Atonement and the Quest for Holiness in the Repentance and Holiness Ministry: Toward a Hegelian Triad

By

Kamaũ Thairũ Moses

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the award of Masters in Theology (MTh) from St. Paul's University

May 2016

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Lead Supervisor: Rev. Dr. John Kiboi

Co- supervisor: Rev. Dr. Joseph W. Black

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any other institution. I agree that this proposal may be available for reference and photocopying at the discretion of the university.

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We confirm that the work presented in this dissertation has been done by the student under our supervision.

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ABSTRACT

The burden of sins weighs heavily down upon humanity and when humanity come to the realization of sins, they are filled with remorse and sorrow. Sin excludes them from the presence of God. Human efforts to appease God for sins are inadequate since humanity is imperfect and cannot meet His standards. Therefore, God in his own volition gave up his son to atone for the sins. Only He could satisfy himself through offering a sacrifice on our behalf. This sacrifice, Jesus Christ, made up for our sins; it became the propitiation and the expiation. Since God himself deliberately redeemed us from the bondage of sin, our response to this redemption should be deliberate as well. It should originate from knowing we are redeemed even when we do not deserve it. While this might make us despair from the guilt that another person bore the punishment for us, we on the other hand must have comfort that the death of Christ at the Cross was an act of love. It is this act of love that should assure us of our salvation. Therefore our response to God and the community around after forgiveness should be of joy and desire to serve God's purposes in the community. However, even though this is the expectation, the Repentance and Holiness Ministry teaches otherwise. Because they consider the community around them apostate, they withdraw from the community. They believe that to maintain their standing before God, they have to be separate from any engagements with other people except those who uphold their faith. And because repentance is ignited by sorrow and guilt over ones' sins, they are in perpetual sorrow yet Christ's death was an act of love. Because it was an act of love after repentance, joy not sorrow should follow.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Introduction

Repentance and Holiness Ministry is a movement within Kenya that has prompted Christians to question the teaching of the Church with regard to repentance. This chapter introduces the Ministry and contextualizes the study by giving a background to the research. It also presents the statement of the problem as well as the research questions and objectives. Its significance and scope are also shown.

1.2 Background to the Study

In October 2008 after my undergraduate degree, I volunteered to serve as an evangelist in my home church. I was assigned teaching Catechism classes and working with the youth within the parish. Towards the end of the year, two very active members- one a youth and a middle aged woman, a teacher by profession suddenly became withdrawn from us and even stopped coming to church. After sometime, I went to find out what was wrong that they suddenly had broken contact with us.

On further inquiry we were told this young man and the lady mentioned above had joined another church: The Repentance and Holiness Ministry. They said that they had 'seen the light'. 'We in the Presbyterian Church were not holy. We never repent. Even when we repent, it is in a very formal and legalistic manner. God is not moved by our repentance. That is why our church does not grow and the Holy Spirit does not 'move in a mighty way'. There are no miracles in our church to show the presence of the Holy Spirit. This absence of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the form of miracles and rapid church growth can only mean one thing: we are sinners

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who never repent and God has withdrawn from us. Otherwise if we repented properly, the Lord would do wonders in our midst'.

Because in their eyes the Presbyterians are sinners, they withdrew from them. They can only mix with those who go to their church. Only they have attained the necessary levels of holiness required by God. Again they even changed their dress code and reduced their engagement with the community. The vibrant young man became perpetually sorrowful, always looking gloomy and pietistic. The lady neglected the family to pursue holiness since even the husband was a potential avenue through which the devil could contaminate her holiness. Christ's coming was 'now' and so she had to be 'sinless'.

At around this time there was a famine in Turkana, a typhoon in Philippines and a very fierce Hurricane in the United States and they interpreted these disasters not as natural calamities but as evidence of God's displeasure of our sins and the nearness of eschaton. This again was very problematic. To see God's punishment in every misfortune was not entirely correct. And true to their Church they all went into repentance mode. They accused us of ignoring these vivid calls through nature to repent. The results were a superiority complex and a negative attitude towards those who do not ascribe to their views. Obviously, some in our church were convinced of this position and they demanded for repentance at every turn of the liturgy. When there was power rationing on Sunday during the service, it was seen in the context of 'the people leading the service are sinful that is why God is sabotaging their ministry'.

Indeed the Scriptures variously show that we are sinners and the only way to come back to God is through repentance. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans3:23). "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our

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sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us form all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him to be a liar and His truth is not in us" (I John 1:8-10). Our status as sinners is not in doubt. What is not agreed upon is the motivation and the desired results of the repentance. Should we be moved to repent because of the fear of the wrath of God alone or should we also be moved by His unending love for us as well? After repentance should we withdraw from the society or should we be more engaged? Should we have more sorrow or should we be joyous?

Wayne Grudem (2007:713) defines repentance as:

> A heartfelt sorrow for sin and a renouncing of it and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ… an intellectual understanding of faith (that sin is wrong), an emotional approval of the teaching of scripture regarding sin (a sorrow for sin and a hatred for it), and a personal decision to turn from it (a renouncing of sin and a decision of the will to forsake it and lead a life of obedience to Christ).

Repentance therefore is simply acknowledging that you are a sinner and renouncing that sin.

Repentance is characterized by sorrow or remorse and a deliberate decision to turn away from sin. However, it does not necessarily mean a changed life since it is merely acknowledgment of sin.

Repentance is also a response to God's grace. The Bible Dictionary (Douglas1963:853) defines repentance as "a profound change of mind involving the changing of the direction of life from that of self-centeredness or sin-centeredness to Christ-Centeredness". In the process of conversion, it is succeeded by faith in God. It springs from the love of God who is offended by sin. "It includes sorrow for the sin committed, confession of guilt, and for the purpose of amendment" (Cross and Livingstone 1957:1393).

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From the above, there seems to be a consensus of what true repentance is and what it involves. It involves faith, acknowledgement of sin, conversion and a turn around.

History shows that different people perceive sinfulness differently and in effect have developed different doctrines of repentance. These views are informed by their understanding of what sin is, their status before God and how to maintain the holiness after forgiveness. The context in which they exist and the prevailing communal values also influences their doctrine.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Repentance and Holiness Ministry's (RHM) teaching on repentance causes strained relationship in the community. When faithful uphold their teaching on repentance, they are in perpetual sorrow and they disengage from community social activities. They become proud and look down on those they perceive as "less holy".

1.4 Hypothesis

The researcher holds that if the Hegelian Triad as espoused by Anthony Thiselton is applied in hermeneutics, the question of what should follow after repentance will be resolved and the assurance of salvation will be affirmed.

1.5 Objectives

a) To analyze the teaching of RHM's doctrine against orthodoxy

b) To investigate the Biblical teaching on repentance;

c) To examine the development of the Reformed doctrine of atonement.

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1.6 Research Questions

a) What does the Old and New Testament teach on Repentance?

b) What does the church teach regarding repentance?

c) What does RHM teach on repentance?

1.7 Literature Review

The realization that one has sinned arouses guilt and sorrow engulfs the sinner. However, this realization must be accompanied by an effort to turn around and turn towards God in pursuit of forgiveness. However, human actions are not adequate to atone for the sins. Only the atoning work of Christ can appease God the Father.

The work of Christ at the cross is an act of love; not an act of desperation. It is an intrinsic act that no external pressure would have moved God to offer himself. The response by humanity to this atoning work therefore should be joyful. They need not to fall into despair since someone else died in humanity's stead. However, this is not the case in the RHM. After repentance, they fall into more sorrow. This is especially in light of their claim that rapture is near and that the catastrophes occurring are a clear indication that God is displeased with humanity. Further, the second coming of Christ is near because the prophet has 'seen it' in his trances. This makes them repent out of panic and embrace a piety that moves them to withdraw from community engagements.

To evaluate the RHM atonement, the researcher used the Hegelian Triad. The RHM's doctrine of atonement was held in light of orthodoxy.

Further literature on atonement is reviewed in consequent chapters.

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1.8 Rationale

Should the fear of eschaton be the only motivating factor that leads one to repentance? Can miracles only occur when we repent? Now that we are forgiven our sins, should we disengage from the society?

Further, though initially Dr. Owour worked with local churches, his approach changed over time to a criticism of the very idea of local churches. In an unpublished paper, Lucas Owako, the Director of Fellowship of Christian Unions in Kenya further elucidates the challenges this movements poses thus as captured by John Maina in his blog:

> "He condemned all local churches and their leaders. The manifestation of this was when his followers everywhere became rebellious; dissenters who could no longer submit to any other leadership apart from that of the 'prophet'. The crusades held by Owuor lost their interdenominational outlook when his followers started forming other places of worship called 'altars'. These altars quickly became local churches by themselves, even as they criticized the idea of local church. The rejection of church leadership, in local churches and CUs, has characterized the group. They either take over or turn it into one of the altars, or they move out. They have a 'holier than thou' attitude which disregards other Christians as 'not serious' or compromising based on how they sing, dress or relate with non-Christians or people of opposite gender… The ministry holds that spouses ought to abstain from sexual relations, and be holy, as they prepare to come before the Lord. Since the followers keep travelling from one place to another for the meetings, family break-ups are inevitable" (www.facebook.com/notes/dalavin-john-maina).

There is consensus among scholars that in the process of conversion, repentance comes first and then turning to God in faith follows. Eventually, having been forgiven, we are filled with joy. However, none of the scholars addresses issues that are unique to the RHM.

Therefore, this research was conducted to restate orthodoxy and show the negations. RHM has, above many other Christian movements, been featured in the mass media prominently. When they have their open air meetings, people from all corners of the country gather in these meetings. Because of the publicity they receive their doctrines have adulterated. Further, most of

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the teaching they give forth have not been evaluated for orthodoxy. If we are forgiven, should we disengage from community life? Should we continue in perpetual sorrow? It is therefore necessary to evaluate their doctrines.

To examine the negation, the research investigated RHM's teaching on the doctrine. Further in the Kenyan Church today, the desired results of repentance are assumed and some Christians are not aware of the expectations. To show these negations further, the researcher used the Hegelian triad to make reflections. The RHM's position is held against orthodoxy so that it is illuminated.

1.9 Methodology

The Hegelian Triad was used to evaluate the RHM's doctrine of Atonement in light of orthodoxy. The two 'truths' were held in tension so that one truth is examined in the light of the other.

1.10 Scope

The study focused on the teaching of the early Church Fathers regarding conversion. The emphasis was meant to establish what moves one to repent and the desired results of such. The researcher also investigated RHM's doctrine of atonement with a view of establishing the major tenets of this doctrine. Eventually, this research dealt with evaluating this doctrine against some early Christian heresy in order to show their negation from orthodoxy.

This study therefore only investigates atonement. The prophet's use of scripture especially with regard to the practice of proof texting and the understanding of eschaton are not dealt with in this study.

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1.11 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 1: Introductory issues

In this Chapter the researcher gave a background to the study; presented the statement of the problem, hypothesis, methodology, research questions and objectives, literature review and the justification of the study.

Chapter 2: RHM's Doctrine of Atonement

This chapter presents a history of the RHM, doctrine of atonement and repentance, the effects of atonement.

Chapter 3: The Doctrine of Atonement

This chapter investigated the historical development of this doctrine of repentance: from Old Testament, New Testament and Church tradition.

Chapter 4: Theological Reflection

This chapter dealt with a synthesis of the findings of the previous two chapters. The study also sought the correlation of the actions of RHM's faithful to their understanding of the scripture. The hope is that the resultant information will lead to better understanding of repentance and the desired impact on the Christian.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this Chapter, the researcher evaluated the achievement of the hypothesis, illustrated pastoral implications of the research and made necessary recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO: REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS MINISTRY

2.0 Introduction

All humanity has sinned and fallen short of God's glory. And because by nature human beings are sinful, they must constantly repent so that the relationship between them and God is restored. As such, after repentance there should be joy at the restoration of the relationship not sorrow.

This chapter looks at the origin of Repentance and Holiness Ministry (RHM). It also presents a brief biography of its founder and his call as well. Their theological foundations are investigated. The teachings of the founder and prophet Dr. Owour are analyzed as captured in online videos, other ministry online publications and the ministry's quarterly magazine issue. Special attention is given to the definition of sin which has influenced the way atonement in RHM is constructed. Lastly, the implications of their teaching were examined against orthodoxy.

2.1 Origin of Repentance and Holiness Ministry

The RHM is a movement started by the 'Man of GOD, the MIGHTY PROPHET OF THE LORD' [these are the official titles as used in the Ministry's leadership hierarchy] Dr. Edward D. Owour in April 2004. Biographical information about him is scanty. However, collaboration from different sources shows that Prophet Owour was born 1966 in Bondo, Siaya County, Kenya. He earned his first degree in Chemical engineering from Makerere University, a Masters degree from University of Nairobi and a second Masters degree in Genetics from Ben Gurion, Israel before proceeding to University of Haifa, Israel for PhD in Molecular genetics. He also has done research at the Institute for Genetics of the University of Giessen, Germany. After his doctoral studies, he worked at the University of Illinois' Centre for Pharmaceutical Biotechnology specializing in research of Cancer. He left his academic and professional teaching

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to pursue a call into the prophetic office with a specific mandate from the Lord Jesus Christ to prepare His people for his coming soon. (softkenya.com).

The call was after he received prophetic visions instructing him to leave his medical research profession with a specific mandate from the Lord Jesus Christ to prepare His people for His soon coming. In the visions he received on that, day the Lord charged him to call all nations to 'repent and prepare the way, for the Messiah is coming, [and] return to holiness and prepare the way' (Repentance and Holiness, Vol. 10. 25). He compares his ministry to that of John the Baptist and his influence is evident in his ministry.

Besides this call, he attributes this particular direction of his ministry to his childhood experiences in the church as narrated in the Repentance and Holiness Magazine Vol. 10. He began serving in the Anglican Church in his home at the age of fourteen (14) years. 'It was during that work at the Altar of the LORD in the church that some very interesting and indeed intriguing events took place, that today form the footprints of the LORD's calling in his life' (Repentance and Holiness, Vol. 10. 20). He was assigned the role of cleaning the church every Saturday in preparation for the Sunday service.

In the community in which the church was located, there were few toilets and as such they could not handle the large numbers of the community members, people chose to use the church toilets and the compound. When the 'Man of God' came to prepare the church on Sunday, he would find it soiled with human excrement. 'Unfortunately for him, whenever he cleaned on Saturday and got everything ready, upon coming early morning on Sunday, he would still find fresh soiling that had happened on Saturday night' (Repentance and Holiness, Vol. 10. 21). That would prompt him to clean again, the whole place.

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Due to exhaustion, he would fall asleep on the pews as he waited for the worshippers to come for the service. It is one such Sunday the he had an encounter with the Lord who appeared to him in person and touched him.

Later he joined the university where he discovered that he had a gift such that he would know what would happen. He confesses:

> So many months in advance he would know when somebody was going to write him a letter and send it to him in school, and indeed when those months passed that particular letter arrived…Only later when the Lord had called his servant and sent him is when the man of God made sense of all that had happened to him in that old church when he used to clean the altar of the Lord. Today, he well understands that the Lord was doing with him as He had done other Servants such as Moses (Repentance and Holiness, Vol. 10. 21).

This seems to be the motivation of Prophet Dr. Owour's ministry. He perceives the church as being under slavery and needing a messiah of some sort. Just as Moses led the children of Israel out of Egyptian slavery, he too is charged with leading the church out of the bondage of sin, corrupt leadership and prosperity gospel through repentance. As such, we should see his call for repentance through the formative story of 'church cleaning' and in the same breadth interpret his role in this process as that of the cleaner.

2.2 Repentance in the RHM

RHM has redefined the way Christians understand 'repentance'. In their tenth issue of their magazine they argue:

> While postmodernism may have entrenched its ugly footprint into this present generation, it is however pathetic to see that the indelible salvation of the cross which Christ Jesus the Lord purchased with HIS dear life has been equally dented. The preaching of money for survival has today become the major hallmark of a present day pastor. The overall consequence of this apostasy, together with its prosperity gospel that lacks deliverance is a church that has drifted away from the Lord… all action… seem to sideline the original holy salvation of the cross and the blood... The spiritual decomposition has particularly been exacerbated by the prosperity gospel being preached today and its continued lack of power of deliverance…. If only today's church could adhere to this voice of repentance then she would without a doubt experience a robust overhauling of her Christian salvation...the key to ultimate restoration of

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> the present day church for purposes of entry into the glorious entry into the kingdom of GOD (Repentance and Holiness NO. 10: 2-3)

At a glance, this is a theologically true statement. Indeed, humanity needs to repent to gain entry into heaven. Again salvation comes by repentance after conviction through the grace of God. However, they argue that postmodernism has dented the salvation of the cross through prosperity gospel. This has led to sin - apostasy and the way to return to God is through repentance and that if we all repent, the Second coming of Christ will be.

The premise of the doctrines of this church is in the definition of sin. From this, all other doctrines of RHM flow. To show the negations made at a later stage, the researcher discussed the major tenets of RHM broadly under: definition of sin, their view on repentance and our response to God and place of eschaton. In each of these categories, the study refers to the scriptural text they emphasize. The researcher also analyzed the teachings of the prophet as captured in the many videos and the print magazines they regularly release.

2.2.1 Definition of Sin

The foundation of RHM's theology is the definition of sin. They define sin as apostasy. The *New Dictionary of Theology* (Mckenzie1988:39) defines apostasy as "a general falling away from religion or a denial of faith by those who once held it". This apostasy can be compulsory or voluntary. In both cases however, there is departure from truth. This departure according to Dr. Owour is promoted by modernism. The characteristics of modernism are love for money and sexual immorality.

In a video message entitled *'Apostasy in the Church'* (www.youtube.com), he argues that apostasy of the church was mentioned by Jesus as the mark that would precede his second coming. He further notes that apostasy and the Bible exist in succession, that is, when there is no

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revival, the nation of Israel is apostate and vice-versa. He interchangeably uses desolation for apostasy.

Apostasy, he says is "a disturbing reality in the church …where the devil has gotten into the church and has gone unrebuked, for example, women out there walk in the church nude unrebuked. [It involves] deception (lies) and it appears as the tool of choice that the enemy has chosen to target Bible believing Christians... The enemy clothes himself in the vestments and stands at the pulpit and spreads deception to the congregation".

With reference to scriptures, he further defines apostasy as injustice. The story of the widow and the evil king (Luke 18.7-8) shows apostasy, as falling away from true faith which does not promote true justice. Matthew 24:12-13 indicates this period of apostasy is a period of declining faith, morality and persecution. Like the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25, the church is "drowsy and sleeping" yet the bridegroom has come. All this scripture points to the time we now live in. Based on Mark 13:13, he argues that apostasy would be to succumb to pressure from men when persecuted.

Apostasy is idolatry as well. All humanity is created to worship. We all must believe in something higher. In the event that we don't believe in any, we have a hole left in us. To fill that hole, we start looking for other things-idols. If we do not believe in God, then we will believe in another. Therefore apostasy is believing in the other!

From the above scriptural references, he adduces additional meanings of apostasy. It is from Greek word *apostacia* meaning "Defiance against an established authority". From the aforementioned, apostasy for us is: rebellion to the Lord; a condition in which a believer openly rebels against Christ Jesus the Lord; it's the abandonment of true faith in Christ Jesus; a breach

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of faith; a revolt against established authority of the true gospel of the Cross; it's the defection from the true worship of Christ Jesus as Lord; its open resistance to the true faith in Christ Jesus; it refers to an uprising which amounts to the highest form of insubordination to the authority of Christ; it's an insurrection; it's giving up and it implies a renunciation of Jesus Christ as Lord; its foregoing faith in Christ Jesus; a place where one discards, leaves, desserts, rejects and shuns true faith in Christ Jesus; at is revoking ones allegiance from 'Jehovah Almighty' [the title they use for God]; a situation in which ones dismisses of the blood of Jesus; the nullification of faith in Chris Jesus, it is contraverting the gospel of Jesus (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:111-115).

Particularly, he singles out sexual sin and the love of money as the two prominent sins. In the online publication *Overcoming Sexual Sin,* he discusses in particular sexual sin; he refers to I Samuel 12 when David committed adultery with Bethsheba. First, he notes the speed at which the Lord moves to punish David. God did not consider the special relationship he had with David as a King over His people. The outcome of this sexual sin was that God cut off communication from David and that's why he sent the prophet Nathan. There was also death, both physically and spiritually. He then refers to several other scriptures to illustrate the penalty of adultery, for example, Deuteronomy 22:22, Leviticus 20:17, Proverbs 6:20-35. All these clearly outline the consequence of sins, which is death. In the end, David was restored after repentance.

He castigates the prosperity gospel. In an address to Church leaders in Botswana, (www.mmegi.com) he notes that the church has now so many tricksters and false prophets. He poses, "what kind of a man of God asks people to give a special amount of money for a special miracle... the gospel of prosperity has never been the right way to salvation. True salvation is when people genuinely come before the Lord in repentance and live holy thereafter. The decay in

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the Church has to stop". If the church repented, the Lord would honor it with miracles, signs and wonders.

The prosperity gospel presupposes a special knowledge of the Preacher, that indeed that miracle will happen and also portrays money as having power to influence the decision of God. "The current detour by the house of the Lord implicitly declares that the Church has today ceased to feed on manna from heaven and hence proceeded to live by the perishable bread of this earth" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:116). This prosperity gospel "was crafted by the confederate forces of darkness working within the Church, to primarily masquerade as light, and then rob away from unsuspecting believers, the treasure of righteousness" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:116). These 'dark forces' are the anti Christ and further affirm the nearness of the coming of the Lord. In discussing this prosperity gospel, he uses terms like: 'hazardous gospel of prosperity', 'gospel of adultery', 'despicable vice', 'pathological gospel'. And because this is a heinous act before the Lord, he will severely punish this world. It is a 'despicable vice' that has robbed the church its purity before the Lord.

This gospel presents quick benefits which are just trappings of the devil. He further states:

> Such fake benefits have proven worthless, since they fail to break the power of darkness over the lives of believers. … the emergence of the corrupt gospel of prosperity came about as a survival instinct for a faithless community of Christians within the Church. Because they had no faith that God could provide for them they devised trickery and conmanship by saying, "sow a seed and get your miracle (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:117).

Because of the emphasis on these material benefits and their ability to influence God, they have reduced God's infinite grace to bless whomever he chooses to bless.

This gospel is proclaimed by false prophets who propose that worldly comfort is the surest sign of God's favor. Since this is a temptation the Church must face, we need to do as Jesus did when

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faced with temptation: use the Word to counter every evil proposed. In the power of the blood of Christ the Church should fortify herself.

To fight Apostasy, Christians must understand: the boundaries of Christian lifestyle as defined by the Bible; the various forms of apostasy; the traits that characterize the apostates; the doctrine of apostasy; and the preachers of apostasy.

Apostasy destroys the true witness of Christians and diminishes the testimony of the church. Because the church is so engaged in other activities, they never see the negation from true faith. We don't have time to reflect on the teachings emanating from the pulpit. As such, we cannot tell a wrong from right teaching.

Apostasy began in heaven when Satan disobeyed God. And the reaction from God should serve as a lesson to us. The consequence was grave. God had zero tolerance on this. Revelation 12:7 depicts the angel, Michael, fighting with Satan. Whenever apostasy shows up, the armies of God are called to a severe battle until the devil is neutralized. In the same way, a church that fights apostasy is one that fights fiercely against apostasy just like the angels. The devil and his agents were fought and they lost their place in heaven. The leader of apostasy-Satan lost his place in heaven.

The second time it happened is in the Garden of Eden when Eve errored in embracing Satanic words motivated by lust. The consequence of their apostasy was death. God cast out both Adam and eve out of the garden.

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2.2.2 View on Repentance

Repentance is the key to restoration. He argues that what delays the second coming of Jesus Christ and an outbreak of miracles in the church today is lack of repentance. "If only today's Church could adhere to this voice of repentance, then she would without a doubt experience a robust overhauling of Christian salvation… This is what holds the key to the ultimate restoration of the present day church for purposes of entry into the glorious Kingdom of God." (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:3). This repentance must lead to purity and righteousness.

God punishes the unrighteous through catastrophes. "Many …are today aware that he shocked the world when he prophesied the massive Haiti earthquake, Chilean earthquake and others across the globe. Moreover, the prophesy of the Global Economic Crisis and its fulfillment, the prophesy of the bloodshed across the Arab world and its ongoing fulfillment …all but a few of earth shaking pronouncements… all the judgments" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:5). All these are wake up calls of how much we have drifted and the need to come back to God.

He perceives his call to repentance as that one of a mediator. In an opinion article by the Repentance and Holiness magazine, the editor confesses that:

> As he (the prophet) goes about his ministration, I also noted that he also does not fail to lift up the banner of hope for the elect of God, as a messenger of reconciliation between God and man. By proclaiming the repentance and forgiveness of sins, the Man of God vividly presents as one who has seen the light and has come to testify of the light. That catapults him into a different league since he fits into the shoes of the mediator of the inter-testamental period between the now dispensation and that of the glorious coming of the Messiah (Vol.10 2014:6).

From the above, two observations must be made. First, Dr. Owour is presented as some kind of messiah. He is introduced with titles such as 'Man of God, the Mighty prophet of God'. He is also referred to as "the one who came as Witness, to bear Witness about the Light…[who] bears a striking similarity to the one who also came as a witness unto the light that was coming"

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(Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:5). When he calls people to repentance, he is seen as standing between the dispensation of the New Testament and the dispensation of the glorious coming of the Messiah. We are therefore now in some inter-testamental period of some sort. He is seen as one who will usher a new dispensation just as Christ did.

He is also seen as a messiah because of the many miracles that characterize his ministry. His followers claim that they resemble those of Christ during his public ministry. Further, in his open air meetings, his followers claim that he simply walks towards the multitudes and thousands are healed. Only Christ did this. These miracles reflect those in the Scriptures and this is a sign he is to usher a new dispensation.

On December 31, 2012, it is claimed that a pillar of cloud like that described during Moses' time came down to the crowd gathered for an open air meeting in Kisumu. This, his followers argue is a fulfillment of his prophesy a month earlier. This makes him more like the Old Testament prophets. He is even compared to the 'morning dew' which was to offer comfort to the people as the wrath of God was visited on the wicked. (Isaiah 26:19-21). He also claims legitimacy since during his call to ministry he fell into many trances one of which the Lord showed him a clock reading 11.59pm and Matthew 11.10 also appeared besides. Because of this clock, he claims to know the timing of the second coming of Jesus Christ. The calamities and the apostasy prevalent in the church are an indication of the immediacy of his coming. He is even greater than Jesus Christ since he reproduces miracles of Jesus with "greater unimaginable magnitude in the Man of God's public ministry". (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:7).

Second, is his constant mention of the second coming of Christ. He constantly calls people to repent for the second coming of Christ is near. This aspect of his ministry is captured in the long

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discourse on the Call of the Prophet to the ministry. When the prophet was being called into ministry, he severally fell into trances as earlier intimated, all of which he saw the heavens open. In one of the trances, he even had a conversation with John the Baptist and Jesus Christ who was standing beside the throne of God. He says the conversation with John the Baptist "reflects the Lord's priorities standing in contrast to the way the church and the world perceive" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:38). It shows the urgency of the coming of the Lord. He says "and the Lamb arrived to where I was standing, John the Baptist disappeared and the rest of the succeeding occurrences, the Holy Spirit never allowed me to reveal unto this day. This was the place at which it finally dawned on me that John the Baptist was as a matter of fact sent of the Lord to instruct me that time to make direct announcement to the nations of the earth of the coming of the Messiah is now" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:31).

At the second coming of Jesus Christ, the Church will be ruptured and taken to heaven as the bride of Christ. In one of the visions he received on July 29, 2009, the Lord showed him "the glorious Church of Christ after she had just been raptured into heaven, she constituted the glorious royal bride of Christ that sits at the wedding Feast of the Lamb of God". Her garments therefore must remain untainted.

The present day Church is incapable of preparing the faithful for the second coming of Jesus Christ. "The old wineskins of the Jewish religious practice … were too rigid to carry the life changing message of God's love. Similarly, the religious activities of the present day church will not suffice on the day of His return unless coupled with genuine repentance and holiness" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:38).

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2.2.3 The Result of Repentance

The call to repentance must be followed by a commitment to holiness and must be like that of Aaron (Exodus 28:1-5). "By calling Aaron from among the Israelites; the Lord was implying [that] a total separation from the multitude is paramount" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:107). To further affirm this, he argues:

> The divine proclamation that founded the church into being requires that believers live their lifestyles as distinct and separate people in accordance with God's exacting law. That marvelous blueprint demands that Christians maintain a clear identity of consecration and separateness. It is this distinctiveness that was originally intended to mould the church as a people totally detached from the decay of this evil world, both in their belief and manifest lifestyle" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:118).

Based on 1 Peter 2:9 where we are called a 'royal priesthood, a chosen generation and a holy nation' he asserts that this provides ground for the demand of total separateness for Christians. The Lord demands a holy segregation from the defiled communities that defined their neighborhood. God assigned sanctions and restraints upon the Ancient Israel so that she may achieve her destiny. "Being very much aware of the cunning nature of the communities among whom Israel was aspiring to live, the Lord hence raised the above caution prohibiting Israel from prophylactically engaging with those communities" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:118). These engagements were through the social contracts especially through intermarriage. This would expose them to foreign gods.

In similar manner, modern day Christian must remain separate and have no contact with the evil and defiled heritages. This call to separateness "became God's significant injunction that was meant to sieve out all the contaminating influences of this dark world upon the Church, that she may realize her salvation as a people consecrated unto the Lord" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:119). The call for spiritual purity becomes an existential requirement.

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Spiritual impurity is the complete embodiment of an evil coalition of all forces of corruption and defilement that propel the dark world. The Christian lifestyle must be distinguishable from the corruption prevailing in the world in vices like immorality, deception, shame and death. "Because righteousness lasts forever while wickedness on the other hand is perpetually under betrayal of its mortal nature, [the Lord] has always placed upon the church a restriction that prohibits excessive indulgence with the world" (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:119). The Christians are expected to maintain spiritual purity even when faced with an evil surrounding. "Today's apostate Church has perfected the art of fronting these temporary measures such as wellness conferences, prosperity gathering, retreats, sowing seeds, as a means of overcoming her spiritual maladies(Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:119). The only way to return to righteousness is through repentance.

God also prescribed a specific dress code for Aaron. Such garments bestowed honor and dignity to the priest and separated him from the civilians. In similar fashion, since we are all priests we need to dress in a distinguishing manner. This issue of dress code stands out in the visions he fell into. He describes the garments thus: "John the Baptists raiment became shinny and exceedingly white as snow, so as no one on earth can whiten them. That was also the moment at which I noticed that the glory around his garment was so immense that if any little dot touched it, that stain would have been magnified manifold…. it was at that very time that I so happened to have looked at myself, and realized that my own garment too had been totally transfigured." (Repentance and Holiness Vol.10 2014:30). This emphasis on the dress code is not only restricted to the trances he fell into. Members of RHM have distinct dress code as well. The women in particular wear a distinct long dress with an overcoat.

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2.3 Conclusion

From the above, the definition of their sin has influenced the way they construct atonement. By defining sin as apostasy only, they imply sin is a conscious decision to turn away from truth. The stranglehold that the prophet has on his followers makes his believers unquestioning. This exposes the ministry to heresy since the theological positions of the leader are not subject to thorough evaluation.

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CHAPTER THREE: THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

3.1 Introduction

Repentance is a response towards the atoning work of Christ. It is also an acknowledgement that humanity has fallen short of God's glory. Therefore, to adequately define our response it is important to define sin first and understand atonement.

This chapter therefore focuses on the doctrine of atonement. The thoughts of early Christian writers who expounded on atonement have been summarized. Also modern theological writers who have analyzed these thoughts have been considered. It traces the development of the doctrine in the Bible and in the Church history. Particular atonement theories have been investigated. To illustrate how heretical movements influenced the formulation of these theories, Gnosticism has been given special consideration. Also John Wesley has been presented since he specifically addresses the concept of assurance after repentance.

This chapter will present the orthodoxy as taught throughout Church history and will be used to evaluate RHM's position.

3.2 Concept of Sin in the Bible

We cannot discuss atonement without first defining sin. The understanding of sin is described in the various words used in the Old Testament. Most times the root *h-t-'* (for example in the word *hatta't)* is the most frequently used to denote both sinful conduct, and the sin itself. It means "to go astray, miss the original mark … presenting itself as a failure with regard to the norm, an offense against or prohibition" (Eichrodt 1967:380). Also used to denote sin is: *āwōn* to denote "bending, go aside from the right way. This implies that the person knows the right way and sinning is negation from the right way; *peša'* to denote rebellion or revolt; *segāgā* which

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emphasizes on the aspect of error (Eichrodt 1967:380). It implies that the person was not aware of the requirements expected.

When the covenant with Abraham was instituted, it established Israel as the holy people. When the chosen people associated themselves with aliens, it was considered sin. "Yahweh's people must keep themselves strictly apart in order not to endanger their belonging to the Holy God" (Eichrodt 1967:385). Breaking this exclusivity affected the relationship between God and the nation of Israel. Further, in light of the covenant, sin was defined in a ritualistic manner and was almost mechanical. If you touch this, or that which is prohibited under the law, then you have sinned. This was espoused in the Levitical code (Eichrodt 1967:385-6).

The underlying principle in all these definitions is that the person has fallen short of the expectation, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The person has broken an expectation and consequently offended God. The offense against God can cause negative consequences to the person or the whole community. "Sin was comprehended as a conscious and responsible act by which man rebelled against the unconditional authority of God in order to decide for himself what he should take, and to make God's gift serve his own ego" (Eichrodt 1967:383). Sin therefore became a conflict of God's will and human will. Reunion between the two can only be resolved by activity between the two.

In the New Testament, Jesus expressly states that his mission is to free humanity from the bondage of sin. In Jesus' teaching, "sin, whether inward or outward in appearance is lodged in the deepest part of man's being… Their common characteristics are that willful and deliberate rejection of truth and goodness" (Hastings 1906:920). Sin affects not only the life and character of the guilty but also the people around a person.

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Paul, an Apostle to the Gentiles, insists on the power and universality of sin. "As a result of Adams transgression, sin obtained an entrance and a sphere of action in the world and not only so, but a predisposition to sin was inherited" (Hastings 1906:920). As such, since sin came through a man into the world, only through a man can we get remedy. He assumes physical death is as a result of sin and because death is universal, sin is universal. Further, if there is no law, we would not be aware of sin. The only way to overcome this sin is to crucify the old self and rise with Christ (Hastings 1906:920-921).

3.3 Notion of Expiation and Propitiation

Expiation "is a term employed in connection with atonement and sacrifice to mean to render satisfaction for sin" (McKenzie, et al 1966.366). The central question here is: "How do we remove the guilt from ourselves and how are we assured that the guilt is removed" (McKenzie, et al 1966.367). Propitiation on the other hand is "to stop somebody from being angry by trying to please them" (Wehmeir, et al 2000:1058). "It applies to turning aside of divine wrath against sinful man (McKenzie; 1966.807).

Expiation treats "sin as something to be dealt with, while propitiation lays stress on the fact that it merits the wrath of God. Expiation is impersonal while propitiation is personal"(McKenzie 1966.366). Propitiation denotes that no sin goes unpunished.

In the Old Testament expiation and propitiation are done through the sacrifices. It was those that had sinned that offered the sacrifice. When the blood is poured, it atones for the sins committed. In the New Testament Christ becomes both the expiation and the propitiation.

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3.4 Doctrine of Atonement in the Bible

Atonement refers to the "process of making God and man one after the tragedy of man's sins had separated them and made them enemies" (Douglas, et al 1974:83). It includes expiation for sin and the reconciliation of man with God (propitiation). Atonement is complete when man becomes guilty and returns to God in faith. This puts repentance at the apex of the reconciliation process.

In the Old Testament, "the key Hebrew word is "*kappēr* and its derivatives, which means etymologically, to cover, to conceal the offending object and so remove the obstacle to reconciliation" (McKenzie 1966.69). Usually, a sacrifice would be made and the blood poured, atoned for the sins. The sins were removed and the possible punishment avoided. This quest for atonement is preceded by repentance.

Repentance in the Old Testament has two dimensions. First, "it has a sense of lamenting or regretting one's own doings and is almost exclusively with reference to God. It also signifies a change in God's attitude and relationship because humanity has taken either a positive or negative change in regard to God". (Alexander, et al 2003:685).

Genesis presents us with the earliest form of atonement. God had instructed Adam and Eve to eat from all trees except the fruits of the tree at the middle of the garden. After they ate this forbidden fruit, they hid among the trees out of guilt when God was visiting. In the ensuing conversation (Genesis 3), God prescribes punishment to them but also made garments for them to cover their nakedness. The nakedness they became aware of epitomized the wrong they had done against God. God atoned for their nakedness by providing garments for them (Alexander, et al 2003:686).

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After Adam, sin was conceived in material form and thus "guilt meant that the sentence was immediately passed on to the offender" (Eichrodt 1967:413). There was no difference between sin and the punishment since when one sinned; they were immediately transferred to the demonic powers or the powers of the taboos. The punishment of Cain is a case in point (Genesis 4. 11). God places him under a curse and puts a mark on his face so that no one ever kills him (Hastings 1909:916).

There is also atonement as a result of an intercession. For example, Abraham intercedes for Lot (Gen 18.23), Moses, after the Israelite worship a golden calf (Exodus 32.11ff); or later when Samuel is praying for Israelites to be victorious against the Philistines (1 Samuel 7: 8). In all these cases, no sacrifice was made. This idea of atonement through intercession took more prominence in the prophetic times. The prophets often called people to repentance. This involved pointing people to their sins and therefore guilt.

As the community developed, the punishment for guilt shifted from just seeking vengeance to reparation. Here the aggressor should feel as much pain as the aggrieved. This is captured in Exodus 21.24 "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Here the aggressor is penalized to a degree equivalent to the aggression they caused.

When God institutes the Law, it becomes an expression of God's sovereignty over Israel. As such breaking any law is not only a sin against community but also an infringement against God. Sin upsets the relationship between man and God and therefore guilt becomes personal. Punishment stopped being arbitrary. Therefore, forgiveness was sought at the earliest time possible, even without waiting for punishment. (Eichrodt 1967:414-415).

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Leviticus 1 introduces the substitutionary goat for sins. To atone for the sins, the guilty would bring a lamb to the gate of the temple and lay hands on it and it would die on his behalf. The blood shed would atone for the sins. Leviticus 6 also introduces the sacrificial goat that atones for the sins and takes away the guilt. A lamb was to be slaughtered in the temple and the blood atoned for the sins of the person. The blood symbolically absorbed the sins committed and cleared off the guilt (Keck, et al 1994:1005-1045).

Leviticus 16 introduces the scapegoat. To atone for the sins of the Israelites, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron was to bring two lambs, one for sacrificing to the Lord and one to be sent away into the desert. He first offered one to the Lord in a sacrifice while the second one, he was to hold by his two hands in the forehead, confess all the sins of Israel and then it was sent away into the desert. What made this sacrifice effective is the declaration of atonement by the high priest. These goats offered a ransom to God who is aggrieved especially in light of the circumstances of Chapter 16. (Keck, et al 1994:1107-1110)

Atonement from these sins was mostly through physical acts; a mechanical process. That is:

> Sometimes this was washed away by the special water of purification (Leviticus 14.5) sometimes it is burnt (offering) away in fire (Numbers 31.22), or a substance imbued with power, such as blood, overcomes the weakening of the character of holiness through sin (Leviticus 16:14-19), or there may be nothing for it but to exterminate the sinner from the community (Joshua 7:25) (Eichrodt; 1967:445).

The prophet broadened the definition of sin from just a taboo to sin as originating from the wrong condition of humanity, especially the conditions of their hearts. “The prophets described this condition of human nature sometimes as ingratitude (Amos), or as inner aversion and hostility (Hosea), as arrogance and self-exaltation (Isaiah), or, as a deep-seated falsity (Jeremiah)” (Eichrodt; 1967:387).

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They emphasized personal responsibility of the guilt before God. They sought to make people aware of their individual place before God. Even when the whole nation was condemned, individuals would take the condemnation personally. Restoration of the relationships was preceded by acknowledgement and consequent repentance of the sin (Eichrodt 1967:417).

For the post exilic community, sin was also both spiritual and personal. God is holy and people must also strive to be holy. Sin led to guilt, curse from God and loss of privilege status before God and in the worst cases captivity to an enemy (Eichrodt 1967:418).

From the above, repentance at any stage in the development of the nation of Israel was a call upon the apostate nation to turn back to God. The *Interpreter Dictionary of The Bible* intimates what repentance is:

> *"*Translation of several words expressing a variety of ideas, ranging form a) a change of mind, b) the feeling of regret or remorse, to c) repentance in the ethico-religious sense, turning away from sin and back to God. The last of the three is most prominent and most significant in the Bible. The emphasis may rest on the negative side, of turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion, it may also fall on the positive side, the turning back to God, the beginning of a new religious or moral life" (Buttrick, et al 1962:33).

It involved turning the whole person toward God. Not only a change of mind. "Repentance was understood largely in terms of the law and meant, negatively, breaking off evil works and offenses against the Law and, positively, obedience to the law as the expression of the divine will" (Ladd; 1977:82). Consequently, repentance becomes a call to return to the Law.

A person repented first then God forgave. Forgiveness of sins depended on the action of the sinner. When they are defeated in war or there is a famine it is interpreted as having strayed from the law and this prompts repentance. Repentance was both at national level, for example, in Nehemiah 9 or at personal level, for example when Ahab repents after Elijah denounces him

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(1Kings 21). The rituals that accompanied repentance were: "rending of one's clothing, fasting, putting on sackcloth, sitting in ashes" (Buttrick, et al; 1962:34).

For the relationship to be restored, God has to be willing to accept these physical acts. These rites were instituted by God himself for the purging of sins. Their power to atone for sin is not inherent but bestowed by God. This sacrificial atonement however had limitations. The efficacy of the atonement was presented as depending on the correct fulfillment of the prescribed ritual not on God's own will. It implied that God can be bought off, and therefore influenced by human acts. That affects the very nature of God.

However evaluating the circumstances under which these sacrifices were made, one gets the impression that they were instructed by God and were done as a result of the guilt on the human part and a desire to restore the broken relationship on God's part. The efficacy of the atonement sacrifice lay in Gods own institution of the sacrifice. It is God who bestowed upon his people the possibility of forgiveness all those things that demanded punishment and assuring themselves of such forgiveness through the visible signs of sacrifice.

In the New Testament, repentance was done with a presupposition that all have already sinned. According to Geerhardus Vos (1948:396) the terms used in the New Testament to refer to repentance are: *metamelesthai*- to denote the emotional element of regret for past act or course of action. For example, it is used in the case of Judas who is said to have had remorse. M*etanoein*- a complete change of mind (II Corinthians 7.10); and e*pistrephesthai*- this implies "turning of the will towards a new, opposite goal". More appropriately it is conversion.

The earliest call for repentance came from John the Baptist. He called on his listeners to repent and be baptized in water. John's baptism was a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of

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sins" (Mark 1.4). It assured forgiveness for sins committed before baptism. This shows that there is a connection between baptism and repentance. "A new development is his relating of repentance to the imminent coming of the kingdom of God and to a baptism granting forgiveness of sins" (Buttrick, et al; 1962:34).

In contrast to the Old Testament where the forgiveness of sins is dependent on the action of the sinner, in the New Testament it is dependent on the faith in a mediator. "Jesus' demand for repentance was not merely a summons to men and women to forsake their sins and turn to God; it was rather a call to respond to the divine invitation and was conditioned by this invitation, which was itself nothing less than a gift of God's Kingdom" (Ladd, 1987:83). This differentiates John's call to repentance and Jesus' call. Jesus was asking them to accept an invite into the kingdom of God; John was simply calling them to turn away from sin in view of the judgment day. God is seeking out sinners as sinners seek him out as well. In divergence to the norm, membership into the new covenant is not by birth into a Jewish family, rather its acceptance of his gracious offer (Ladd, 1987:84-85).

Like John before him, Jesus introduces a new aspect with regard to repentance:

> "The prophet knows that God must give the sinner a new heart and spirit. Repentance in the deepest sense is beyond human powers. They look forward to the time when God will perform the miracle of raising men from the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37)…. Repentance is no longer only a demand; it has become possibility, for what is impossible with men is possible with God (Mark 10.27). Repentance is completed by faith… it is no longer response to law but to a person, it is discipleship". (Buttrick, et al, 1962:34).

Jesus places faith as necessary in repentance. You have to believe in Him to repent. Faith makes it possible.

In the Apostolic teaching, repentance is basic and a prerequisite to being baptized. It signified beginning of a new life in Christ (Acts 13.24); turning away from evil (Acts 3:26). It is

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human response to God's gift of grace (Acts 3.19, 3.26, 5.31, II Corinthians 7.9). In the epistles it is not directly referred to. "This does indicate no depreciation of the place of repentance in the Christian life, but rather points to the developments of specialized theological vocabularies which emphasize the element of newness in the Christian life" (Buttrick, et al, 1962:34). Repentance is implied in the process of faith.

Worth noting is that in the New Testament, *kerygma* always ends with an appeal to repentance for example Acts 2:38-39. The call to repentance is grounded on the nearness to the Kingdom of God. Hans Conzelmann (1969.118) argues that the "concept of repentance is concerned with the totality of conversion, a new orientation in anticipation of manifestation of the Kingdom of God. It comes from the realization that I am not what I should be. The fact that I am told to repent is strictly a verdict on my standing before God".

In the New Testament therefore, faith in God is a prerequisite to repentance. It is a personal process and in no way is the community involved. It is a response to the grace of God offered through Jesus Christ.

3.5 Development of the Doctrine of Atonement in Church History

The work of Christ at the cross is the definitive mark for Christianity. It is what gives Christianity the legitimacy it has. The work of Christ is summarized in theories of atonement. Each of these theories attempts to explain the work of Christ on the Cross. Each of the theories emphasizes certain truths such as "the example of Christ, the demonstration of the extent to God's love, the severity of God's righteousness and the seriousness of sin, the victory over sin and death, and the satisfaction for our sins" (Erickson, 1983. 798).

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Ireneus (130-202AD) the Bishop of Lyon argued that the benefits of Christ atonement are enjoyed by only those who repent and "resolve to live righteously, a resolve to which they give expression by accepting Christian baptism" (McGiffert ,Vol. I; 1932:137).

Christ's atonement makes our salvation possible. Our understanding of this doctrine also influence the way we construct the response of the Christian after conversion especially with regard to sanctification. The work of Christ is explained in various atonement theories. According to Millard Erickson (1983:798) the theories are: 1. The Socinian Theory, Moral Influence Theory, Governmental Theory, Ransom Theory and the Satisfaction Theory.

In this section I will not only discuss the theories within the epochs of church history but I will also, examine what some of the church fathers taught with regard to repentance. The theories examined chronologically.

3.5.1 Atonement in the Early Church (1-590AD)

It is the period of Church fathers who laid the foundation and defined the doctrine, government and worship. The early Church formed most of its theology mostly in response to the heretical movements especially Gnosticism and its derivatives. Gnosticism (80-150AD) was a prominent heretical movement in the early Church. This movement traces its origin to pre-Christian cynicism. Chadwick notes:

> "They claimed to possess a special 'knowledge' which transcended the simple faith of the Church. … a knowledge of the nature and destiny of man, especially Gnostic man based on grandiose revelation about the origin of the world which explained how evil had come in to being and how one should act in order to gain deliverance form it" (Chadwick, 1967:35).

They argued that creation was a product of pre-cosmic disaster which accounted for the present evil world and only a few will be redeemed. The present material world is a product of inferior

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power and therefore not a product of the Supreme God. The chaos of this world reflect nothing of the heavenly glory. Evil was an independent divine power. (Chadwick, 1967: 36-40)

Gnostics did not believe in taking any responsibility whatsoever. They are at complete freedom to do whatever they desire with their bodies and from taking any obligation in the society which they are pessimistic about. In any case, the society is at the mercy of evil powers. They promoted asceticism with rules for the mortification of the flesh and discouraged marriage. (Chadwick, 1967: 42)

Their salvation rests at "learning the correct magical passwords and the most potent amulets which would enable the delivered soul to force the monstrous powered barring the ascent into heaven" (Chadwick 1967.36). Salvation also rests in abstinence and detachment from worldly pleasures like marriage. They denied divinity of Christ and therefore argued he is in no capacity to be a redeemer. Gnostic teaching embraced the platonic dualism that matter is evil and spirit is good. The good spirit is a captive of the material body. Jesus Christ the Son of God could not have entered evil material body. That which is spirit is pure and cannot inhabit the matter which is evil.

3.5.1.1 The Ransom Theory

To explain atonement Origen (184-253AD) proposed the Ransom Theory of Atonement which was in part a response to Gnosticism. He acknowledged the biblical story as a cosmic struggle between the evil and good. Satan, through unjust aggression, had established control over the world and had become the ruler. As the ruler of the world, his rights cannot just be ignored. God, because he is just, cannot use a similar method of aggression to take back what is rightfully his.

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As 1 Corinthians insinuates, God then bought us at a price from the devil. This price was Christ. Matthew 20:28 also indicates that Jesus had come to offer his life as a ransom for many.

Justin Martyr (100-165AD) was aware of the Gnostics argument, that man has the free will. He refuted the Gnostics argument that salvation depended on a predestination which is not dependent to moral virtue. In his works *Apology I,* "the first thing God demands is the conviction that demands virtue and that he will reward and punish men according to their sins. This conviction leads to repentance which is the beginning of the Christian life" (McGiffert, Vol. I; 1932:102-103). Repentance means that all the past sins are forgiven after which a life of virtue must be pursued. What he does not mention is the place of baptism. However, this is understandable since his interest was not theology per se rather it was a purely philosophical defense of Christianity.

Gregory (590), the Bishop of Rome refined Origen's theory. He argued that "since slavery in which we find ourselves in is our own doing, our own free choice, it would have been unjust to deprive Satan of his captives by some arbitrary method" (Erickson, 1983:811). Out of his greed, Satan accepted a prize- Jesus Christ which he thought was more than all humanity put together.

He further discussed repentance under the doctrine of man. He said since we are all descendants of Adam we constantly sin. At baptism, all sins are forgiven but after baptism all sins are atoned through penance. "Penance involves repentance which must be sincere and of the heart, and also confession and meritorious works. Repentance springs from fear…of eternal punishment, and then love…for the joys of heaven" (McGiffert, 1933: 152). He places fear and love as different sides of the same coin that motivate one to repentance.

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3.5.1.2 Substitution Theory

St. Athanasius (296-373,) before explaining atonement, defends incarnation first. He too, is responding to Gnostics who denied that God created the world from nothing. He affirmed that if indeed God did not create the world from nothing, then he is not a 'creator;' he is an 'artificer' (*De Incarnatione Verbi Dei i.ii).* "He made all things out of nothing through His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ; and of all His earthly creatures he reserved a place for the race of men" (ibid, i.iii). Therefore unlike all other creations he impressed his image on them so that they not only shared in the image but they also had capacity to choose. Because of this, God instituted conditions based on: a place and a law. "He set them in His own paradise and laid upon them a single prohibition" which they did not keep" (ibid, i.iii).

It is for this failure on human part that Christ became man: to restore the image of God that had been lost at fall. By breaking the condition, they were turning back to non existence where they had come from at creation (ibid, i. iv). It would have been unthinkable that God should not have punished them for breaking a law, but it was also equally monstrous for beings that had shared the nature of the Word to go back to nonexistence through corruption (ibid, ii.vi). It was not in God's goodness to let man be overcome by Satan.

In order to safeguard his own nature, God could not recall death to save man from corruption. Again, not even repentance from this transgression could restore the image of God in Man. Only the Word, who was there when man was created from nothing, could restore the image. "His part was ... to bring again the corruptible to incorruption and to maintain for the father His constituency of Character with all" (ibid, ii.vii). Therefore, Christ took our body which is corruptible and capable of death and at his death surrendered it to the Father. By his death and resurrection, he abolished death for humanity and therefore escapes from corruption. By Him

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indwelling in a human body he restored the dignity of humankind and restored the image previously lost (ibid, ii.ix). As such, the death of Christ accomplished two things: He renewed God's image in mankind so that through it men would come to know him again (ibid, iii.xiii); and he offered a sacrifice for all to settle man's account with death (ibid, iv.xx).

From the above, Christ death not only restores the image of God in man; it assures man of escape from death but also makes repentance possible.

3.5.2 Atonement in the Medieval Church (590-1517 AD)

3.5.2.1 Satisfaction Theory

Anslem developed the satisfaction theory. This is captured in his work *Cur Deus Homo?* - Why Did God Become Man? His view with regard to what God must do to get rid of our sins is summarized in a conversation between him and Boso (*Cur Deus Homo?*, i.xi-xx; vi.6). This theory emphasizes that Christ died to satisfy the Father. This thought was first proposed by Augustine of Hippo but it was not until Anslem of Canterbury (1033-1109AD) did the theory come full cycle. He developed this theory based on the feudal system of government. "Justice and law had become more of a personal matter; violations of the law were now thought of as offenses against the person of the feudal lord" (Erickson, 1983:814). He depicts God as a feudal Lord who, to maintain his authority and honor, has to be compensated for wrong done against him.

Anslem builds this theory based on his understanding of sin. Sin is failure to give God what is due to him. To be in the right books with God we must therefore give to God what we have withheld from him. Over and above returning to him what is due, we must offer additional compensation for the inconveniences we have caused him (*ibid, i.xx).*

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Since God, as the feudal Lord must act to preserve his honor, he must punish sin or an adequate compensation made to his satisfaction on behalf of humanity. Humanity could not have rendered this compensation to the extent that God is satisfied. Even if they did, it would only give God his due, not full compensation for they are weakened by sin and under the yoke of the devil. The satisfaction therefore had to be greater than anything not in the created order. It had to be done by God himself. However, if it had to also show that human salvation is possible, it had to be human as well. Only one who is both God and man could satisfy both. "Christ, being both God and sinless human, did not deserve death. Therefore his offering life to God on behalf of the human race of which he was a part went beyond what was required of him" (Erickson, 1983:816) and therefore satisfied God. "Satisfaction ought to be proportionate to the guilt and man is unable to accomplish this himself" (*Cur Deus Homo?i.xx)*

3.5.2.2 The Moral Influence Theory

In response to Anselm's satisfaction theory, Peter Abelard (1079-1142) developed the moral influence theory. In AD 1122 he wrote "*Sic et Non"* – "Yes and No" in which he expounded the theory that the way to reach truth is doubt, and then to ask questions and find the answers. He ridiculed the Ransom's Theory idea that the devil has any right over humanity; in fact humanity has right over the devil. If at all paid, then it was paid to God who really has rights over us. God loves humanity and is prepared to forgive humanity. Abelard avers that Christ's death on the cross is the supreme example of God's love and because of it, we are able to believe God's mercy and trust His forgiveness. In fact, Christ's death and the love it shows, awakens a response of love in us (Erickson, 1983: 803)

This theory emphasizes the divinity of Christ and sees his death as a demonstration of God's love on his part. Anselm argued that incarnation was prompted by the fact that "our sin is an offense

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against God's moral dignity and consequently, there must be some compensation to God" (Erickson, 1983:803). Abelard argued that Christ did not make any sacrificial payment to the Father to satisfy his offended dignity. "It was human's fear that needed to be ratified" (Erickson 1983:803) and this was accomplished by Christ's death. Christ's death benefited humanity rather than satisfying God.

If God's nature is essentially that of love, then the knowledge of this leads his creation towards Him. Therefore, according to Abelard it is not sin that separates humanity from God, it is attitude. Human disobedience breaks the heart of God. When problems come, the blame is placed on God and he is rejected. If humanity is to repent, they would be reconciled to Him since the problem is not with him, it is with human attitude. It is for this reason that Christ came, to correct human attitude towards God. God already loved the world and he empathized with it. His incarnation showed God's love to the fallen humanity while his death is an affirmation of the already existing love. His death was an act of love. Luke 19:10 demonstrates this: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost". Other Scriptures are John 18:37 and 2 Corinthians 5:19. The effect of the death of Christ is that the character of the people is restored and reconciled to Christ. The souls are healed of the malady they possess.

This theory almost assumes the holiness of God and the need to preserve his honor. Further, if Christ's death is only an act of love, then what ails humanity is not overcome. However, this theory defines the response of the sinner: He should respond to these advances of love with love.

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3.5.3 Atonement in the Reformation Church (1517-1880AD)

3.5.3.1 Penal Substitution Theory

John Calvin (1509-1564) published his theory in his classic *Institutes of Christian Religion* (1536) in which he argues that the Father bestowed upon Christ three offices that of the priest, king and prophet. Under the law, the holders of these offices were all anointed into the offices. As a prophet he is called to "preach the good news to the lost, bring healing to the broken hearted and proclaim liberation to the poor" (Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18). He was anointed to be the mouth piece of God the Father "and that, in the common way-for he is distinguished from other teachers with a similar office" (Kerr, 1989:75). The fact that he is God, we have confidence that all the teachings he gave represent the perfect wisdom from God.

The kingship of Jesus is spiritual in nature while as a priest he reconciles us to God since he is without sin. It is through his priesthood that sins are atoned. "An expiation must intervene in order that Christ, as priest may obtain God's favor for us and appease his wrath. Thus, for Christ to perform the duties of this office, he had to come forward with a sacrifice" (Kerr, 1989:76). By that sacrifice, he removed the guilt and made satisfaction for our sins. This gives confidence that humanity is in the right books with God and by Christ's blood, conscience is clean.

Therefore pardon is not dependent on human actions, rather, it is dependent on Christ's sacrifice which God considered as enough. That is, at the cross Christ suffered the wrath that would have otherwise been borne by humanity. He bore the punishment on behalf of the human race. "Christ plays the priestly role, not only to render the Father favorable and propitious toward us by an eternal law of reconciliation, but also to receive us as his companions in this great office" (Kerr, 1989:77).

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In view of the above, repentance is more of an activity initiated by God rather that humanity. Humanity is only responding to the advances of God. Calvin noted that at atonement:

> The Lord restores all those he adopts to the inheritance of life. And this restoration is not in a single moment … but continual…the Lord destroys the carnal corruption of His chosen; purifies them from all pollution and consecrates them as temples to himself… that they may employ their whole life in the exercise of repentance… (Institute iii.3.ix).

His view of repentance must be seen in light of his doctrine of predestination. Only those who are predestined to salvation, does God impress on their hearts guilt that moves them to repent. The process is ignited by God and humanity responds by asking for forgiveness which is preceded by sorrow. It is born out of awareness of human weakness (Institute iii.3.ix).

3.5.3.2 Socinian Theory of Atonement

In response to Calvin, Faustus Socinus (1539-1604 AD) while developing the Socian theory acknowledged the threefold offices of Christ but did not hold the priestly office with high regard. His argument is contained in his classic *De Juse Christo Servatore (1578)*-. These works were not available to the public until after his grandson published them posthumously. "He maintained that the ministry of Jesus during his earthly days was prophetic rather that priestly. Second, they contended that his priestly role, the seat of which is in heaven, is coincident with his kingly office rather than distinct from it" (Erickson, 1983.801). The kind of covenant Christ spoke of is one of absolute forgiveness not a sacrifice as a substitution. Christ's death only gives us an example of the level of dedication we need to have. His resurrection is a confirmation of his teachings; that they were true and valid. They reject the idea of the vicarious satisfaction that is "Christ rendered to God, who was angry over the sins of man, a satisfaction which changed his wrath into grace towards men" (lutherantheology.com). For proof of their claim, they quote 1 Peter 2:21 and 1 John 2:6.

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This theory is also influenced by the Peligian view of human condition as capable of spiritually and morally fulfilling God's expectation. Further God is not a God of retributive justice and therefore does not need some form of appeasing, otherwise he will revenge. Also they emphasis the humanity of Jesus whose death was only because he was born into the world and therefore had to die like all other human beings. It only served to affirm his teaching. It also showed Gods love and gives us inspiration towards virtuous life.

3.5.3.3 Governmental Theory

In response to the Socian theory Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) developed the governmental theory in *Defensio fidei Catholicae de Satisfactione Christi (translated*-Defense of the Universal Faith on the Satisfaction rendered by Christ). Since he was a lawyer by training, he argued as one would argue a case before a judge. This view emphasizes the seriousness of sin. It upholds the need of appeasing God on one hand and as deterrent to sin by convincing the sinner of the gravity of the sin.

God is holy and righteous and he has established some laws. Sin is a violation of these laws and these upset the administration of his kingdom, not his nature. As a ruler in his kingdom he reserves to punish those who violate the law. However, as much as he is a ruler who does not condone violation of the rules he is also a loving God. Therefore since he is only accountable to himself, he reserves the right to punish or to pardon. "He has chosen to do it in such a way that it manifests at once, both his clemency and severity. God can forgive sin, but he also takes into consideration the interests of his moral government" (Erickson, 1983:807). The quest here is not to dish out arbitrary pardon, but rather to dish out pardon while not upsetting the rule of the law. Therefore, the action he chooses must not compromise his authority as the king, instead, it must also take into consideration the inadequacies of humanity. If he were to forgive the sins freely, he

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would not have been properly compensated and his authority would have been undermined. Humanity would not have understood the severity of the sins. (Erickson, 1983:807-808).

To retain the legitimacy of his government while at the same time atoning for the sins of humanity, He gave up his only son, Jesus Christ to die. Christ's death became a substitute penalty on behalf of all humanity. "What God did through Christ's death was to demonstrate what God's justice will require of us to suffer if we continue to sin" (Erickson, 1983:807). The anguish of Christ at the cross should be a deterrent enough to stop us from sinning. If we turn from sin, we are forgiven and God's moral judgment is preserved.

By Christ suffering, he atoned for our sins. His death was not a punishment since punishment for sins cannot be transferred from one to another, neither was it a substitute for our punishment; rather, it was God's demonstration of how he hates sin. If punishment is transferable, then the connection between sin, guilt and punishment is broken. What his suffering accomplished was to void punishment, that is, after his death; there is no need for punishment. "Thus, even in the absence of punishment, justice and morality are maintained" (Erickson, 1983:808).

3.5.3.4 Atonement in the Post Reformation Church: From General to Specific Aspects

John Wesley (1703-1791) was "the primary figure in the eighteenth century Evangelical revival and founder of Methodism" (Elwell, 1984:1163). More than any other theologian before, he specifically deals with repentance as opposed to atonement in general. In Robert G. Turtle's biography of John Wesley, he captures the theological dilemmas he (Wesley) is facing as concerns repentance. "Repentance, for those who were influencing me most, was self-abasement and continued self-condemnation. Consequently, self righteousness was mixed self condemnation thus the ambivalence. These dilemmas, instead of decreasing my anxiety,

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increased my frustrations" (Turtle, 1978: 95). The dilemma was further fueled by the confusion whether in the pursuit of holiness, the emphasis should be on "bodily austerity or in inward temper" (Turtle, 1978: 95). Initially, in pursuit of holiness and moral perfection he ascribed to asceticism which eventually did not fulfill the assurance he so needed.

His major contribution to theology was his development of the doctrine of assurance and pursuit for Christian perfection. First he defines sin as "a willful, voluntary transgression of the known will of God" (Heitzenrater, 1995:228). "In essence Wesley's theology, so akin to the Reformation, affirms God's sovereign will to reverse our 'sinful, devils nature' by the work of the Holy Spirit, a process he called prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace" (Elwell, 1984:1163). This process happens between conception and conversion.

Original sin makes it necessary for the Holy Spirit to initiate the restoration of the relationship between the people and God through constant persuasion and conviction by the spirit. At conversion, two things happen: the Holy Spirit justifies (the righteousness of Christ is imparted) and also sanctifies (in which the Spirit begins to produce the righteousness of Christ) of the believer. To be justified you need to repent first and trust in Christ as able to deliver you from your sins. However, after justification, you need no repentance since the sins have already been forgiven.

This sanctification is the work the Holy Spirit does between a believer's conversion and death and is progressive until one reaches perfection "a place where love becomes devoid of self interest" (Elwell, 19841163).

In his ministry and writings, his quest was that of assurance. As Arthur S. Yates (1952.12-19) discusses, Wesley assures the believers that indeed we are forgiven. His arguments begin as early

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as 1725 when a Jeremy Taylor's asserts that" whether God has forgiven us or not, we know not, therefore, still be sorrowful for having ever sinned" (Yates 1952:12). He responds and states that:

> Now surely these graces are not of so little force, as that we cannot perceive whether we have them or no, and if we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, which he will not do till we are regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it. If his opinion be true, then I must have always been in great error; for I imagined that when I communicated in worthily i.e. with faith…my preceding sins were ipso facto forgiven…But if I can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason is that every moment should be spent not in joy but fear and trembling, and then undoubtedly …most of all miserable (Yates, 1952.12)

He affirms that we can know that we are forgiven and therefore in a state of salvation because the scriptures tell us so. He bases his argument on Romans 8:16 "the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are Children of God". The Holy Spirit within us is our security and our constant assurance that we are indeed forgiven. It is the guarantee that our repentance is effective. This Spirit of God within us is the seal and mark of assurance; it bears witness with our spirit that we are of God. And therefore since we have his assurance, our response must reflect joy and enhance relationship among the brethren.

3.6 Conclusion

What Christ becomes at incarnation, which is, the metaphor we ascribe to Christ, is determined by what sin is defined as. The work of Christ is described in terms of what will cure that which negatively affects and severes our relationship with God. Because human effort is inadequate God the Father offered the Son to atone. Each of these theories arose from the need to address specific questions that had been raised.

The Church fathers formed their theories against existing theories or in response to prevailing questions like in the case of Gnosticism. As such, in critiquing the RHM's atonement, these theories that have been held as the canon basis of evaluation.

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CHAPTER FOUR:ATONMENT IN THE LIGHT OF HEGELIAN TRIAD

4.0 Introduction

Theology is dynamic; it is a back and forth process in which mysteries are interconnected. Defining one Christian mystery often determines the construction of other. As such a defective atonement inevitably leads to a defective ecclesiology, for example. New insights must be evaluated in light of eternal truths which have stuck over time.

This chapter seeks to evaluate atonement in the RHM in light of the orthodoxy. The definition of atonement in the RHM is greatly influenced by their definition of sin. Therefore, the implication of defining sin as apostasy will be evaluated in order to examine the orthodoxy with regard to propitiation and expiation. The researcher will use Hegelian Triad. The similarities between RHM and Gnosticism will also be examined. The response of the Christian to Christ's atoning work will also be investigated.

4.1 Hegelian Triad

Hegelian triad is a model used by Anthony C. Thiselton in discussing theology and hermeneutics. In the foreword, he notes that, "we cannot raise questions of hermeneutics-the science of interpretation- and we cannot raise the question of interpretation without raising questions about the nature of knowledge, the use of language, and the scientific and ontological presupposition operative in the mind of the exegete" (Thiselton, 1980:ii). He therefore aptly titles his book *'Two Horizons'* since hermeneutics is about the interaction between the interpreter (anti-thesis) and the text (thesis).

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He further asks: 'Can one understand the history of religion and philosophy without knowing what religion and philosophy are? One cannot understand the Communist Manifesto of 1848 without understanding the principle of capitalism and socialism". (Thiselton, 1980.108)

As such, knowledge is generated through dialectics. "The way in which the world unfolds itself is through dialectics…a system of rational antinomies- the development from thesis to antithesis and finally to synthesis" (Stam, 1951:460). Hegel began by assuming that:

> …universal reason is the thesis of the great dialectic. This thesis is absolutely objective, existing in and of itself apart from particular subjective manifestations. The absolute Spirit seeks to realize itself however in Nature- which is the antithesis and, indeed, completely subjectively and individualistic... meanwhile the universal Spirit implanted within the individual gives him an impulse to perfectibility, and this leads ultimately to his Rational Freedom from nature. This rational freedom is the great synthesis, so that Spirit has become actually what it was once but potentially (Stam, 1951:460).

Hegel illustrates this in his work *The History of Philosophy:*

> "The architectural plans would be the thesis, existing the way they do abstractly as objectively reality. The materials to be used in building would constitute the antithesis, an obstacle to the idea in the objective realization of it. The final harmonization of form and matter by the subjection of the latter to the former would correspond to the synthesis" (12).

According to Spenser and Krauze, this dialectical thinking is where "a thought is affirmed, which on reflection, proves itself unsatisfactory… which propels the affirmation of its negation, the antithesis, which also on reflection, proves inadequate and so is again negated (synthesis)" (www.marxist.org). That is, if the proposition made exhibits insufficiency or any contradiction, it calls for further reflection by making a counter proposal. Further, this model upholds that to arrive at any conclusion (totality), there is a process. Every phase of our knowledge is partial and to get the totality of any situation there is a process. In this process, all truths are held in tension so that each is examined in the light of the other truth.

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This method, however, implies that nothing can come into existence out of its own. That is, there is nothing that proceeds from itself. What we now see or know proceeds from another. As such the very existence of God is not independent; it is the result of a triad. This triad envisions the outcome as proceeding from the first. This is however addressed by Aristotle's 'First Cause Theory"

As such, in this research, to submit to this methodology, there has to be a connection of all aspects. The second has to come from the first. To overcome this challenge, the existential-ontological method of John Macquarrie, as summarized by J.J Meuller, could also be used. However, this method is not as comprehensive with regard to evaluation as the dialectics method is.

4.2 Theological Reflection

4.2.1 Propitiation and Expiation

To evaluate RHM expiation and propitiation, we need first examine their understanding of sin and its implication. The RHM defines sin as apostasy. Apostasy implies one has turned around and renounced faith. In Christianity apostasy is often seen as a precipitate to the return of Christ. It would be marked by the reign of the Antichrist and many natural disasters and persecution would precede the return. The *Dictionary of the Bible* not only introduces us to the severity but also illustrates apostasy in the scriptures thus:

> In Acts 21:21 it describes the charges brought against St. Paul by the Jews as apostasy; that he taught the Jews to abandon the Law of Moses. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3 it describes the defection of Christians which was to accompany the 'man of lawlessness'- i.e. the Antichrist. This expectation is an illustration of what seems to have been a common belief- the return of Christ to establish his kingdom would be preceded by violent activity in the part of His superhuman opponent, and that this would result in an abandonment of Christian faith by many nominal Christians. The seriousness of the act is reflected in Hebrews 6:6 where probably as a result of

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> persecution, some have defected and thus 'crucify the Son of God on their own (Grant et al 1963:46).

Defining sin as apostasy has its implication. B.J Opereza notes that to be considered apostate in Christianity, it means you were a member of the faith and you revolted or defected. It means rejection of Christ whom you previously believed. It's the opposite of conversion. Believers could be led into apostasy by:

> Temptations; that is… Christians were tempted to engage in various vices that were a part of their lives … (or by) deception where they encountered various false teaching spread by false teachers and prophets that threatened to seduce them from their pure devotion to Christ… (or by) persecutions where Christians were threatened with death if they did not deny Christ (Opereza, www.ebscohost.com).

The *New International Dictionary of the New Testament* further notes that apostasy is more prevalent when eschaton is perceived to be near. People receive the good news with joy but with persecution and tribulation characteristic with eschatological events as recorded in the Bibles, they fall from faith. In the messages of the prophet to the believers, there is an urgency to repent based on the nearness of the rapture. Repentance is treated as an emergency and all other social activities are relegated to oblivion in pursuit of holiness. Also because eschaton is near, the believer must live separate from the world which will otherwise contaminate them. While there is no doubt that eschaton will happen, there is no need to panic. Once in Christ, humanity has confidence that our entry to eternal life is assured. Any works after salvation is a manifestation of faith not an act of atonement (Douglas, 1974:879).

From the above, by defining sin as apostasy, it means that after conversion, if you commit sin, you go back to a similar state as before conversion. In the strictest sense it means total loss of salvation beyond recovery not mere renunciation of faith, recovery of which can be made.

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Secondly, by defining sin as such, the sinner is seen as having betrayed the brethren. This echoes the Novatian Controversy where Novatianists refused to readmit those who had renounced their faith under the persecution of Emperor Decius (AD250). There were those Christians who sacrificed to the Roman gods and there were those who, instead, bought a certificate (*libelli)* from the government officials indicating they had renounced their faith or that they had sacrificed.

Cyprian, in response, rebuked the Christians that these hardships had come their way because of their worldly ways and loose morals. With regard to readmission of the apostate to the Church, he argued that "to deny Christ, as did the lapsed, is indeed the greatest sin, but those who have fallen will find forgiveness, if they will repent and submit to ecclesiastical penance" (Cyprian, *De Lapis*, 518). Therefore, restoration to faith is through repentance and penance. That is, before readmission to church, you have to do something that brethren approve. Your forgiveness, first, depends on acceptance by fellow believers through penance. Should you meet their standards, then you are repentance is effected.

Penance is "an act of judgment and belongs to the discipline of the Church. If the community is to maintain its being as the community of faith, it must make certain demands on its members. If a member rejects these demands they must be subject to the discipline though the end of such discipline must always be hope that the offender will confess their sins and return to the body from which that has cut themselves off (Tillich, 1966:428). As such, penitence begins with a condemnation and involves physical acts usually prescribed by the priest. Because they are physical acts, they cannot atone for the sins against God. They only numb the guilt. In penance, there is a danger of emphasizing the guilt so that any sin demands penance. Penance emphasizes works while repentance emphasizes faith.

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By defining sin as apostasy, committing a sin becomes conscious decision to renounce former faith. Emphasis is on the state- a position and not the condition inherent in the Christian by virtue of the original sin. Since it is a state, human effort can restore salvation. After conversion, you have to rely on human acts to maintain salvation. The RHM advocates for works that they perceive to earn them forgiveness. To illustrate this, a recap of his home church is instructive. He is convinced that the present church is like in a similar state. It was clean but now has been soiled with human dirt. Therefore, repentance has to be like the cleaning of the church. It is a physical act that can be seen.

Every so often they will engage in 'meeting of the Lord'. These are nationwide meetings where they gather to repent. In these gatherings only the prophet speaks and they spend countless hours in fasting and prayer. Often times, people arrive days before to secure vantage spots in the open air meeting, even if it rains they will not find shelter. If a mother is lactating, they will carry the baby to the meeting. All these acts of devotion are considered to give one a pole position before God. For having accomplished this, sins are forgiven. With enough acts of penance post conversion sin is overcome. The guilt is removed.

Owour's definition of sin inevitably influences how we construct atonement. In discussing atonement, "we must go back a step behind the knowledge that we have already won salvation which has come to man in the self sacrifice and death of the Son of God in our flesh and which is revealed in His resurrection" (Barth, 1985.358). This knowledge that victory has been won prevents us from falling into despair and leads us into joy.

Forgiveness is not effected by human own effort. How can a moral finite being please the immortal infinite being? How can we restore the image of God lost at fall? How do we

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adequately compensate God who is our king? What does Christ do for us at the cross? All this point to inadequacy of human effort to atone God for the sin, whether pre-or post conversion. It is only by Christ's atoning work that we are forgiven. It is by grace alone. Because of their emphasis of human actions, the RHM fall into despair because they feel as if their acts of atonement are ultimately inadequate before God. This despair and perpetual sorrow is misconstrued as piety.

Repentance begins with awareness that one has sinned and a desire to 'turn around' from sin. "Conviction of sin by itself might lead to despair rather that to repentance, were it not that the very revelation that convinces of sin also offers promise of reconciliation" (Tillich, 1966:302). Repentance therefore involves turning away from sin and to God in faith. This does not mean despising the world. Christ sent us into the world to (John 17) and therefore to be detached form it means we cannot adequately engage it. Repentance is a continuous process that never ends. It is made possible by Christ atonement.

Christian life is a constant journey towards the likeness of God in Christ. In this journey, Christians will make mistakes calling for penitence. The death of Christ removes the necessity of human acts whether prescribed or otherwise. It makes forgiveness independent from human acts. The only prerequisite of forgiveness is repentance which must then be followed by a commitment to remain yoked to Christ's commandments. Therefore the nature of sin is inconsequential.

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4.2.2 Evaluating RHM's Doctrine of Atonement, Gnosticism and Orthodoxy

The RHM in many ways is similar to Gnosticism. Like Gnosticism, there is one central figure whose word is law; they consider themselves superior by virtue of special knowledge and their view of the material world.

The prophet is seen as a messiah of some kind. The titles they confer him and the prominence they give to his messages affirm this. These messages are those that he receives when he falls into trances. In some instances what is in the Scriptures is considered secondary to that which the prophet has spoken. The natural catastrophes are seen as a fulfillment of his prophesies and a judgment of God on human sinfulness. By repentance, you divert these acts of judgments. That is, acts of repentance- fasting, distinct long dress for women prolonged open air meetings, perpetual sorrow can alter Gods decision to punish. Yet, if God can be influenced by our own actions, he ceases to be God.

This material world is evil and therefore, they must keep off from that which can defile them. Post –conversion sin can only be avoided by abstaining from the material world and interacting with only those who are of their church. In particular, post-modernity, which has embraced materialism has affected the efficacy of the cross. Economic affluence has diverted people's attention from devotion to God.

Unlike the Gnostics, however, RHM see no dichotomy between the body and the spirit. That is, for Gnostics, they can do whatever they please with their bodies since there is a clear distinction between the two. This material world cannot be united with the immaterial world at the same time. It is for this reason that the Gnostics denied the divinity of Christ. If Christ was God, then he cannot sin. But to have a human body means susceptibility to sin. And since Christ took a

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human body, he sinned and therefore cannot atone for the sins. What can atone for the sins should be immaterial and knowledge is immaterial. Therefore, salvation means detachment from the material world.

Further, only by being illuminated by that special knowledge can you achieve salvation. This is the insistence of RHM as well. Only be ascribing to the teaching of the prophets is your salvation assured. Conversion, is preceded by gaining and ascribing to a special knowledge (*gnosis*)as proclaimed by the prophet. Those who do not embrace the prophet's message are seen as hard hearted and ignorant of what the Lord speaks. Repentance means a renunciation of all that is worldly.

After repentance, they disengage from the society. They have no business with an evil world and its inhabitants. They take no responsibility in the community and family and are continually engaged in prolonged fasting and endless meetings of the Lord. They are in this world to prepare the way for the coming of the messiah. All these human engagements are avenues through which defilement can come to them. They however do not withdraw from civilization.

Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17 is instructive of our engagement with the world. In this prayer, He does not separate His ministry with the community's life. It is in the community that His ministry has been fully manifest. In similar fashion, the fullness of the ministry that will come after his resurrection must be realized in the community. It is for this reason that in v, 11-16 He prays "for their safeguarding in the world; 17-19 he prays for God's authorization of the disciples work in the world; 20-23 he prays for the success of the disciples work in the world" (Keck et al, 1995:791). The disciples' relation with the world is dualistic. They are not of the world but must engage with the world. They have been set apart to engage the world just like

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priests are set apart. The authority to engage the world even in persecution is based on their sanctification and preservation by the Father in faith. If there is disengagement from the world, then the opportunity to evangelize it is lost (Keck *et al 199: 793-795)*

4.2.3 Response to Atoning work of Christ

Christ's death accomplishes three things (Erickson, 1983:804-5) for us: First, any sinner, when invited to repentance will run away and hide just as Adam and Eve did. They do this as a result of fear for the punishment. But Jesus, at incarnation, shows his love which culminates in his death. It is this love that draws humanity to him. God the Father offered His son, not out of desperation but out of love for humanity. It is not that all other avenues had failed; it is because they were inadequate to atone for human sins.

Secondly, is with regard to conviction of sin and consequent repentance. Human beings feel regretful after they have done wrong. They feel guilty. What they need is a deep personal conviction that leads one to a genuine sense of sorrow, especially when we remember the crucified Christ. This makes us tender and inclined towards God. If God's love and not punishment meets us first, we will be moved towards genuine repentance and consequent salvation. If punishment is what moves us to repentance is fear of punishment then when the fear subsides or the threat of fear is removed, repentance is postponed. Further, if the awareness of guilt meets us first, we will be moved by the feeling of guilt towards despair and commit suicide like Judas. Friedrich Schleiermacher in his work *The Christian Faith* presents repentance as one half of conversion. For him, conversion "the beginning of the new life in fellowship with Christ, makes itself known in each individual by repentance, which consists in the combination of regret and change of heart; and by faith, which consists on the appropriation of the perfection and blessedness of Christ…. it includes painful recognition which precedes turning away, and the

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faith church precedes turning towards" (1928.481). This moment of conversion marks the end of one cycle in sin and the beginning of another in fellowship with Christ.

What about out the repentance after conversion? Repentance is not only what happens at the beginning of a new life, it is also what happens in the course of life since we are still sinners. There is a big difference between one who is not yet converted and one who already has a relationship with the Christ. While their consequent sinfulness after conversion negatively affects their relationship with the redeemer, they do not need to start afresh nor is it a change of heart as would new converts necessary (Schleiermacher 1928:482-483).

There is conversion that causes despair and one that causes vitality in faith. The conversion resulting in faith is prompted by law, not grace. The regret caused by law "goes into particulars and the regret evoked by it is only regret for particular motions and affections and not for the general condition and its deepest cause. Nor is there anything in this connection out of which a new and opposite movement of life might develop" (Schleiermacher 1928:484). The result of such repentance is despair leading to death. True repentance must arise from the recognition of Christ's life giving work. It is Him who awakens the regret in us. The result of this regret should be joy since we have been united to the father through Christ. The change of heart affected by Christ binds together faith and regret and represents the true unity of conversion.

This moment of conversion and the results are evident. However "the idea that every Christian must be able to point to the very time and place of his conversion is accordingly an arbitrary and presumptuous restriction of divine grace, can only cause confusion" (Schleiermacher 1928.487). This is because this moment involves emotional anguish and the pain in the heart thereafter. To

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emphasize the emotion is to negate the very requirement and necessity of repentance: a turning away from sins; not only the emotional turmoil.

Thirdly, the death of Christ removes abstraction in matters of holiness we are to uphold. Because Jesus lived here on earth we know we can achieve holiness. If Jesus lived without sin in a sinful world, then Christians have an example to aspire to. Holiness is not only an abstract other-worldly concept but a day to day practicality.

The RHM argues for a withdrawal from communal activities. This mild form of asceticism is what they argue helps them maintain holiness. The disengagement minimizes the avenues through which they could be contaminated. John Wesley, in his own pursuit of holiness falls into similar challenges. In pursuit of holiness and moral perfection he ascribed to asceticism which eventually did not fulfill the assurance he so need. His major question is: how can we be sure that we are indeed forgiven? In response, he de-emphasizes physical human acts and instead points towards God. At conversion, it is the Holy Spirit that convicts the sinner to repentance. The spirit justifies and also sanctifies the sinner. Sanctification is a task of the Holy Spirit independent of human action (ascetic action) but nonetheless, dependent on the cooperation of the regenerate. It is instantaneous and also progressive, that is, at conversion you become sanctified by the nature of being joined to Christ but also continually sanctified to perfection. The same spirit within us is the assurance that we are indeed forgiven. Humanity does not need to despair because the spirit resident in them assures of their status before God.

Karl Barth in similar detail discusses repentance as a part of conversion. But unlike Schleiermacher, he first makes a summary of the whole work of Christ and then shows the place of conversion in the whole process. He notes:

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> Our starting point is again the conclusion of our second subjection- that the sanctification of man in fellowship with Jesus the Son of Man, in the power of His call, and in the freedom which we are given in the strength of His Holy Spirit to look to him and thus to lift ourselves inspite of the downward drag of our slothful nature (1958:553).

It is this 'lifting up' that Barth refers to as conversion. He also notes the place of Christ in this process. "It is Christ who prompts us through his call to discipleship and we choose to respond to it. Thus, conversion has to be a conscious decision on the part of man. "How could it be real sanctification of the real man if man himself were not present in his inner and outer activity…?" (Barth, 1958:556). The man in full consciousness must be involved. As such, the emphasis should not be on the history rather it is the new found fellowship in the life of Christ and the man. It is work that is eternally willed, resolved and executed by God.

Conversion characterizes sanctification as a reality which takes place here and now in time and on earth. "The divine act of atonement accomplished and revealed in Jesus Christ does not consist only the humiliation of God but in and with this in the exaltation of man" (Barth, 1958.498). Therefore, man's justification and sanctification become different sides of the same coin. Achieving one means the achievement of the other as well. He also notes that sanctification might also mean renewal, regeneration, penitence or even conversion. All these latter names present an aspect of sanctification.

The results of conversion that "when we convert and are renewed in the totality of our being, we cross the threshold of our private existence and move out into the open…" (Barth, 1958.565).

4.3 Conclusion

From the above, atonement is an activity initiated by God the Father through Jesus Christ. Atonement, which is an act of love, makes up for the inadequate human acts. "Repentance is

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already implied in conviction of sin, for to be aware of sin is to be dissatisfied with oneself, and to be already seeking to turn away from where one actually is" (Macquarrie, 1966. 302). After repentance, therefore, humanity should respond with joy to this atoning work, not despair and withdrawal from the community.

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CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of thesis

Apostasy implies a conscious decision to fall away from faith. It has an element of rebellion. As such since falling away from grace is a conscious decision, then returning has to be a conscious effort manifest through human actions. Further, if sin is defined as apostasy, and what moves a believer to repentance is fear and the nearness of eschaton, then the believer is likely to be paralyzed with panic. If humanity is moved to repentance because of fear of punishment then we fall into despair. In an effort to appease God, a believer will engage in acts they are convinced will divert God's wrath while attracting His attention. Those who do not engage in these acts will be viewed as ignorant of God's call to repentance. Engaging in this act will also be viewed as piety and an indication of devotion to God.

However Christ died and atoned for our sins. His death was because human acts were inadequate. His death was not out of desperation rather it is a voluntary act of love. Therefore, a believer needs not to feel guilty for Christ's death on the cross. Justification does not lie in the rightness or intensity of human action, neither is sanctification preserved because of withdrawal from the society. Instead, they are effected by Christ through his death and Holy Spirit residence in us. Even when humanity is reconciled to God, the Holy Spirit still intercedes for us with deep groans.

Following our observation and lessons learnt from Christ's work at the Cross –atonement, Christ's death moves us to loving him since Christ demonstrated love in his death on the Cross-Moral Influence Theory. Christ's act of love not only moves us towards loving him alone but also towards us loving God's creation –other human beings. If humanity is moved to repentance

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because of the Father's love for us, we should respond with love. As such, our response toward this loving act should be joy. Thus, the love towards other humankind is indeed love towards Christ and God Himself.

If by Christ's death we are moved towards loving him and his creatures, then salvation means loving other human beings. This therefore, rules out excluding others on the basis of our piety as measured against theirs. Our knowledge of this leads us towards not grieving but rejoicing in our salvation; especially our knowledge that we did not work for it and thus, did not deserve it.

5.2 Critique

This study has focused mainly on the effect of Christ's atoning work and human response towards it. The weakness of this thesis lies in the danger of creating false joy and assurance of God's love. Care must be taken to ensure that converts of the RHM do not drift into false assurance of salvation and joy even when they are not sincerely converted.

Further, the study did not lay emphasis on the eschatological perspective of the RHM. The RHM contends that Christ's coming is near. While this is valid, it should not paralyze a believer to the extent that they disengage from the community.

5.3 Pastoral Implications

If conversion brings freedom, then, it should usher one into a dispensation of joy. But where there is more sorrow after sins are forgiven, then the purpose for which Christ died is diminished. His act was an act of love and therefore we should be joyful. Just as it was with David; in Psalms 51, after David was forgiven, he turned to God in joy and made a commitment to evangelize.

Knowing that by Christ's death we are all redeemed without our own effort, creates joy and assurance of salvation in our souls. Also, by knowing that none of us deserves salvation, leads to

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a positive attitude towards others and readiness to accept them and not to exclude as less saved. Thus, the anxiety created in the Presbyterian faithful and in the RHM converts when they are converted is assuaged and love for Christ and others is rooted.

5.4 Recommendations

Noting the weakness of this thesis as that which could create false joy and assurance of salvation, we recommend that further investigation on impact of salvation and attitudes be further studied. The eschatological emphases of RHM need to be put into perspective particularly with regard to how a Christian should pursue holiness in an evil world against the imminence of rapture. Literal hermeneutics and proof-texting of scriptures that has led to the RHM converts grieving and being judgmental needs to be avoided and critical approach to texts and effects of salvation be adopted.

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