still Divide?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 58. The Roman Catholic Church has argued recently that the Reformers' disparagement of the sacrament, which is an outward thing, is caused by the Reformers' misunderstanding of God's wise ordinance.

secondly, the Church “does not indeed forgive guilt, but remits the eternal punishment or changes God’s conditional forgiveness of guilt into an absolute forgiveness.”¹²⁴⁶ Indeed, the Roman Catholic Church as a judge holds with both theories and as a result absolution is not only the authoritative expression of the forgiveness which has already been given by God alone but also remittance of the eternal punishment or changes God’s conditional forgiveness of guilt into an absolute forgiveness. It should be noted here that the most important aspect in this step is that only the priest has the power to declare and remit the sins of the penitent fully.

In the Roman Catholic Church absolution which is conferred by priests as a judicial act of judgment¹²⁴⁷ is a very important discipline, especially for heinous and serious sins. In particular, she declares that if one has committed heinous and serious sins, the penitent should go to a higher ranked priest because they have supreme power of absolution to grant absolution.¹²⁴⁸ Since A.D.1603, absolution is only available “orally in the presence of the penitents.”¹²⁴⁹ Therefore penitents must be in the presence of the priest to receive his absolution.

Indulgence, which is intimately related with the cause of Luther’s Reformation, does not forgive mortal sins but forgives sins which have been confessed to priests and which have received absolution from priests and is remitted by the Church by virtue of the merits of Christ and the saints. Indulgences presuppose that “sin must

1246 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 15.

1247 Bernhard Poschmann, op. cit., 201.

1248 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 14*, op. cit., 708.

1249 Andrew Cuschieri, op. cit., 198-99. So she never allows the artificial sound, i.e. phone, because for her the presence of penitents is important.

have a penalty either on earth or in purgatory, even after the sinner has been reconciled to God by penitence and absolution.”¹²⁵⁰ The Church can administer the benefit of these merits because through the Communion of Saints all Christians can share in the merits of Christ. This presupposes the martyrs have privileges that allow them to intercede with God on man’s behalf and can be used by the Church for sinners. Therefore she believes that the merits of saints and martyrs as well as that of Christ can shorten canonical discipline. She argues that indulgence sprung from the earliest times of the Church and it was approved by the authority of sacred Councils and was granted by Christ Himself.¹²⁵¹ However, in the Bible there is no teaching of indulgence of priest or man, but rather that sins are forgiven by Christ alone.

Paul IV revised the practical application of the traditional doctrine of indulgence and promulgated that “the Church’s object was not merely to help the faithful to make due satisfaction for their sins, but chiefly to induce them to a greater fervor of charity.”¹²⁵²

The Roman Catholic Church says that indulgence is not connected to the remission of sins but rather that it is connected to the penalty for what is already forgiven. Therefore the catechism of the Roman Catholic Church defines it as “the remission of the temporal pain due to sin,” and the Canon outlines it in more detail as: “indulgences are the remission before God of the temporal pain due to the already-forgiven sin of the guilty person.” And ecclesiastical authority adds that it “grants

1250 E. A. Livingstone, ed. *Oxford concise dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, New York : Oxford University Press, 2000), 288.

1251 Henry Bettenson, *op. cit.*, 266.

1252 E. A. Livingstone, ed. *op. cit.* 288.

them from the treasury of the Church, for the living under the form of absolution and for the deceased under form of intercession.”¹²⁵³ It is not a commercial practice, according to the Roman Catholic Church, even though it was sold in medieval ages, but rather that it started from the love of God in the same sense as satisfaction.

The indulgence which is intimately related with absolution and which is an external proof of absolution stands in close connection with the sacrament of penance in Roman Catholic theology. In a narrower sense indulgence is “an authoritative remission of temporal punishment, valid before God, which the Church grants outside the sacrament after the guilt of sin has already been forgiven.”¹²⁵⁴ And for her it is not a divine institution, but church usage for penitential procedure and the prototype for it are an early medieval tariff penance and intercessory prayer which is means of relief of penance.¹²⁵⁵

Indulgence was granted for “no other purpose than for the remission of the temporal punishment due to actual sin.”¹²⁵⁶ But however the effect of it extended from this world to purgatory. What is more she controlled the living and the dead in purgatory through indulgence. There is no biblical proof to support this idea.

There are two kinds of indulgence in Roman Theology: the one is plenary,¹²⁵⁷ the

1253 Christian Duquoc, *Note on Indulgence: The Sacrament of Penance* (Glen Rock: Deus books Paulist Press, 1966), 76-77.

1254 Bernhard Poschmann, op. cit., 210-11.

1255 Ibid., 211.

1256 John M. T. Barton, op. cit., 138-139.

1257 Plenary Indulgence “remits the whole of the temporal punishment due to an individual’s sins.” And its efficacy depends on the perfection of the soul’s disposition and by it soul has profited to the full. E. A. Livingstone, ed. op. cit., 456.

other is partial indulgence. The former indulgence is known in the example of Urban II for the Crusaders, that it “remits, in the intention of him who grants the indulgence, the whole of the temporal punishment still remaining to any man who has the right disposition for gaining an indulgence,” and the latter remits “some, but not all, of the debt that still remains.”¹²⁵⁸

The Council of Trent added the last anointing to the sacrament of penance. And according to the Roman Church, penance is not finished by completing the stages of penance, from contrition to absolution, but must be accomplished throughout the Christian life. This means that the act of penance will not be finished in a defined period, and as such even when man is near death or has suffered through disease, the Church takes away the sins and “comforts and strengthens the soul of the sick person” through the last anointing (*extremae unctionis*). In this step ordained priests and bishops¹²⁵⁹ can help penitents as well. Anyone who holds beliefs contrary to this is condemned as anathema through the canon concerning the sacrament of penance.

4. 3. The Roles of Penance in Soteriology

4. 3. 1. Penance and Church

In the Roman Catholic Church penance, conversion, confession, reconciliation and repentance are used as a similar means. They are used differently or similarly. As

1258 John M. T. Barton, op. cit., 150.

1259 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Session 14*, op. cit., 710-11. The Roman Catholic Church translates presbyters (*presbyteros*) to priests or bishops.

mentioned above conversion and repentance are normally used with the same meaning and penance, confession and reconciliation are attributed a similar meaning. Nowadays penance and reconciliation are frequently used comparatively in the Roman Catholic Church. However each of the terms has uses with their emphases, on a dimension of conversion or confession or repentance. The modern Catholic Church rather uses reconciliation as a means of reconciliation with the Church than penance or doing penance that emphasises satisfaction and compensation but it does not change the meaning and emphasis in essence.¹²⁶⁰ For the church, reconciliation is a goal but penance constitutes external and interior actions and processes that facilitate sanctification.¹²⁶¹

Discussing the differences with Reformed theology, sometimes Roman Catholic theology calls conversion “conversion-confession” or “conversion-penance.” This may influence its sacraments in relation to traditional baptism-penance. Conversion-penance can be divided into two; one is sudden conversion which happens by the compelling grace of God over a short period and the other the work of a lifetime, requiring the devoted aspiration to a Godly life over a long time. It is valid to understand it rather as a vocation than a conversion because both of them, conversion-confession or conversion-penance, are not yet approved officially.¹²⁶²

1260 Robert J. Kennedy, op. cit., 47. Robert J. Kennedy classifies the meaning of penance and reconciliation more concretely. Reconciliation, according to Kennedy, is “the process of return of serious sinners to communion of the Church,” but penance is “the system of those actions and processes that facilitate the sanctification, moral transformation, and ongoing conversion of the Church and its members at every level of corporate and individual Christian life.”

1261 Ibid., 48.

1262 Adrienne Von Speyr, *Confession: The Encounter with Christ in Penance*, tr. A. V. Littledale

And conversion is understood as human acts inspired by love, external confession and satisfaction.¹²⁶³ This is called the anthropological dimension of conversion in Roman Catholic theology. Another aspect of conversion is the ecclesial dimension according to which the power of forgiveness of sin in the name of Christ was given to the Church and for that reason the Church, bishops and priests can bring about the salvation of man in the Church. This is a power given to the ecclesial community. The reconciliation presupposes reconciliation with the ecclesial community, which is a presupposition of salvation and a necessary requirement of redemption.

The relationship between the Church and Christ is likened to the relationship between bride and bridegroom. The bride has a responsibility and duty to keep herself holy till the coming of the bridegroom.

Through confession or penance penitents pertain to the church and they recognise that sin is not only a personal problem but also a corporate problem of the Church and the problems of sins can be solved by intercession of the Church or the mediatory office of the Church that has been given by Christ Jesus¹²⁶⁴ because the Church has received the Spirit, the mind of Christ and the power to bind and to loose.

A sign of the authenticity of the church, according to Roman Catholic theology,

(Freiburg: Herder; Edinburgh-London: Nelson, 1964), 112-113.

1263 William H. Woestman, *Sacraments, initiation, penance, Anointing of the sick: Commentary on Canons 840-1007* (Ottawa: Faculty of Canon Law, Saint Paul University, 1996), 219. Conversion can be defined: conversion of traditional meaning and penance as a process of life in the Roman Catholic Church.

1264 Adrienne Von Speyr, *op. cit.*, 87-88.

is the power and authority in the sacrament of penance. Through the sacrament of penance penitents become members of the Church and through Christ the Church distributes the grace of God to penitents. Therefore penance facilitates the readmission to the Church from being sinners. Penance brings about the restoration of the original state of wholeness that is lost by sin. Penance is situated in the heart of the Church's works and utterances. Therefore Holy Communion is connected with what we are, but a sacrament of penance is related to what the sinners do.¹²⁶⁵

One of the characteristics of penance in the twentieth century, according to James Dallen, is that it emphasises the social and ecclesial dimension of the sacrament of penance in comparison to previous centuries.¹²⁶⁶ At the Second Vatican Council as well as Trent, the main purpose of penance is reconciliation with God and the Church.¹²⁶⁷

Reconciliation with God, according to the Roman Catholic Church, is impossible without reconciliation with the Church; that is, there is no reconciliation with God without reconciliation with the Church¹²⁶⁸ “which is performed through the confession and penance of the sinner.” Therefore reconciliation with the Church is an infallible

1265 Ibid., 96. Holy Communion is related to identity of sinners in that through Holy Communion the Christian is participating in the work of Christ and in the Christian community, but penance is related to positive action for a restoration of the relationship with God, Church, and community that is destroyed by sin.

1266 James Dallen, *Recent Documents on Penance and Reconciliation: Reconciliation: The Continuing Agenda*, ed. Robert J. Kennedy (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 107.

1267 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Second Vatican Council-1962-1965: Priests: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils. Vol. II, Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1047.

1268 William H. Woestman, op. cit., 219.

sign of reconciliation with God.

The Church is only an agent of salvation although it has emphasised the role of faith and the role of the grace of God because she believed that all the power of God is entrusted to the Church on earth. Therefore, the power of Christ that forgives sin and governs the universe is actually no more than a nominal idea in its theology. Through penance of sinners they take their place in Church and participate in her mission fully¹²⁶⁹ because penance is a restoration of the relationship with God, Church, and community as much as sin is the destruction of the relationship between them.

The Roman Church does not accept the individual's direct confession to God but instead of that presents confession through the Church¹²⁷⁰ believing that it is body of Christ, and in confession it alone has the power to bind and to loose that which is received from Christ. But the sacrament of penance of the Roman Catholic Church is not biblical in the strictest sense of the word. Rather it has evolved out of necessity in Church tradition.

The Church is an instrument of salvation; therefore one can be saved through the Church alone. (*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*). Outside of the one universal Church of the faithful “nobody at all is saved.” (*Una vero est fidelium universalis ecclesia, extra quam nullus omnino salvatur.*)¹²⁷¹ Only penance done through the Church brings about the possibility of an individual relationship with God because, she believes that

1269 Paul Anciaux, *The Ecclesial Dimension of Penance: The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (New York: Alba House, 1971), 160-161.

1270 Gabriel M. Nissim, *Communal Penance: a Liturgical Commentary and Catechesis: The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (New York: Alba House, 1971), 203-211.

1271 Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Constitutions of IV Lateran Council 1215*, 230.

the Roman Catholic Church is a unique organism for salvation. There is, therefore, no salvation and no forgiveness of sins outside of the Church, stretching the meaning of the term “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*” to “*extra ecclesiam nulla remissio peccatorum.*”¹²⁷²

The Council of Trent, according to Rahner, used John 20 as the ground for the authority of the power of Church but Tertullianus and early Church fathers used the phrase ‘to bind and to loose’ of Matt 16 and 18 for the Church’s official attitude toward penance. Through the above scriptures it believes that the authority of Matt 18 was given to the Church and only through the Church can sinners be reconciled with God.

4. 3. 2. Penance and Priest

Concerning the interpretation of John 20:21-23 as the source on authority of the Catholic Church regarding the remission of sins according to the promulgation of the Council of Trent, it is” to be understood that they have the power of remitting or retaining sins in the sacrament of penance.”¹²⁷³ Officially she has not interpreted these verses as the authority to the preaching of the Gospel but instead this authority of preaching, John 20:21-23 has been used to justify her power of remitting sins. Therefore the church condemned the interpretation of Reformed theology; that it is the power of preaching the word of God and of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. The

1272 Peter Riga, *Sin and Penance: Insights into the Mystery of Salvation* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1962), 108-116.

1273 Henry Bettenson, op. cit., 265.

bishop, according to the liturgy of Hyppolitus, has the power which can loose every bond of evil in virtue of Christ's authorisation to his apostles.¹²⁷⁴ The absolution granted by the priests, according to Mark Searle, is a product of twelfth and thirteenth centuries. After that time the Roman Catholic Church changed the focus of the sacrament of penance from penitent-centered to priest-centered.¹²⁷⁵

In Roman theology, in fact, all power to loose and to bind lies with the priests who are successors of Peter, the Apostle. According to her beliefs, after the resurrection of Christ he sent his Spirit to his Apostles so that "they might have the power to forgive sins or to retain them."¹²⁷⁶ Since that time, their successors have the power of preaching and remission of sins. Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter that what ever is bound on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever is loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven(Mt 16:29). The Church has believed this – see his sermon in Acts 2:38, 'Repent, and baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins', and from there they argue succession to the priest of today; giving priests of the Church, as successors of the Apostles, the power of forgiveness of sins and instituting penance as a means of remission of sins.

In the sacrament of penance the Roman Catholic Church has considered intercession through a priest as only instrument for it. It is mentioned as an office of

1274 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 10.

1275 Mark Searle, op. cit., 190-191.

1276 Austin Flannery, ed. *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: Vatican Council II, Vatican Collection Vol. II* (New York: Costello publishing company, 1982), 35.

the Church but actually it is an intercession by the priest.¹²⁷⁷ “Nobody can effect this sacrament (Eucharist) except a priest who has been properly ordained according to the church’s key, which Jesus Christ gave to the apostles and their successors.” (*Et hoc utique sacramentum nemopotest conficere, nisi sacerdos, qui fuerit rite ordinatus secundum claves ecclesiae, quas ipse concessit apostolis et eorum successoribus Iesus Christus.*)¹²⁷⁸ Therefore the term Church-centered is nothing but priest-centered in the ministry of salvation.

On account of their positions and roles, priests in the Roman Church are called leaders of the Church, judges of criminal trials and successors of the Apostles.¹²⁷⁹ They are endowed with the power of the Church and have the key of binding and loosing. So, actually without them believers can not enter the kingdom of heaven. In the sacrament of penance the priest’s roles are more important than in other sacraments because he alone takes the initiative of the sacrament of penance.

Priests in the Roman Church occupy a special position; they are confessors and at the same time penitents, and givers of absolution and at the same time sinners. Their right of absolution is guaranteed by the authority and power that Christ gave to his Apostle. And in the disposition of sins there is a difference between the sins of priests and of parishioners; the sins of parishioners “spring up from neglect of what faith requires” but the sins of priests are focused on the danger of neglect of his obligation and office, by becoming wholly absorbed by his external functions.¹²⁸⁰ And

1277 Austin Flannery, *Ibid.*, 39-40.

1278 Norman. P. Tanner, *Constitutions of IV Lateran Council 1215*, op. cit., 230.

1279 Mark Searle, op. cit., 198-99.

1280 Adrienne Von Speyr, op. cit., 120.

the priest himself confesses and conducts himself following the rules of penance.

The position and role of the priest is passed down from Christ himself and he serves as Christ's vicar. The role of the priest in the sacrament of penance is as a representative of Christ that forgave sinners, and as such the priest guarantees their forgiveness of sins, their reconciliation with God and their true conversion. Thomas Aquinas described it articulately and Paul Anciaux summarised it briefly: "Christ as a doctor of souls acts in two ways: he calls to the sinner's interior through the Spirit; he completes through his minister what he has begun in the sinner's heart. The intervention of the minister 'brings about' and 'completes' the sinner's conversion so that there is full reconciliation with God and liberation from sin."¹²⁸¹ The priest is, according to Canon 978, "at once both judge and healer"¹²⁸² and he has a role of teacher¹²⁸³ in his ministry.

For her, priests are not more than a reflection of Christ himself. The relationship between confessor and penitent is "the echo of a definite relationship between God and the sinner."¹²⁸⁴ It can be questioned whether he actually trusts in the merit of Christ or whether he himself lives as another Christ, seeing that the priest regards the

1281 Paul Anciaux, *The Ecclesial Dimension of Penance: The Mystery of sin and forgiveness*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (New York: Alba House, 1971), 154-160.

1282 Andrew Cuschieri, op. cit., 241-42. Canon 978§1; In hearing confessions the priest is to remember that he is at once both judge and healer, and that he is constituted by God as a minister of both divine justice and divine mercy, so that he may contribute to the honour of God and the salvation of souls.

1283 Canon 978§2; In administering the sacrament, the confessor, as a minister of the Church, is to adhere faithfully to the teaching of the *magisterium* and to the norms laid down by the competent authority.

1284 Adrienne Von Speyr, op. cit., 178.

life of Christ as his own and that he substitutes as Christ who is head of the Church. The term “successor of the Apostle” shows that the origin of his power and authority is nothing but a definition of terms. In the presence of God, according to her, Christ is a penitent who has no sins and he stands for his people as a priest, like the human priest. Therefore, as a matter of fact, the priest is Christ Himself who is the penitent and God the Judge Himself.¹²⁸⁵

We find no examples of forgiveness of sins by a priest in any part of Scripture. Furthermore, it is neither the commandment of Christ, Apostles nor of prophets. If the Roman theology regarding forgiveness of sins by priests and their guarantee of absolution are biblical we would be able to find support for this in Scripture but the Bible regards priests as sinners who need forgiveness of sins and it presents the grace of God as the only means of forgiveness of sins, the Cross of Christ and faith in Christ who died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead for sinners.

This notwithstanding, the priest in the confessional, according to Roman church theology, has not only the power to declare sin but also to judge it through the assigning of penance.¹²⁸⁶ From this reasoning it can be seen that her religion is idolatry which is priest-centered, in as much as the priests have deceived their penitents, claiming power belonging only to Christ is theirs. Moreover they acknowledge the direct link between God and his people and place themselves as mediator between them. As a matter of fact the only mediator between God and man

1285 Ibid., 119-124. Norman. P. Tanner, ed. *Second Vatican Council 1962-1965: Decree of the Ecumenical Councils Vol. II*, 835-836, 873, 881, 882, 1046-1050, 1051, 1054.

1286 M. E. Brinkman, *Sacraments of Freedom. Ecumenical Essays on Creation and Sacrament, Justification and Freedom*, 112-114.

is Christ; there is no other medium for mediation between them. As such “they have religion, but not the religion of the Bible.”¹²⁸⁷

But the idea of Tertullianus on the function and ministry of the priest in the sacrament of penance is our idea and best response to the idea of Roman Catholic theology regarding it: “the decision (to forgive sin) belongs to the Lord, and not the servant, to God Himself, and not to the priest.”¹²⁸⁸

The penance and absolution by priests who commits the mortal sins, according to Roman Catholic theology, also valid in sacrament because they have power to discharge penitent’s sins as “ministers of Christ having the function of forgiving sins by the power of the Holy Spirit conferred in ordination.” So the Roman Church admits that penance and absolution by her priests are valid in any case absolutely. Besides which, the declaration by a priest is not a “bare service,” but it is treated like a judicial act pronounced by a judge (*sed ad instar actus iudicialis, quo ab ipso velut a iudice sententia pronunciatur*).¹²⁸⁹

The Council of Trent objected to the Reformers’ idea that we are forgiven by

1287 Loraine Boettner, op. cit., 204.

1288 Peter Riga, op. cit., 108.

1289 Norman. P. Tanner, *Council of Trent 1545-1563: Session 14*, 707; ; H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (Freiburg, 1965 and frequently), 1685: cited from K. Lehmann and W. Pannenberg, eds., *The Condemnations of The Reformation Era: Do They still Divide?*, 62-63. Recently, the Roman Catholic Church has argued that absolution by a priest is for the assurance of salvation and *actus iudicialis* is nothing but “an analogy,” that *actus iudicialis* is “comparable with human tribunal only in an analogous sense.” But she does not reach to heart of problem. The essence of the problem of absolution is neither “just as,” nor “as an analogy,” nor “in an analogous sense” but, according to Scripture, the power of absolution is based on Christ and Christians receive it through faith.

faith in Christ alone because she has the idea that forgiveness of sin by faith alone neglects the seriousness of salvation. The decisions of the Council of Trent had the intention of objecting to the Reformers' doctrine of the 'justification by faith alone' as the council of counter-Reformation.

In the broadest sense, the penance of the Roman Catholic Church, according to Boettner, includes "the act of confession on the part of the penitent," "together with the priest's pronouncement of absolution" and "the priest's assigning of certain works to be done by the penitent," but in the narrower sense, penance is exclusively connected with "the works assigned by the priest."¹²⁹⁰ As this is the case, the priest should be regarded as belonging to the center of penance.

4. 3. 3. Penance, Christ and Holy Spirit

Forgiveness of sin through penance, according to the Roman Catholic Church, belongs to the ministry of the Trinity and it is a single process even though it has many dimensions. Principally, the Roman Catholic Church does not overlook the importance of the Trinity in the sacrament of penance and the forgiveness of sins by God.

Conversion lays more stress on the active and strenuous participation of the human being moved by *the Spirit*; reconciliation is more concerned with the Church's mediation that continues the work of reconciliation done by *Christ*; and forgiveness is principally the merciful and gratuitous action of *God the Father* towards his lost child.¹²⁹¹

1290 Loraine Boettner, op. cit., 254.

1291 Dionisio Borobio, op. cit., 97.

Through penance God welcomes the penitent as a home-coming son and Christ returns the repentant sinner to his flock and the Holy Spirit sanctifies his “temple” and dwells in it fully. Avoiding grave and venial sins they arrive at the “full freedom of the children of God” and they have a chance to examine their consciences, bring to perfection the grace of their baptism and deeply conform to Christ and “become more submissive to the voice of the Spirit.”¹²⁹²

The initial purpose of penance was not to escape punishment but “to do the will of God and to give him glory.”¹²⁹³ So penance is accompanied by God’s prompting and man must follow the grace of God. This is a more positive approach to penance.

The view on sanctification of the Roman Catholic Church is qualitatively different from that of Reformed theology that sees “the way of salvation primarily under the aspect of God’s gracious disposition in Christ Jesus and under the aspect of unmerited forgiveness.”¹²⁹⁴

In the sacrament of penance the Roman Catholic Church does not neglect the roles of God and a relationship with Him because penance comes from the grace of God. As Rahner puts it, penance is a reaction to sin due to the grace of God.¹²⁹⁵ Therefore the grace of God is the starting point of the sacrament of penance because without the grace of God man is not able to know God and to find the way of forgiveness of sin.

1292 Austin Flannery, ed. *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents: Vatican Council II, Vatican Collection Vol. II* (New York: Costello publishing company, 1982), 39.

1293 Dom Hubert van Zeller, op. cit., 51.

1294 G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 27.

1295 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 3.

And by the grace of God man decides “to renounce the permanent menace of sin”¹²⁹⁶ and to do penance. The grace of God is a cause of penance which precedes all else.

Penance has two aspects; that of turning from evil and conversion to God, but the most important thing in penance is trusting upon the grace of God as a positive activity so it is based on charity rather than austerity. For that reason the Roman Catholic Church asserts that the authentic cause of true penance is a holy fear of offending God’s love and true penance is the surrender of the whole self to God and by true penance Christian recognises the hope and love of God. The notion of penance in Roman theology is derived from the notion of sin and the nature of justification but penance always requires cooperation with the grace of God for satisfaction and expiation.

It is important to study the relationship between penance and the word of God because in Reformed theology by the word of God sinners can turn to God. To hear the word of God, for her, is the beginning of penance. The sacrament of penance in Roman theology begins with the reading of the word of God by both confessor and penitent, choosing a message appropriate to the penitent. The word of God guides in the examination of the penitent’s conscience, leading the penitent to know the mercy and forgiveness of God. The word of God outlines God’s judgment and the sacrament of penance is “a total response to this message,”¹²⁹⁷ arousing faith and hope in God’s power to save. In Reformed theology the word of God which is concerned about repentance has the forms of proclamation through preaching and reading but in the

1296 Ibid., 4.

1297 Mark Searle, *op. cit.*, 203.

Roman Catholic Church it has only the form of reading.

For the Roman Catholic Church penance comes from the grace of God and union with Christ's passion.¹²⁹⁸ The Roman Catholic Church has argued that penance is based on the commandment of the resurrected Christ; receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained (Jn. 20:22-23).

The Roman Catholic Church does not accept the sufficiency of the blood of Christ and believes in the good works of man as a means in order to accomplish salvation. So, the Council of Trent clearly criticises justification by faith that is based on Christ's merit alone¹²⁹⁹ and the Roman Catholic Church has added external means

1298 Ibid., 25.

1299 "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sin for Christ's sake alone; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be anathema" (Sess. VI, Can. 12). But First Vatican Council (1869-1870) promulgated the idea that "without faith it is impossible to please God and reach the fellowship of his sons and daughters, it follows that no one can ever achieve justification without it (faith), neither can anyone attain eternal life unless he or she perseveres in it to the end." But for her this faith means the faith under the guidance of the Roman Catholic Church and its origin is not only Scripture but also her tradition. Therefore the "justification by faith" in the Roman Catholic Church is different to that of Reformed theology. Norman. P. Tanner, *First Vatican Council 1869-1870*: 807-809. And although the Roman Catholic Church has discussed 'justification by faith' with the Protestant Church; *Lutherans and Catholicism Dialogue VII: Justification by Faith* (1983), *ARCIC II: Salvation and the Church* (1987), *English Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee: Justification-A Consensus Statement* (1988/1992), *Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission: Church and Justification* (1994), *The Gift of Salvation* (1997), and *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999), she never abandons the idea of the Council of Trent but only tries to re-interpret it because the Council of Trent's standpoint on 'justification by faith' is still accepted as a stem of that idea in the Roman Catholic Church. M. E. Brinkman, *Sacraments of Freedom. Ecumenical Essays on Creation and Sacrament*,

through a priest for the Christian's salvation to it.

And penance, according to the Roman Catholic Church, assumes the will to be good and helps in the progress towards perfection. This is necessary to both those who are “not good already” and “good already”¹³⁰⁰ because the purpose of penance is to draw closer to God and a more perfect life. The church believes that “the Church has a vast treasury of unused merits which have been accumulated primarily through the sufferings of Christ but also because of the good works of Mary and the saints who have done works more perfect than God's law requires for their own salvation.”¹³⁰¹ It is believed that the merits of salvation rest not only on Christ but includes the merits of Mary and other saints.

The grounds for forgiveness of sins are based on “the suffering and death of Christ” and “the good works of Mary and the saints.”¹³⁰² This doctrine was begun by Pope Clermont VI (1342-1352) who proclaimed that “the Church has control of a treasury of merit, and that it can give to one believer the excess merits of another.”¹³⁰³ And Pope Sixtus IV expanded it to include the dead as well as to the living. This infers that “the sacrifice of Christ was not sufficient to atone fully for sin and that it must be

Justification and Freedom, 111-114 and See. Anthony N.S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2002); Alister McGrath, *Justification by Faith: What It Means for Us Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988).

1300 Dom Hubert van Zeller, op. cit.,64.

1301 Loraine Boettner, Ibid., 263.

1302 Ibid.

1303 Ibid., 265.

supplemented to some extent by these good works.”¹³⁰⁴ Therefore our salvation depends on ourselves and our good works. Penance goes totally astray from repentance taught in Scripture; throughout the Bible there is no salvation through our merits or the merits of the saints, but rather it is connected totally to the grace of God.

In spite of the misunderstanding of the power and position of penance, the starting point of penance in the Roman Catholic Church is the whole life of Christ. For that reason, the passion of Christ and his suffering and resurrection are the beginning of penance in the Roman Catholic Church.¹³⁰⁵ The life of Christ becomes the life of the Christian, his death becomes the death of the Christian, his resurrection becomes our resurrection and his passion becomes our passion. And the extent to which we live in Christ is “the measure of our penance and our service.”¹³⁰⁶ Because Christ reconciles himself to the world we must reconcile ourselves with the world and because he died for sins and he lives for God we must die to sin and live for God.

Therefore in the first place the church’s penance is based on unity with Him in Christ’s mystical body. The Passion of Christ has strength in itself and it is “the basis of the effective power of the sacrament of penance.”¹³⁰⁷ As a result the Roman Church denounces the notion of the imputed grace of God taught by Reformed theology as fanciful and that individual confession to God is an illusion. Christ is the starting

1304 Ibid., 255.

1305 Eric Luijten, *Sacramental Forgiveness as a Gift of God: Thomas Aquinas on the Sacrament of Penance*, Publication of the Thomas Instituut te Utrecht, New Series, Vol. VIII (Nijmegen: Stichting Thomasfonds, 2003), 172. Thomas Aquinas referred to the life of Christ with a one word “*Passio Christi*.”

1306 Dom Hubert van Zeller, op. cit., 101.

1307 Eric Luijten, op. cit., 172.

point and archetype of penance and all action which imitates Christ becomes penance. For the church the life of Christ is considered as our whole life and “our lives are part of it (Christ’s passion).”¹³⁰⁸ So the sacrament of penance originated from the whole life of Christ, his life, death, resurrection and, suffering and passion. Furthermore the sacrament is effectively demonstrated in Christ Jesus. This, she believes, is an essential element of the sacrament of penance. It is believed that” to suffer as a Christian in defense of a righteous cause serves to identify one with one’s Lord and Master.”¹³⁰⁹

As Christ suffered in his passion, we ourselves participate voluntarily in the discipline of suffering because we are followers of Christ and we are always to follow behind him.¹³¹⁰ The foundation of this idea of penance is identified with the life of Christ. The Roman Catholic Church presents participation through penance in the suffering of Christ as a token of being Christians because “Christ has suffered for our sins; we show our love for him by suffering with him.”¹³¹¹ As mentioned above, outwardly the Roman Church argues that all the merits in salvation are in Christ so there are no merits within us but this argument is no more than a front.

The actual heart of belief is that through participation in suffering one can acquire merit and this plays an important role in salvation, so as such voluntary mortification has an important role in penance as well. Penance puts off the corrupted old self and puts on the new life through Jesus Christ, which is why the Roman

1308 Dom Hubert van Zeller, op. cit. 101.

1309 Loraine Boettner, op. cit., 257.

1310 Dom Hubert van Zeller, op. cit., 23.

1311 Ibid., 14.

Church believes in the union between Christ and the Christian in soteriology. In the sacrament of penance our whole personality, which is intellect, mind, heart, affection, soul and body, are intimately connected with Christ. Through penance we die with Christ and live with Him.¹³¹² Because in Christ we are one with others and with God, we must reconcile with others and with God through penance that represents the life and death of Christ.¹³¹³

The Roman Catholic theology presents peace, perseverance, joy, humility and charity as the evidences of true penance and the soul finds them in penance as the reward and result of obedience, but they are not the aim of penance. And obedience alone can prove the quality of penance therefore “obedience is the most effective of all penances.”¹³¹⁴ They are different from the spontaneous upwelling service.¹³¹⁵ They come from Christ and are proof of true penance in Christ and are products of the ministry of Christ. Christians have them in obedience. Therefore in true penance, most of all, obedience is necessary.

But in the sacrament of penance the accomplishment of redemption and its proclamation are completed not by Christ, nor by the word of God, but by the Holy Spirit and by a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. Although theoretically in the Roman Catholic Church penance is based on the life of Christ and it is related to the passion of Christ and justification through faith in Christ as well as baptism, actually the effects and fruits of penance are caused by the Holy Spirit and it is more

1312 Ibid., 26-47.

1313 Ibid., 89-94.

1314 Ibid., 75-76.

1315 Ibid., 70-71.

intimately related with the Holy Spirit and sanctification which sanctifies the Christian than Christ Jesus and justification through Him. For her, it is true that the forgiveness of sin is the gift of the Holy Spirit; therefore, forgiveness of sin is, as Thomas Aquinas commented on Jn. 20: 22-23 says, “the fitting effect of the Holy Spirit.”¹³¹⁶ The reason why the Roman Catholic Church emphasises the ministry of Holy Spirit in penance is that she wants to relate it to the power of the key, to bind and to loose, because she believes that the gift of the Holy Spirit is associated with the power of the keys and the power of the keys is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit in a priest of the Roman Catholic Church.¹³¹⁷

Therefore the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of penance does not mean that one must receive the Holy Spirit for forgiveness of sin, but that the Holy Spirit makes us see and understand the things of God and the assistance of the Holy Spirit is necessary “in order to see the ministers of the sacraments as instruments in the hand of Christ.”¹³¹⁸ And principally the Holy Spirit can help others to be led to God, therefore, “the Church is the community of the Holy Spirit”¹³¹⁹ because the Holy Spirit dwells in the each member of the body of Christ. But, with respect to the sacraments and the ministers, the Holy Spirit plays an important role in aiding the penitent in his approach to the sacrament of penance: examination of conscience, understanding the meaning of the rite itself, in particular the instrumentality of the priest, reception of the absolution, and the new life in the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit

1316 Eric Luijten, *op. cit.*, 185.

1317 *Ibid.*

1318 *Ibid.*, 186-88.

1319 *Ibid.*, 217.

plays only a secondary role to the work of Christ.¹³²⁰

By the Holy Spirit one can be justified and by the Spirit one can live in the Spirit because “the gifts of the Spirit are given in order to adapt man in such a way that he can be moved by the divine instinct.”¹³²¹

Nevertheless comparatively, the position of pneumatology in the doctrine of penance of Roman theology is weakened. In Reformed theology the ministry of Holy Spirit is principally the cause of repentance but in Roman theology the starting point of penance is the life of God’s children who want to imitate Christ and earn the guarantee of the priests. Therefore the imitation of Christ is at the root of penance in Roman Catholic theology but the Holy Spirit plays a secondary role with the result that the work of the Holy Spirit is not the cause of penance but it leads penitents into the way of Christ.

It is a fact that the Roman Catholic Church has emphasised more the effect and necessity of penance than the repentance of the Reformed Church, but in the strict sense it is not by the Holy Spirit in Christ because priests of the Roman Catholic Church appropriate the role and position of the Holy Spirit Christ between the Church and penitents in penance. And the sacrament of penance is substituted for repentance by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For the Roman Catholic Church the sources of penance are God’s grace, tangible accomplishment of justifying faith and participation in Christ’s Cross. The penance in

1320 Ibid., 190-91.

1321 Ibid.

the Roman Catholic Church presents uniquely ‘a tangible accomplishment of justifying faith’ as one of the sources because she interprets *metanoia* of New Testament as only the change of attitude and she believes that it is always a matter of tangible things.¹³²² Therefore she changed the repentance of the New Testament, emphasising an inward change, to penance, emphasising exterior change.¹³²³

The study of faith in penance is important as in the Scripture faith and repentance accompanies each other and stands together. In Reformed theology through faith sinners can repent to God which necessitates that faith precedes repentance. But in Roman Catholic theology the position of faith and justification by faith are weakened and faith does not precede penance.

By both sacrament and faith, according to the Roman Catholic Church, Christians are united with Christ, therefore the sacrament of penance is the sacrament of faith and through this faith sanctification and justification may happen in the sacraments.¹³²⁴ The starting point of justification and sanctification in Roman Catholic theology, according to G. C. Berkouwer, is the same, but their inter-relationship in soteriology is obscure and cannot be divided articulately. So, according to Berkouwer,

1322 Karl Rahner, op. cit., 5.

1323 The Roman Catholic Church has argued recently that Calvin’s position, that faith precedes good works and the sinner is forgiven by faith and grace of God, “seems more in agreement with the position of Trent.” But it shows that she still holds her position of the Council of Trent without sign of regret and she wants to amend the misunderstanding of Protestant theology about the penance and justification of the Roman Catholic Church in the discussion with other churches. M. E. Brinkman, *Sacraments of Freedom. Ecumenical Essays on Creation and Sacrament, Justification and Freedom*, 116. ; K. Lehmann and W. Pannenberg, eds., *The Condemnations of The Reformation Era: Do They still Divide?*, 56-69.

1324 Eric Luijten, op. cit., 181.

the Roman Catholic Church “turned the relation between penitence and grace into a legalistic conditional stipulation.”¹³²⁵ And even though faith may perform its now very modest function of preparing for justification, justification itself becomes almost “indistinguishable from sanctification” because justification and sanctification in Roman Catholic theology are a relationship between forces and counter-forces. Therefore “the cultivation of the grace received, after its initial infusion, is then the essence of sanctification. In this process the sacraments must, of course, play their part.”¹³²⁶

The position of faith in the Council of Trent, H. Morsorley wrote, was in harmony with Luther’s. In Roman Catholic theology faith is no more than “one of four requirements of justification of the godless that is signified in the sacrament of penance.” And one is justified by faith and the sacrament of penance “must be the sacramental expression of this justifying faith.”¹³²⁷ The some of Roman Catholic theologians regards Luther’s position on faith as a dogmatic divergence as Luther’s teaching on faith does not separate faith from penance.¹³²⁸ But both of them are absolutely different because for Luther faith is only an instrument of justification but in Roman Catholic Theology faith is no more than one of the elements of penance.

For Reformed theology faith is the start of all of new recognition that is prompted by grace of God, whilst in Roman Catholic theology faith does not play an

1325 FJ, 182.

1326 FS, 27.

1327 Eric Luijten, op. cit., 173.

1328 Harry Morsorley, “Luther and Trent on the Faith needed for the Sacrament of Penance: Concilium no. 7/1-10 (London: Burns & Oates, 1971), 89-98.

important role in the sacrament of penance. She believes that faith is prompted by charity and is nothing but the correct institution of knowledge, and although faith becomes a means of recognition of sin, it does not become a means of salvation. Penance is nothing but “one more burdensome element in their life as a whole”¹³²⁹ because it is not completed by the grace of God and by faith.

Theoretically, the sacrament of penance should be a very useful part of the spiritual life of Christians because it encourages and strengthens the communion of saints and protects them from sins but practically the sacrament of penance of today is far from its original intention. Penance has many problems, not only in relation to Scriptural teachings but also in the practical aspects where it can not help to have the assurance of salvation. Thus in penance Christ and the Holy Spirit are not the subject of the forgiveness of sins and faith in Christ is not the only means of salvation; rather the Roman Catholic Church has become the only institution of salvation.

Roman Catholic theology presents the history of penance in the Church as proof of the legitimacy of the sacrament of penance, because for her the revelation not only includes Scripture but also tradition and because she believes that if Scripture is only a revelation, and separates Scripture from historical settings in the life of the Church.¹³³⁰ For her, theological traditions of the Church have important roles as standards of faith in addition to Scripture.

The sacrament of penance of the Roman Catholic Church has the probability of change and variety with the changes of the times because she has changed its form out

1329 Adrienne Von Speyr, op. cit., 109-110.

1330 Aidan, Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1991), 165.

of the necessity of the times as we have seen in Church history. What we can conclude is that there are many ways of celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation and that the Church, which is the whole body of believers, has shaped them and “can shape them to the needs of the members in changing times and places.”¹³³¹ So the sacrament of penance is not based only on scriptural revelation, but rather on tradition and necessity and it is largely a product of the Roman Catholic Christian’s necessity, meaning that whenever she wants to, she can diverge from the position of Scripture.

SUMMARY

In the Roman Catholic Church penance is necessary for one who commits mortal sin but not in the case of venial sin. The Roman Catholic Church has the power to differentiate between the types of sins. For her there are no unforgivable sins, as through penance mortal sins are forgiven and penance is the beginning of the sinner’s endeavor to annul unforgivable sin, such as apostasy.

Penance can be understood in relation to baptism; a Christian is forgiven his sins that were committed before baptism; the sins of a Christian that were committed after baptism are forgiven through penance. Therefore penance, theoretically and practically, together with baptism, are requisite elements in soteriology. There is no salvation without penance and only through penance penitents can have the assurance of salvation but this is of little assurance and is no more than a fetter to Christians.

1331 Monica K. Hellwig, *Sign of Reconciliation and Conversion: The Sacrament of Penance for Our Times* (Wilmington: Michael Glazer, 1982), 151.

Furthermore, without satisfaction and absolution given by a priest, forgiveness of sins and salvation cannot be accomplished.

Penance consists of four elements; contrition, which looks for the grace of God and sorrow for one's sins; confession, in which one confesses one's sins to a priest; satisfaction, which grants satisfaction due to one's confession of sins to the priest and absolution, granted as sins forgiven by the priest as an assurance of salvation. But, her main interest is not in the inward change of sinners but rather external change. For her the sufficiency of atonement through Christ's cross is insignificant and offers no assurance of salvation, so she presents absolution, through priests, as the conviction of salvation. For her the heart of repentance is not the grace of Christ and confession of the penitents, but satisfaction and absolution or indulgence awarded by priests.

The Roman Catholic Church was handed-down the power of forgiveness of sins through baptism and penance from Christ and his successors, and only the Roman Catholic Church has this power. So the doctrine of repentance of the Reformed Church, according to which we are forgiven by faith alone and confession of our sin before God alone are not true repentance in her eyes, in as much as sins can only be forgiven by the Church.

The main character in the sacrament of penance is the priest. He evaluates the sins of penitents and gives satisfaction in light of their sins and dispenses absolution from sins and his power to do so continues not only in this world but also into purgatory.

For the Roman Catholic Church the atonement of Christ and guidance of the

Holy Spirit in the sacrament of penance are weakened because, she argues, the priest has been entrusted with total power of forgiveness of sins by Christ.

The main problem of Roman Catholic theology in the doctrine of penance, even though it is presented with concrete directions and categories, is that it is not based on biblical repentance but is a human invention. This penance has an inclination towards synergism.

This form of religion is idolatry as its focus is not on Christ but man, and as such is incompatible with the beliefs of the Reformed Church. Furthermore the penance of the Roman Catholic Church is nowhere near that of biblical repentance and offers nothing to Christians; rather it converts Christianity into a religion without the righteousness of Christ.