

THE PASTORAL ROLE OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION:
A LIFE NARRATIVE STUDY IN THE MASVINGO DIOCESE
IN ZIMBABWE

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that *The Pastoral Role of The Sacrament Of Confession: A Life Narrative Study In The Masvingo Diocese In Zimbabwe* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signature

27 February 2015

Date

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my fellow priests and all Catholics in the Diocese of Masvingo in Zimbabwe.

SUMMARY

The laxity and continuous apathy among some members of the Catholic Church of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe towards the Sacrament of Confession prompted this study. The claim of Zvaiwa (2009) that confession is disappearing while psychology is being used more, as reflected in the title of his article “Confession out, psychology in”, motivated this research. The objective of the study was therefore, to explore the practical therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession among members of the Catholic Church in Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. A theoretical and qualitative life narrative study was done from within a practical pastoral therapeutic perspective of practical theology. The sample of the empirical study consisted of 30 priests and laypeople in the five deaneries. A lifeline and semi-structured interview instrument was used. A key finding of the study was that the Sacrament of Confession was not threatened by psychological counselling or psychotherapy. Another significant finding was that the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo was experiencing a devaluation of the church’s pastoral confessional practice among its priests and laypeople. The study confirmed that the Sacrament of Confession has therapeutic value and spiritual meaning in the Church. The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling or psychotherapy were found to collaborate as therapeutic disciplines in pastoral therapy. A new model of therapeutic counselling that embraces spiritual direction through psychological counselling and reconciliation is proposed. It is rooted in cultural value; spirituality; private confession followed by prayer and absolution; and change in existential life, to enhance the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Diocese of Masvingo, Zimbabwe. This model has interdisciplinary elements borrowed from medical, pastoral, psychological and social research fields. If adopted in the Diocese it would decrease the spiritual indifference amongst the parishioners and prevent them from defecting to other denominations.

Key terms: Sacrament of Confession, Catholic Church, Masvingo Diocese, Zimbabwe, life narrative, psychological counselling, psychotherapy, pastoral care, practical theology, spirituality

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Axial coding: Assembling data to have a comprehensive meaning.

Confession: One of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church; admission of one's sins or faults.

Contingency: Existential critical incident or event that does not have to happen but happens, even though it is not necessary in life.

Culture: Set of accepted ideas, practices, values and characteristics that develop within a particular society or people.

Emotions: Subjective feelings that have positive or negative value for the individual.

Life narratives: Stories that are told by a person reflecting his/her life; autobiography.

Masvingo Diocese: The area under Catholic jurisdiction and led by a bishop within the provinces of Masvingo and part of Matabeleland in Zimbabwe.

Meaning/Decision making: The capacity to make good sense of things, as applicable in a positive way in people's lives.

Pastoral care: The duty of a pastor/priest to build up church communities and to comfort and support Christian members during times of personal or corporate sorrow by giving them spiritual direction and guidance about the inner life.

Pastoral counselling: The priest/pastor's experience and use of religious insight to give coping strategies to community members who have mental and behavioural problems.

Practical theology: The study of God within the context of human practice.

Psychological counselling: Helping someone with mental and behavioural problems to deal with human experience.

Psychotherapy: Psychology-based treatment whereby trained practitioners help people who have mental, emotional or psychosomatic disorders and problems.

Sacrament: A symbolic religious ceremony, especially in the Catholic Church, that is regarded as sacred.

Spirituality: A disciplined way or practice of personal devotion and prayer; sensitivity to religious values or spiritual orientation of a human being.

Theoretical coding: According to Saldana (2009:163), theoretical coding functions like an umbrella that covers all codes and categories formulated in grounded theory analysis.

Therapy: Treatment of an individual by physical or psychological means; a way of curing someone.

Zimbabwe: The Southern African country in which this study was conducted.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAPC: American Association of Pastoral Counsellors

ADCL: Aspects and dimension of contingent life experience

CPE: Clinical pastoral education

GCBC: Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference

ZCBC: Zimbabwe Catholics Bishops' Conference

AXIAL CODES

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CHAPTER 1: THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION IN CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Sacrament of Confession is one of the seven sacraments recognised by the Catholic Church as one of the healing sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ. It is the Catholic belief that when people sin, they deprive themselves of God's grace. The Sacrament of Confession is a sacred process of restoring grace to one's self and one's relationship with one's neighbour and with God. It is the acknowledgement of our sins before an ordained priest, as a way of repenting and asking God's forgiveness. In case we may be accused of gender issues, it is important for the readers to realise that Catholic priests are all male. Through the Sacrament of Confession, our souls are healed from the sickness of sin.

In this chapter of the study, the background of the Sacrament of Confession (which includes our motivation and context) is discussed. The chapter contains the statement of the problem; the purpose aim and objectives of the study; the rationale for the study and the methodology that was used in the study.

The laxity and continuous apathy among some of the members of the Catholic Church of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe towards the Sacrament of Confession prompted this study. These days some priests in Catholic missions and parishes spend a lot of time waiting for people to come for confession and sometimes they become frustrated when no-one turns up. It has been observed that our churches are full of people who receive Holy Communion but do not bother to go for confession in order to prepare themselves for the Holy Eucharist. This study is not to blame the church members for neglecting the sacrament of confession in favour of other options but to obtain the truth on why there is a low turn-up in the practice of Confession. The reason for this apathy towards the sacrament of confession is not known but it was observed that it is a cause for concern among devout believers and the priests. This thesis is written not with the church goal or to defend the church but to attain more information about what is taking place in the church with regards to the sacrament of confession and find ways to restore the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Diocese of Masvingo.

The objective of this study was therefore to explore the practical therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession among members of the Catholic Church in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. A qualitative life narrative study was conducted from a practical pastoral therapeutic perspective of practical theology. The motivation for the study is discussed below.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

This study was motivated by an article entitled “Confession out, psychology in” that was written by Zvaiwa in the *Catholic Church News* (2009:3). Some people claim that the practice of the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church is becoming irrelevant due to the dominance of psychological counselling and psychotherapy. However, the phenomenon that the Sacrament of Confession is threatened by psychological counselling services in Zimbabwe has no empirical basis. The claim that the concept of confession is slowly dying out is however, not substantiated by adequate practical theological research. Hence, this study seeks to illuminate the role of psychological counselling and psychotherapy and to determine the therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession among the members of the Catholic Church of the Masvingo Diocese, both in rural and urban areas. This is done within the framework of pastoral theology which is given credit to pastoral theologian giants like Osmer (2008), Browning (1991), Heitink (1993) Van der Ven (1968), Muller (2009), Viau (1999), Hermans (2014) and others. These giants give us an empirical development of a practical theological epistemology that was used to formulate the paradigmatic positioning in this research. The context of the Masvingo Diocese is discussed in the following paragraph.

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The Diocese of Masvingo is located in an area of approximately 70 000 km² and has a population of about 1 200 000 people. Of these people, about 103 000 are Catholics who constitute almost 12% of the population in Masvingo province. In addition to this, there are 51 diocesan priests, four Missionary Society of Bethlehem priests, 19 Holy Cross Sisters, three Sacred Heart Brothers, five St Paul Brothers and 81 Sisters of the Infant Jesus (Masvingo Diocese 2009:1).

The Diocese of Masvingo is located in the southern part of Zimbabwe bordering South Africa and part of Mozambique. The dominating cultures in this diocese are Shona and Ndebele. The cultural dynamics of the Shona and Ndebele people could have an influence on their choice or preference for or against the Sacrament of Confession. This aspect is discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

The Masvingo Diocese is guided by the following vision: “The Family of God united in love: seeking, following and proclaiming Jesus Christ.”

The mission statement of the diocese reads:

The Diocese of Masvingo exists to evangelise: commits itself to renewing its way of living by being closely united to Christ through the Word of God and the Sacraments; by being united with one another, cooperating and sharing with one another; by seeking the Kingdom values in the context of society today and in fraternal dialogue with people of other faiths; by proclaiming Christ and giving witness to Him in a simple life style; by loving others, especially the poor and needy. (Masvingo Diocese 2010:2)

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

The problem statement for the study is based on the observation that: “The influence and dominance of psychological counselling pose a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession” (Zvaiwa 2009:4). There are members who do not seem to partake in or value the Sacrament of Confession anymore probably due to modernity, technology and democratic freedom of association or political grounds and cultural practices. This problem statement is linked with faith actions, reflections and development of new praxis within church, society and their culture.

Further explanation to this problem is based on the sentiments that were raised by some lay people and priests in the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo and other areas that many parishioners were losing interest to go for confession. The actual reasons to this problem were not specified. However, there was a mention of the advent of postmodern sciences like

psychology-counselling as one of the contributing factors to the apathy of practising the Sacrament of Confession. How psychology counselling was giving a threat to the Sacrament of Confession was not spelt out. Why there was apathy to the Sacrament of Confession, was not clear. The deeper research question was to find out why there was apathy in the practice of the sacrament of confession? Hence, this research was embarked upon to find the truth about the practice of faith by some church members on the Sacrament of Confession. The results of this study can assist the church practice. The nature of the problem centres on the apparent dominance of psychological counselling in the Diocese of Masvingo, especially in the 21st century. The implication of this problem is that Church members in the diocese disregard the Sacrament of Confession because they prefer other options like psychological counselling. The question still remains why? It would also seem as if members of the church are no longer attending the sacrament of confession as in the past. What caused members to react like what they did? This phenomenon is disturbing the church's mission and is problematic because the Church loses its pastoral confessional value because of this contingency. As a consequence, the Sacrament of Confession is losing its meaning in the context of the pastoral role of the Church. It follows that this study is aimed at exploring the reasons why the Sacrament of Confession may be losing its importance and meaning. Secondly, if the role of the sacrament is dwindling then we need to find ways to restore the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Diocese of Masvingo.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It is proposed that a practical theological study on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession be conducted among some members of the Catholic Church of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. This study is aimed at (1) analysing the impact of psychological counselling and psychotherapy on the practice of the Sacrament of Confession in the Diocese of Masvingo; (2) enquiring about the efficacy and meaning of the Sacrament of Confession and its therapeutic value; (3) developing an understanding of the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe as a pastoral therapeutic model. The objectives of the study are to explore:

- the role and therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession among those who practise it

- why members chose psychological counselling and psychotherapy over the Sacrament of Confession
- the meaning/emotions/spirituality that participants attach to the Sacrament of Confession

The rationale of the study is explained in the following section.

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The rationale for the study was to establish whether the practice of the Sacrament of Confession is succumbing to psychological counselling and psychotherapy because of the choices of the Catholics in the Masvingo Diocese and the meaning it has in their spiritual lives.

As already mentioned, this study was necessitated by Catholics' preferred choice for psychological services over the Sacrament of Confession. In this light, Mandava (2011:1) argues in favour of the celebration of the Sacrament of Confession as an exercise of reconciliation that is an "indispensable means" of repelling sin despite people's antagonistic behaviour against it. As a Catholic priest, Mandava argues from a spiritual theological point of view. He highlights a severe loss of appreciation for the practice of the Sacrament of Confession in the Church today. The cause of people's antagonism against the Sacrament of Confession has to be addressed in order to clarify the roots of the problem. However, no immediate solution is given for this decadent behaviour towards the Sacrament of Confession. The situation is aggravated by authors like Zvaiwa (2009) who write about the problem but do not come to the rescue of the Sacrament of Confession. His observations are inclined to support the use of psychological counselling and psychotherapy.

Zvaiwa (2009:4) posits that the Sacrament of Confession is under attack in the postmodern era. He argues, from a psychological counselling point of view, that parishioners prefer to get counselling from psychologists instead of pastoral spiritual direction by priests through the Sacrament of Confession. This suggests that psychological counselling and psychotherapy, as secular sciences, are taking a leading role over the Sacrament of Confession. However, this argument has no empirical evidence to substantiate the claim that the Sacrament of

Confession has been overtaken by psychological counselling services. This necessitates our proposal for the narrative practical study of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. The study would be conducted to investigate the validity of the aforementioned argument. In order to augment the study, a literature study and a qualitative study with an empirical approach to life narratives were conducted.

1.7 LITERATURE STUDY

1.7.1 The meaning of practical theology

According to Heitink (1993:132), the development in practical theology in the Netherlands came as an academic discipline to cater for the crisis in the church and theology as a result of Enlightenment and Modernism. The growing gulf between science and faith, academic theology and ecclesiastical practice, the church and society gave rise to many problems. Practical theology was established to bridge the gap between theory and praxis in theology.

Practical theology was seen as the modern form of doing theology, facing the modern world and facing modernity (Van der Ven 1994:34). Schllibeeckx (1968) established the chair of practical theology in order to take care of the present day situation of the church. The scientific-analytical description of the current state of the church is the object of practical theology. Frans Haarsma (1968) became the first chair holder of practical theology and defined it as the empirical theology. Practical theology has to interpret the multidimensional modernisation and the multidimensional secularization process as stimulus, as a challenge and as an invitation to advance the inculturation process of the Christian religion in the modern world. Practical theology has to participate in the self-critical reflection on modernity. This can be done especially from its prophetic traditions in the first testament, from Jesus, the eschatological prophet and in the second testament (Van der Ven 1994:34). Van der Ven stresses the necessity of an intradisciplinary approach, making use of empirical methodology employed by theologians in the field of practical theology. Van der Ven introduced the term empirical theology to stress the need for empirical research in practical theology.

In order to come up with a framework for the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession, the key term “practical theology” has to be defined because this is the main discipline of the study. According to Hunter (2005:936), theology is understood as the “science about God”.

This is the etymological meaning of theology. In other words, theology is the discourse or study about God. Patton (2005:105) adds that practical theology is the science that studies human experiences about God. The understanding here is the added element of practice which is considered by Patton as human science. Hence there is no contradiction between Patton and Hunter's definitions but there is complementarity. Patton's definition may sound weak and contradictory to the first meaning of theology, but one may argue that any study can be human science or human art. Hence practical theology is the study about God. This does not differ much from the meaning that was given by Hunter but there is an addition of human science. We concur with Hunters (2005) that theology is the study about God. It would sound better for us if Patton (2005) could define practical theology as the empirical study about the relationship of God with human beings. The scientific aspect is then catered for. Hunter (2005:296) also writes that practical theology is the science that emphasises understanding concrete human experience of God and problems with the explicit intention of developing practical principles and methods for ministry. We can thus concur that practical theology reflects on and develop theories or models of our Christian faith actions and concrete human experience of God. Patton (2005:25) argues that practical theology touches all disciplines of Christian ministerial activity. It looks like Patton is reverting to the proper meaning of practical theology which Schllibeeckx (1968) Van der Ven (1994), Heitink (1993) Haarsma (1968) and others supported. This activity is related to theological understanding about the Church, ministry, preaching the word of God and healing issues. Practical theology in general consist of five fields of study, preaching, teaching, worship, care and service (Heitink 1993:2, Osmer 2008:1). Therefore, the Sacrament of Confession forms part of the ministry of care as a healing practice in the Church --- it is therefore a key subject of practical theology.

After defining practical theology, it is also important to discuss the relationship between the Sacrament of Confession, psychological counselling and psychotherapy within the framework of practical theology.

1.7.2 The relationship between the Sacrament of Confession, psychological counselling and psychotherapy

It has already been noted that Zvaiwa (2009) argues that psychological counselling services are a threat to the Sacrament of Confession. Hurding (2008:330) posits that the Sacrament of

Confession relates well with pastoral work and psychological counselling. He adds that the Sacrament of Confession plays a pastoral controlling role in psychological counselling/psychotherapy, thus linking the two as pastoral counselling – which is part of practical theology. Hurding (2008:330) further points out the value of the Sacrament of Confession as pouring out of the soul, consciously repressed and hidden sins that are poisonous burdens, grief and sorrows.

This calls for a further literature study on the Sacrament of Confession, psychological counselling and psychotherapy to clarify their role in the Church. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 2, but at the moment the meaning of psychotherapy services is explained.

1.7.3 The meaning of psychotherapy services

In this study, the term “psychotherapy services” refers to psychological counselling and psychotherapy (Zvaiwa 2009:4). Counselling and psychotherapy service centres in the Diocese of Masvingo and elsewhere in Zimbabwe are located in hospitals and are mainly used by patients who were referred for consultations and counselling sessions because of various sicknesses (Masvingo Diocese 2009:11). However, these counselling and psychotherapeutic centres are open to everybody who needs these services.

Cawley (1977:32) argues that psychotherapy and psychological counselling are one but differ in depth, as illustrated by the following four levels.

- (1) *The first level* indicates what a good doctor or a caring person with some experience, layperson or professional person, does in terms of supporting and encouraging a client (Cawley 1977:32; Hurding 2008:24; Bridger & Atkinson 1988:26). The principal elements of the first level of psychological counselling are empathy, listening ability, support and encouragement (Cawley 1977; Hurding 2008; Bridger & Atkinson 1988). Simply by ventilating anxieties within a caring relationship, the troubled person may find healing. As a psychotherapist, Cawley bases the concept “psychotherapy” on the experience, training and aims of the counsellor.

- (2) *The second level* is when a client is helped and taken to a deeper realm in terms of the causes of personal problems. This is when psychological masks or defence mechanisms are challenged. It involves a deeper analysis and understanding of the counselee's problem situation. Some degree of technical understanding and training is required in this level. The counsellor's natural qualities are not enough; deep clinical psychology is called for (Cawley 1977; Hurding 2008; Bridger & Atkinson 1988).
- (3) *The third level* takes both parties (the counsellor and the client) into the realm of dynamic psychological counselling. This level is where the unconscious processes is probed and transference is used, whereby the client transfers past experiences of a key person or key persons onto the counsellor to help her or him move beyond old unhelpful patterns of relating to others (Cawley 1977:32; Hurding 2008:24). This is the realm of experienced professional psychotherapists which largely lies at a deeper level than what is usually reached through psychological counselling. Considerable professional psychotherapy and clinical expertise on the part of the counsellor are essential on this level (Bridger & Atkinson 1988:26).
- (4) *The fourth level* of psychological counselling or psychotherapy is designated for behavioural psychotherapy, where the patient's dilemmas are seen to relate to bad habits. This fourth level is aimed at thorough behavioural change through in-depth therapy. The aim is to help the person to re-learn behaviour patterns within which he or she can adapt socially. This can be achieved only with the help of a skilled and trained psychotherapist (Bridger & Atkinson 1988:26).

There is a continuum relationship between psychological counselling and psychotherapy. Crabb (1977:164) argues that psychological counselling follows a model that has three levels, namely:

- (1) encouragement
- (2) exhortation, and
- (3) enlightenment

Table 1 below illustrates the similarities and differences between Cawley (1977:32) and Crabb's (1977:164) psychological counselling and psychotherapy models.

Table 1: Cawley (1977) and Crabb's (1977) psychological counselling and psychotherapy models

Cawley	Depth of counselling	Crabb
Level 1 Psychotherapy	Psychological counselling	{ Level 1 Encouragement { Level 2 Exhortation
Level 2 Psychotherapy	Psychological counselling	{ Level 3 Enlightenment
Level 3 Psychotherapy	Clinical psychotherapy	
Level 4 Psychotherapy	Clinical psychotherapy	

In brief, the first and second levels of Cawley's psychotherapy and the three levels of Crabb's counselling are defined as psychological counselling. The third level and the fourth level of psychotherapy, according to Cawley, fall in the realm of deep clinical psychotherapy which is beyond psychological counselling. However, as mentioned before, in this study the concept "psychological counselling" is used interchangeably with psychotherapy – which falls in the first and second levels of counselling according to Cawley (1977:32) and the three levels of counselling according to Crabb (1977:164). We may not be limited to the third and fourth level of Cawley (1977). This is why Zvaiwa (2009) argues that the Sacrament of Confession is dominated by psychological counselling and psychotherapy services.

It can be argued that the Sacrament of Confession has never been studied from a scientific practical theological point of view with specific reference to the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe and specifically in the Masvingo Diocese. This is especially true when the study is restricted to a practical theological approach with a narratives component. Mandava (2011:1) refers to the celebration of the "Sacrament of Reconciliation" within a liturgical-sacramental discipline. He conducted his study in view of promoting active participation among members of the Church with his assistance as a priest. I concur with his view in so far as the definition of the sacrament is concerned, but differs in my preferred mode, which is more practical and narrative centred.

The "Sacrament of Reconciliation" is another term for the Sacrament of Confession. There are many authors who discuss the Sacrament of Confession from different perspectives. For example, Browning and Reed (2004) argue forgiveness, reconciliation and moral courage; Musekura (2010) writes about the models of forgiveness and highlights the need for

confession; Capps (2005) argues on the indifference for the Sacrament of Confession; Knapp (1985) posits that the Sacrament of Confession is privileged communication for pastoral counselling; Stumpf (1993) argues that private confession is a call for restoration in pastoral care; Murphy (1990) proposes that the Sacrament of Confession is ministry to the total person; Lind (2006) writes about the Sacrament of Confession as keeping and sharing confidentiality in the ministry; Beaumont (1966) argues for the use of both the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy; Weigert (1960) is concerned with the Sacrament of Confession within pastoral counselling and psychotherapy; he sees the Sacrament of Confession as a ministry of preachers and confessors that has pastoral impact; Southard (1985) argues for clergy performance standards on the Sacrament of Confession; and Hutch (1994) writes about the Sacrament of Confession as dying within oneself. These authors make similar but different contributions on the role, meaning and purpose of the Sacrament of Confession. However, the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession as having therapeutic value in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe still need to be validated by the life narratives.

The official teaching of the Church on the Sacrament of Confession is given in detail in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It also defines the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession. From a catechetical point of view, the Sacrament of Confession is defined as a process of disclosing one's sins to a priest as a way of repenting and acknowledging God's presence. According to the *Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CC 2005:1424), the Sacrament of Confession is an acknowledgement and praise of the holiness of God and of his mercy towards sinful people.

The Sacrament of Confession is also called the Sacrament of Penance, Reconciliation and Forgiveness. It is a sacrament of reconciliation and conversion because it represents the divine presence of Jesus' call to conversion, which is the first step of returning to God the Father from whom one has strayed through sin (CC 2005:1423). The Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation presupposes human restoration to the mutual relationship with God and with one another (Mandava 2011:18). The mutual relationship with God is not ordinary, but holy or sacred. Hence, the human participation in that sacredness is what we call a sacrament.

The word “sacrament” refers to the sacredness of the act of confession as something that gives grace. A sacrament is power that comes from Jesus Christ (CC 2005:1114). It is a sign or a symbol which is a vehicle of God’s grace. Thus a sacrament is a sign that effects grace by signifying it, and it was instituted by Christ “explicitly or implicitly” through his words and actions. According to Thurian (2005:26), the practice of the Sacrament of Confession is part of any vital belief in the communion of saints. He relates the Sacrament of Confession to psychoanalysis where men and women of the Christian faith have no psychological equilibrium and yet have not wallowed in pathological states. It is the task of the psychoanalyst to identify the partnership with Christ as a great help to the pastor and to the penitent alike. The cure of souls, however, is likely to demand spiritual ministry – the invocation of God (the Holy Spirit and the application of the promises of the gospel). Thurian (2005:51) further argues that all those who are engaged in pastoral ministry are convinced that thousands of people are enslaved by guilt or real and imagined offences that need absolution and release. Thus, in this case, sin is a failure to please God and a limitation to reach his standard of love and obedience to him. The Sacrament of Confession exists to reunite brothers and sisters who might have separated because of sin. It heals and reunites the penitent with God.

McGarry (2009:20) relates the Sacrament of Confession to the earliest times of the Christian Church. He argues in the earliest times of Christianity, healers not only struggled with ills of the body, but also with the ills of the mind and were often in need of spiritual guides; hence they turned to confession. According to McGarry (2009:21), the Church practised the Sacrament of Confession even in the times of Christ. Rites of forgiveness are mentioned in St John’s epistles (1 John 2:8–10). The early Church had rites of penance for serious public sin, but it is unclear when private confession for less public or less serious sin developed (McGarry 2009:21).

The practice of the Sacrament of Confession was greatly influenced by the Irish monks in the 6th and 9th centuries (McGarry 2009:21). Each monk would have his “*anam chara*” (literally “soul friend”) to whom he would open his inner life. Collins (1988:25) names such an exercise spiritual counselling in which forgiveness had a place. This practice spread to laypeople as many parishioners sought it. About the year 1200 AD, private confession developed into the form that it is in the Catholic Church nowadays (McGarry 2009:21).

According to the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Holy See 2005:193), the formula for the penitential rite is as follows: “I confess to you Almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters that I have greatly sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do ...” This formula has a vertical and a horizontal dimension of therapy. The vertical dimension is the human relationship with God and the horizontal dimension is the relationship between human beings.

In the Shona rite of the Sacrament of Confession, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference (ZCBC 2003:172) outlines the following five processes of confession:

- (1) “*Kubvunzisisa moyo zvawakatadza*” (examination of conscience)
- (2) “*Kurwarira matadzo ako nokuapfidza*” (perfect act of contrition)
- (3) “*Kutsunga moyo kusatadza pakare*” (to be determined to live in grace)
- (4) “*Kureurura kuna baba vezvomweya*” (to confess to the priest)
- (5) “*Kuaripira*” (restitution)

When a parishioner has faithfully followed all the five processes, he or she goes to the priest, who absolves his or her sins with the following formula: “*Ndinokuregerera matadzo ako muzita raBaba noMwanakomana naMweya Musande*” (I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit). The penitent thanks the priest and is allowed to go in the peace of Christ to perform an act of contrition and restitution.

In this process of the Sacrament of Confession, the whole person is believed to be healed both in body and in soul. However, nowadays the cure for souls is increasingly being removed from the hands of the priest and the pastoral field is being encroached upon by other professions such as psychological counselling. This argument is supported by Soren Kierkegaard (a spiritual mystic) who asserts that preachers are no longer pastors of souls but doctors and other scientists have become preachers (in Autton 1963:23).

However, even if psychological counselling and psychotherapy services pose a threat to the Sacrament of Confession, Makamure (2009:4) argues that the Sacrament of Confession or penance still has indispensable value for Christians. He argues from a spiritual theological perspective. Makamure (2009) laments the fact that parishioners become frustrated when they

remain silent in their sin without using the Sacrament of Confession in order to be healed from their deepest conflict of the human heart.

A pastoral letter from the Masvingo Diocese (2011:2) supports the role or the importance of the Sacrament of Confession in Shona: “*pinduka utendere dama rakanaka*” (convert and believe the Good News) (Mark 1:15). This shows that the diocese conscientises people about the Sacrament of Confession and is concerned that the parishioners should use it for their salvation. In the same vein, Wooden (2010:1) argues from a catechetical point of view that the members of the Catholic Church should practise the Sacrament of Confession when they sin in order to be cleansed from their evil deeds. Wooden emphasises that there is a tendency or a growing sense of guilt among members of the Catholic Church which should lead them to go for confession. This shows that while more Catholic members seem to have trouble seeing some of their actions as sins, the fact that so many people feel guilty means that they are aware of the need to go for confession. From a catechetical point of view, people are supposed to confess their sins often in order to be healed and to live in grace. To emphasise the Sacrament of Confession as the dispenser of grace, the pope (as the visible head of the Church) educates the priests on its importance.

In a special course for confessors, Pope Benedict XVI (2011) emphasised to the priests who participated that the formation and education of consciences in realising the Sacrament of Confession is a pastoral priority of the Church. In this way, he linked the Sacrament of Confession to the pastoral care of priests to their flock, which is mainly the concern of pastoral theology. Van Arkel (2005:32) defines pastoral care as the heart of all care. It is a ministry that is directed at the inner life and the spiritual care of the total person in all the psychophysical and psychosocial dimensions of human life. Pastoral care is the heart of all care in practical theology. Kotze and Kotze (2001:7) concur with the view that pastoral care is all about “caring with people rather than caring for people”. Hence pastoral care is part of practical theology, which focuses on pastoral practices for human needs and actions.

Furthermore, the theology of pastoral care cannot be complete without mentioning pastoral counselling and psychotherapy, which feed the pastoral discipline with scientific and psychological pastoral skills. Pastoral counselling is therefore a specialised field of pastoral care which comes after mutual care and pastoral care (Van Arkel 2005:115). It is the third level or form of care. Pastoral counselling is a dimension of counselling which can form part

of the Sacrament of Confession. According to Heitink (1992:41), the word “counselling” is derived from the Latin word “*consilium*” which refers to giving advice or counsel. Pastoral counselling is the pastor/priest’s attempt to help the parishioner to help him or herself. In secular psychologies and therapies, counselling is defined as a professional relationship between the skilled helper and the one who seeks help in order to gain meaning about his or her condition (Hurding 2008:15). McGarry (2009:20) argues that there is no conflict between the Sacrament of Confession, psychology and pastoral counselling. According to McGarry (2009:20), pastoral counselling has its place in the Sacrament of Confession. He does not see psychological counselling as merely responding to the body but also to the mind and the spirit. The Sacrament of Confession contains all the healing aspects that the person needs, including spiritual direction. McGarry (2009:20) argues from a spiritual psychological perspective without looking at the practical theological aspects of the Sacrament of Confession.

Another aspect has to be addressed in this study, namely culture. Culture can influence people’s attitudes towards the Sacrament of Confession, either positively or negatively. There could be hidden clashes between Christianity and the Shona-Ndebele culture that have to be investigated. For example, the Shona-Ndebele culture does not encourage exposing individuals’ private life to strangers or to the public. This could negatively impact on the Sacrament of Confession (Zvarevashe 2005). Pope Benedict XVI (2011a:16) defines culture as “public life and social interaction common to a group of people”. It involves exchanging new forms of solidarity, common patrimony of values, and development of thought and human expression in a society. Stratton and Hayes (1993:48) define culture as a general term that is used to describe the set of accepted ideas, practices, values and characteristics which develop within a particular society or people. Finally, the Sacrament of Confession is practised in a culture and needs serious consideration.

The arguments above address the issue of the Sacrament of Confession in relation to pastoral counselling, pastoral care, psychological counselling, practical theology and psychotherapy in different contexts. The problem of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the context of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe was a key research point of this study. The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession refers to the spiritual role of the Sacrament of Confession in pastoral work. The therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession is its healing effect, which was viewed from a practical theological perspective within the context

of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. A practical theological study of the Sacrament of Confession as a pastoral therapeutic practice of the members of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Masvingo in Zimbabwe was centred on the actual religious and spiritual practices of the people. This was why the study had to take practical theology, with special reference to pastoral therapy, as its guiding principle.

The study also focused on the therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession among some members of the Catholic Church in the Masvingo Diocese. Van Arkel (2005:184) defines the term “therapeutic” as the most specialised form of care. Our opinion to this effect is that the specialised form of care brings healing to individuals as it is referred to by Van Arkel. Such healing effect is holistic in such a way that it is not only limited to the body of a person but to the soul and to the whole person. The way we understand the term therapy concurs with the one already mentioned, but we further take note of the relaxation of the body and the healing of the soul. It was hoped that this study would unveil the required information from the participants through life narratives and semi-structured interviews.

Hunter (2005:187) locates the pastoral therapeutic approach in a theology of pastoral care which serves the healing of the human soul (“*cura animarum*”). This implies a ministry that is directed not merely to human inner life, but also at the spiritual care of the total person in all the psycho-physical and psycho-social dimensions. The healing of souls is attributed to God who works through the ministers of the church who avail themselves to the church members and attend to all their needs. This is supported by Hiltner (1959:22), who argues that pastoral therapy goes together with healing. The term “healing” is used in its general and comprehensive sense, involving the restoration of functional wholeness that has been impaired. Hiltner adds that the practical theological and therapeutic approach uses the healing function. The practice of the Sacrament of Confession in terms of a therapeutic approach interlinks with Hiltner’s mode in the sense of expressing oneself to the pastor who is a counsellor and a confessor. The word “confessor” here refers to the priest who conducts the Sacrament of Confession. The life narrative study would be based on an exploratory approach to the healing value of the Sacrament of Confession within the pastoral context. Haley (2006:27) contends that in the exploration of the therapeutic value, it is the therapist’s task to unveil a presenting problem clearly and to design an intervention in the client’s situation.

The following research design had reference to the study.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

In the research design, an overarching epistemology and methodology are underscored. A qualitative research methodology, which consists both of a literature study and a qualitative empirical study of the life narratives of the participants, was applied to explore the reasons why the Sacrament of Confession was losing its impact and meaning in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. An empirical practical theological positioning is discussed below to offer a proper epistemology for this study within the discipline of practical theology. The paradigmatic positioning of this study is a qualitative empirical methodology of practical theology. This is characterised by life narratives of participants. The qualitative empirical-analytical approach has been presented since the eighties by an extensive program of empirical research directed by Van der Ven, (1994:35) for him the empirical approach was important to validate theological knowledge and to falsify wrong insights about the empirical relevance of theological concepts. For this purpose, Van der Ven (1994:35) found it easier to investigate the content of religious beliefs, interpretations, images and feelings found among people in order to classify, analyse and evaluate them. He also dealt with the problems and the beliefs of church members and referred to the fundamental crisis in belief systems. Van der Ven (1994:35) introduced practical theology as empirical theology and he chose an intradisciplinary model applying empirical methods to theological research. Furet (1968) referred to practical theology as a theological futurology. He established an institute to do empirical research in the service of hermeneutical questions. He worked in cooperation with social scientists.

We put more emphasis on the empirical practical theological study based on the life narrative research methodology developed at the Radboud University in Nijmegen (Hermans 2012a). The theoretical gap in the Sacrament of Confession as a practical theological practice with therapeutic value in the field of pastoral care and counselling in the Masvingo Diocese was addressed.

The perceived preference of members of the Church for psychological counselling instead of pastoral care and counselling through the Sacrament of Confession and their experiences necessitated a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research would be used to explore priests and members' perceptions, choices and actions in the context of the

Sacrament of Confession, psychological counselling and psychotherapy, with specific reference to the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. The complexity of reflecting on the therapeutic praxis of the Sacrament of Confession necessitated the life narrative research methodology within a pastoral practical theology framework.

The life narrative approach was applied because it follows the ideas purported by a contextual approach with an emphasis on doing theology (Kotze & Kotze 2001:5). This methodology would involve the research participants as an integral part of the research. Qualitative narrative methods were used in order to gain an understanding and insight into the life worlds of the research participants (Mouton 2001:150; Hofstee 2006). The life narrative methodology involved using semi-structured interview questions that would be based on practical issues pertaining to the Sacrament of Confession. It emphasised the doing of practical theology which reached beyond a mere practice of theology. Life narratives refer to a shift from “the general to the local ... to true participation among all participants of practical theology” (Mouton 2001:150). According to Hermans (2012), human beings are motivated storytellers. Life narratives highlight and motivate our contingencies, feelings, meanings and actions. Instead of having interviews alone, participants could also be engaged in informal conversations where they could tell stories in relation to the Sacrament of Confession. The Sacrament of Confession requires a spiritual life story or biography to explore the understanding of meaning people give to its practice. Semi-structured interviews are an integral part of life narratives. This study followed a spiritual life story model (Van de Brand, Hermans, Scherer-Rath & Verschuren 2013). Figure 1 below illustrates the research map we followed in our search for the meaning of participants and how they made decisions and choices on the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling.

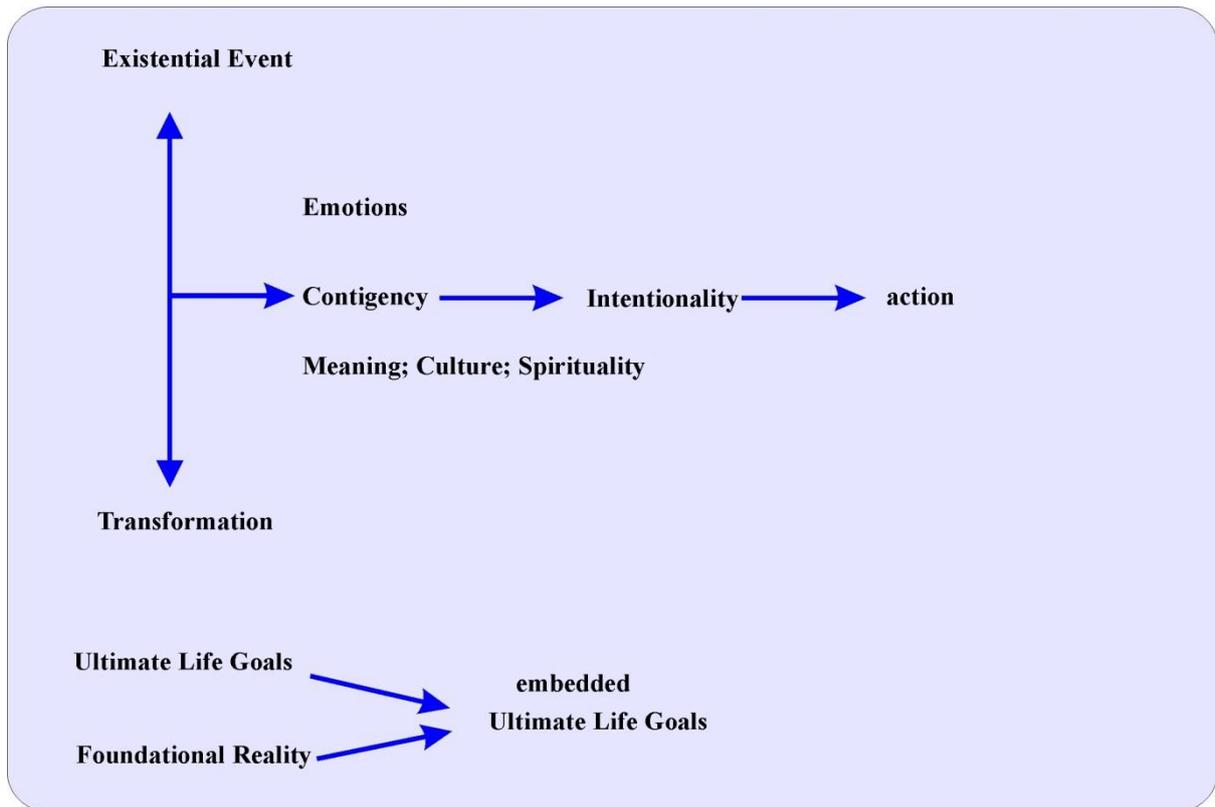


Figure 1: The spiritual life story model (Van de Brand et al 2013)

According to Hermans (2012), the spiritual life narrative model consists of the following key indicators: ultimate life goals, foundational realities, meaning, intentionality and an existential event. Ultimate life goals indicate people's ultimate values and their deepest motivation. Our goals can be distinguished as instrumental and ultimate. The instrumental goals can be fulfilled, but the ultimate goals are abstract and universal. For the Sacrament of Confession, life stories could help us to know whether people consider them ultimate goals or not.

The foundational reality can be transcendent or immanent. The word "transcendence" refers to God and the word "immanence" refers to nature. Life stories would demonstrate whether the participants perceived the Sacrament of Confession as transcendent or immanent.

Hermans (2012), describes emotions as condensed narratives. He got this from Lazarus' (1999:193–255) framework, which consists of aspects such as anger, envy, jealousy, anxiety, guilt, shame, relief, hope, sorrow, concern, revulsion, happiness, pride, love, gratitude, compassion and amazement. These were important with regard to the participants' experience of the Sacrament of Confession as a religious-spiritual exercise. Their life stories would

illustrate their choices, intentions and emotions about the Sacrament of Confession as a therapeutic practice.

A contingency is something that is not necessary but happens in life. A contingency can be situational, existential or religious. In this study, “life stories” refers to people’s attitude or behaviour when they experience existential contingencies in relation to the Sacrament of Confession.

Intentionality is how people actualise their ultimate goals. This is manifested in people’s actions. When telling their stories, the participants would relate their intentions or decisions about the Sacrament of Confession or psychological counselling and its meaning in their lives.

Action is the execution of an intention of a person. In this case, the desired action was to go for confession or psychological counselling (as the participants would feel).

Transformation is the process of change or becoming. Human existence is becoming and only through change, do we develop in life. The choices of the ultimate goals of the Church members in the Masvingo Diocese would help them to transform their lives.

The data collection process is explained below.

Data collection

The data was collected through a semi-structured interview guide in order to obtain the sample’s life narratives. The life narrative methodology involved listening to the previously unheard voices and experiences of people. It was a people-centred methodology (Mulwa 2006:1). The conceptualisation or mode of reasoning of this methodology was more inductive than deductive. By inductive, it is meant that the methodology ranged from particular instances of life narratives to the general inference of the people’s perceptions of the Sacrament of Confession (Morton S. 1996:466). This made the study more empirical as it did not start with the general premises and moved to the particular, but vice versa. There was no imposition of any pre-set theory or explanation. This means that the methodology centred more on the practice of the Church members concerned. The approach focused on the

participants and their world views. It meant that all their voices had to be heard and listened to. As pointed out by Mouton (2005:151), the best sampling procedure or selection of participants in qualitative research is based on non-probability selection principles. This means that the respondents in the five deaneries of the Masvingo Diocese were approached to participate in the study. The Sacrament of Confession, as a well-practised activity in the Church, offered an ideal opportunity to use the life narrative methodology (Hermans 2012a). In order to have a broader view of the Sacrament of Confession, the Catholic Catechism was used to look at the Sacrament of Confession in context.

According to the CC (2005:97), confession is a religious exercise that heals the souls of sinners when they come forward to confess their sins before a priest. This definition helped us to focus more on the practice of confession. Thus, our methodology would exclude “the seal of confession”, which is the confidentiality between the confessor (who is the priest who conducts confession) and the penitent (who is the faithful member or parishioner who comes to do confession). The methodology excluded the names of the penitents and confessors, but explored the exercise of confession and people’s attitude towards it.

As part of the life narrative methodology described above, the following semi-structured interview framework (of Hermans 2012) was used:

- (1) directions for the interviewer
- (2) validity and trustworthiness
- (3) introduction
- (4) demographic information
- (5) probing questions on the Sacrament of Confession
- (6) lifeline (religious experiences: past and possible future)
- (7) exploration of meaning, emotions, contingency on the Sacrament of Confession and culture
- (8) life goals and foundation (ultimate goals and higher reality in decision making)
- (9) the Sacrament of Confession life theme
- (10) support and expectations from communities of faith
- (11) close of interview

According to Mouton (2005:151), semi-structured interviewing is essential because it enables the interviewer to probe the respondents to give adequate and expanded answers. During an interview, the interviewer can exhibit some flexibility and can repeat or rephrase questions so that the respondent understands what is meant by particular questions (Chikoko & Mhloyi 2003:12).

This study focused on Hermans' (2012) life narrative methodology and semi-structured interviews were used to measure participants' ultimate meaning and spiritual development in the Sacrament of Confession. The interviewees were selected from the five deaneries of the Masvingo Diocese, namely: Masvingo, Gutu, Lowveld, Eastern and Southern. The following groups of people were interviewed from each deanery: one priest; one male and one female youth member; one man from the St Joseph Association; one woman from the St Anne Association; and one religious brother or sister.

The total number of the participants was 30 people. The five interviewers were trained first before they went to the respective deaneries to conduct the interviews.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study on confession was limited to some of the members of the Catholic Church in the Masvingo Diocese. The study excluded all other religions, denominations and other Catholic dioceses in Zimbabwe. The small sample and low degree of control could affect the overall generalisability of the results and the possibility of strong causal and structural explanations (Mouton 2001:151).

All other Catholics who were not in the Diocese of Masvingo were therefore excluded and not all the Catholics in the Masvingo Diocese were involved in the study. The sample consisted of 30 Catholic members in the five deaneries of the Masvingo Diocese. The study was confined to practising Catholics and was limited to those who were familiar with the Sacrament of Confession. It did not include other Catholics who knew about the Sacrament of Confession but did not participate in it.

1.10 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The interviews and life narratives involved the active participation of the participants to enhance the chances of high construct validity, low refusal rates and ownership of findings (Mouton 2001:151). It was thought that the benefits of the study would outweigh its limitations.

The study makes a new contribution to the discipline of practical theology with specialisation in pastoral therapy. It might motivate other researchers to cover grey areas of the Sacrament of Confession which have not been explored in this study in the field of pastoral therapy.

Some of the key terms used in the study are explained below as part of the conceptual analysis.

1.11 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

1.11.1 Therapeutic

This word comes from the word “therapy”, which means treatment that helps someone to feel better or to grow stronger. “Therapeutic” means causing someone to feel happier and more relaxed, or to be healthier. Van Arkel (2008:216) refers to pastoral therapy as a form of care that deals with problems in greater depth and that the healing action may take longer than that with pastoral counselling (Van Arkel 2008:216). According to Wicks (1982:61 & 62), the concept “therapy” is often used as a shortened form of psychotherapy. Therapy is an “in-depth process requiring specific and extensive education and expertise” (Hurding 2008:22).

1.11.2 Sacrament

This is derived from the word “sacred”, which means “holy”. It is a holy religious activity or ceremony in the Church. It is an activity that has to do with the presence of Christ. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2005), a sacrament reveals the presence of Christ and the mystery of salvation. “It is a sign and instrument in which the Holy Spirit dispenses the mystery of salvation” (CC 2005:1112).

1.11.3 Confession

This is an act of admitting the wrong one has done, coming to terms with what one has done and accepting to own the wrong that has been done. In the Roman Catholic Church, confession is a formal and private act of telling a priest what a person has done in order to be forgiven and to start a new life with a cleared conscience.

1.11.4 Catholic

This refers to the Roman Catholic Church, whose visible head is the pope in the Vatican City in Rome. According to Hirmer (2007:10), “Catholic means general, universal, for all people and for the whole world”.

1.11.5 Masvingo

This is the name of the first town in Zimbabwe, which was called Fort Victoria in the Colonial era. The Masvingo region stretches from the town centre and borders on South Africa and part of Mozambique. It has a population of about 2, 5 million.

1.11.6 Pastoral care

According to Van Arkel (2005:32), pastoral care is the heart of all care. It is the second level or form of pastoral work. “It is a fairly organised form of care, taking place in the context of the Church, and is aimed at the building up of people ... of the Church” (Van Arkel 2005:32).

1.11.7 Pastoral counselling

According to Clinebell (1984), pastoral counselling is a specialised form of care which arose as a real need in the churches. It is a structural and informed caring dialogue with people who have problems. Pastoral counselling is the third level of care; it is a more intensive and structured form of care than mutual care and pastoral care (Van Arkel 2005:107).

1.11.8 Psychotherapy

According to Bridger and Atkinson (1998:26), psychotherapy is the third level of counselling that is aimed at undergoing behavioural change through in-depth therapy. Hurding (2008:22) writes that psychotherapy is a continuum from the simplest form of counselling through to the deepest level of counselling or psychotherapy. This can only be achieved with the help of skilled, trained psychotherapists. According to the *Penguin dictionary of Psychology* (Reber 1985:598), psychotherapy is influenced by a medical model. In the most inclusive sense, psychotherapy is the use of any technique or procedure that has palliative or curative effects on any mental, emotional or behavioural disorder.

1.11.9 Psychological counselling

According to Hurding (2008:24), “psychological” refers to the mental effects of something on someone. This is derived from psychology, which is the scientific study of the way that the human mind works and how it influences behaviour or character (Bridger & Atkinson (1998:25). According to Hurding (2008:24), psychological counselling, therapy and psychotherapy refer to the same process which includes what any good caring professional person with some experience does in terms of supporting and encouraging a client. The difference between psychological counselling and psychotherapy lies in the depth of treatment and the degree of the professional therapeutic expertise of the counsellor (Bridger & Atkinson 1998:24). Psychological counselling can be defined as a process that assists individuals in using psychological insights to learn about themselves, their environment, and methods for handling roles and relationships. According to Collins (1988:24), psychological counselling is primarily a relationship where one person (the psychologist or counsellor) seeks to assist another human being with the problem of living.

1.11.10 Practical theology

According to Poling (1991:186), practical theology is critical and constructive reflection within a living community about human experience and interaction, involving a correlation of a Christian story and other perspectives. This leads to an interpretation of meaning and value, resulting in everyday guidelines and skills for the formation of persons and communities. From Poling’s (1991:186) description, the following guidelines can be derived:

- Practical theology should reflect the current plurality and heterogeneous descriptions of lived experience.
- The presence of difference and otherness in experience should be accepted as a given.
- Practical theology should develop an ear for unheard voices, and interpret these voices as critically and constructively as the familiar voice of tradition.
- Practical theology should not be a terrain only for practical theologians as academically trained theologians. Practical theology should include the unheard voices of so-called “non-theologians”.
- Practical theology should continuously and critically assimilate new methods and techniques developed in other areas of science in order to develop a practical theological praxis.
- Practical theology should be aimed at the continual transformation of faith in God as he reveals himself throughout history.
- Practical theologians should develop the skills to interpret their own interpretations.

1.11.11 Life narratives

Life narratives are stories that are told by a person which reflect his or her life (or autobiography). The “I” is the author of life narratives. The narratives are the accounts of one’s past, present and future. According to Hermans (2012), life narratives are storied accounts of past events that range from brief anecdotes to fully developed autobiographies. People make meaning out of storied events or a narrative account of events that are experiential, automatic, concrete, holistic and intimately linked with one’s emotions (Hemans 2012).

1.11.12 Diocese

This is an area that is controlled by a bishop. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Masvingo is under the jurisdiction of a Catholic bishop who is resident in the city of Masvingo in Zimbabwe. The diocese covers an area of 70 000 km². The Catholic population in the

Diocese of Masvingo during the time of the study was about 103 000. This was the population of the area where the study took place, which comprised five deaneries (namely Masvingo, Gutu, Lowveld, Eastern and Southern).

1.11.13 Zimbabwe

This is the Southern African country that shares borders with South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana. Geographically, Zimbabwe is a land-locked country in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. This is the context in which the research was conducted. At the time of the study, Zimbabwe had a population of approximately 13 000 000 people.

1.12 CONCLUSION

In this first chapter of the thesis, I gave the background and context of the study. The motivation for the study was the claim that the practice of the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church is becoming irrelevant due to the dominance of psychological counselling or psychotherapy. The problem statement is that the influence and dominance of psychological counselling pose a threat to the Sacrament of Confession that can lead to its extinction. The purpose of the study was to analyse the impact of psychological counselling and psychotherapy on the practice of the Sacrament of Confession in the Diocese of Masvingo. The study therefore centred on enquiring about the efficacy and meaning of the Sacrament of Confession in order to develop it as a pastoral therapeutic model.

The aims and objectives of the study were to explore the role and therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession among those who practised it; to explore why members of the Church chose psychological counselling and psychotherapy above the Sacrament of Confession; and to explore the meaning/emotions/spirituality that participants attached to the Sacrament of Confession. The rationale for the study was to establish whether the practice of the Sacrament of Confession was succumbing to psychological counselling and psychotherapy because of the choices of the Catholics in the Masvingo Diocese and the meaning they attach to it in their spiritual lives. Definitions of key terms were given. The rest of the chapters of this thesis are outlined below.

Chapter 2 deals with a practical theological framework for the Sacrament of Confession, with special reference to pastoral care and counselling. Psychotherapy and practical theology are discussed in terms of how they relate to each other. Pastoral care and counselling are also discussed, and how they relate to the Sacrament of Confession.

Chapter 3 (Towards a theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession) is a discussion on the Church and the Sacrament of Confession. The theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession is explained in relation to psychological counselling, psychotherapy and pastoral therapy/counselling. The relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling is highlighted. A literature study was done to explore the concepts, practices and definition of the Sacrament of Confession, and psychological counselling. The socio-cultural perspectives of the Shona people in relation to the Sacrament of Confession are analysed and reviewed. The argument that the Sacrament of Confession is becoming irrelevant in the contemporary world and that its role has been overtaken by psychotherapy is reviewed. The effects of culture on the sacrament are also reviewed and its value discussed. The relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and pastoral counselling is then reviewed. The variables that relate to the Sacrament of Confession, such as spiritual healing and direction, are discussed. The view that confession has an element of psychotherapy and that it maintains the equilibrium is analysed.

Chapter 4 (The research design) is about the qualitative empirical research design that was followed for the study. The life narrative methodology of Hermans (2012) was applied and the empirical research methodology is explained in detail. The what, how, who, when and where questions of the research are therefore addressed. The research questions are also addressed in this chapter. The research was carried out in the parishes of the five deaneries in the Masvingo Diocese, namely: St Peter's cathedral and St Paul's Cathedral in the Masvingo Deanery, the Mukaro Mission in the Gutu Deanery, the Silveira Mission in the Eastern Deanery, Holy Trinity in the Lowveld Deanery and St Joseph's Parish in the Southern Deanery. The method that was used to collect the data was semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 5 (Life narratives on the pastoral role of the sacrament of confession in the Masvingo Diocese) focuses on the empirical study (data analysis and presentation). The findings on the relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy are presented, analysed

and interpreted. The qualitative data that was obtained from the interviewees are coded according to concepts and themes.

Chapter 6 deals with the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. This chapter relates the results of the literature study to the findings of the empirical study to arrive at the conclusions, key findings and recommendations.

In the next chapter, a practical theological framework for the Sacrament of Confession is discussed.

CHAPTER 2: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter contained a description of the context and the background of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese. This chapter is a reflection on practical theology as a framework for the Sacrament of Confession within pastoral care and counselling. It deals with practical theology as a theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession with specific reference to pastoral care, pastoral counselling, pastoral therapy and psychotherapy.

2.2 AIM OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

The problem statement for the study is as follows: “The influence and dominance of psychological counselling pose a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession.” The nature of the problem centres on the apparent dominance of psychological counselling in the Diocese of Masvingo, especially in the 21st century (Zvaiwa’s 2009:4). The implication of this problem is that Church members in the diocese disregard the Sacrament of Confession because they prefer psychological counselling. There are members who do not seem to partake in or value the Sacrament of Confession anymore probably due to modernity, technology and democratic freedom of association or political grounds and cultural practices. This problem statement is linked with faith actions, reflections and development of new praxis within church, society and their culture.

The aforementioned problem statement is a contemporary practical theological issue which can be tackled within the paradigmatic position of pastoral and ecclesial practice based on the four tasks of hermeneutical approach of Richard Osmer (2008). His argument gives us an epistemological development for this study. He argued that much contemporary practical theology research is focused on four tasks namely: descriptive-empirical; interpretive; normative; and pragmatic. The four tasks of practical theological interpretation were reiterated by Wagner- Ferreira (2011:1) These four paradigmatic levels or tasks of Osmer

(2008) are explained further to give us a comprehensive epistemology for the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe.

According to Osmer (2008:4), the descriptive-empirical task is based on the question: What is going on? Similarly, in our study we are also interested in finding out what is going on in the practice of faith, particularly in the Sacrament of Confession. What it means is that we want to gather more information to have a clear understanding of the Sacrament of Confession within the context of the church in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe.

Osmer (2008:4) goes further to explain the second task of interpreting practical theology, namely: the interpretive task. The interpretive task is guided by the question: Why is this going on? In our study of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession, the quest is to enter into a discussion and ask questions like why is there laxity and lack of commitment in the Sacrament of Confession? The interpretive task according to Osmer (2008:4) is entering into a dialogue with the social sciences to interpret and explain why certain actions and patterns are taking place. Suffice to say that our study incorporates the social sciences like psychology and counselling to dialogue with the practice of the Sacrament of Confession which falls in the realm of practical theology as the church practice. It is important for our study to find out whether psychology counselling as a contemporary and modern social science is causing any interference with the practice of the Sacrament of Confession. Furthermore, we question why there is laxity and reluctance in the practice of the Sacrament of Confession? This task is executed as we go on to extract lived narratives of church members' spirituality to get more information on the Sacrament of Confession.

The third task of empirical practical theological research is normative. According to Osmer (2008:4), the normative task is based on the question: What ought to be going on? The question is centred on the rules and norms of a certain practice. Osmer (2008:4) explains that normative task is raising questions that are in line with the subject concerned. For example, in this respect, questions are raised from the perspective of practical theology and psychology counselling. The normative task helps us to bring to the fore what is supposed to be done according to each field. This is very important for us to act within the given boundaries of the subject area though it is interdisciplinary.

The fourth and final task of Osmer (2008:4) is pragmatic. We may understand the pragmatic task as the practice in the given context. The question that guides the pragmatic task is: How might we respond? According to Osmer (2008:4), a pragmatic task is forming an action plan and undertaking specific responses that seek to shape the episodes, situation, or context in desirable directions. This task is put into consideration in this study when we come up with theories that can assist in the practice of the Sacrament of confession in the church.

In one of his presentations, Osmer (2009) acknowledged that practical theological research before him had such descriptions of the four tasks in many various forms and he gave credit to other practical theologians who came before him.

As Osmer (2008:2) wrote extensively on practical theology as an empirical subject, there are other contemporary practical theologians or scholars we can mention who have relevant material for our study especially considering the main stream of practical theology as an empirical research that combines praxis and theory. For example, Dreyer (2008:1) expounded on practical theology and human well-being. He gave an exploration of a multidimensional model of human action as a conceptual frame work of practical theology within the context of South Africa. We are exploring the Sacrament of Confession as human action as a conceptual framework within the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. The aspect of human action within a context is well appreciated as important for our study. In the same vein Browning (1994) contributed widely on practical theology and pastoral care. Don Browning (1991:46) propounded a philosophy for a fundamental practical theology. His position can be recognised in theologies about Christian practices (cf Dykstra 1999). We concur with Don Browning on the aspect of Christian practices. The Sacrament of Confession is a Christian practice that needs to be examined as a Christian practice.

It is worthwhile to mention Dames (2014:1) who wrote on a contextual transformative practical theology in South Africa. His argument informs our study about practical theology that applies in various contexts, be it in modern or postmodern times or in different situations or environments of our societies. The context in which our study is conducted touches the spirituality and religious practices of parishioners and priests in their own context of Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. Another scholar in practical theology who has relevant material for us is Hestenes (2012:1) who contributed immensely in practical theology when he wrote about Browning on pastoral care in a pluralistic age and the method of practical moral inquiry. He gave a scope and critical reflective method for pastoral care and

counselling through which theology and the social sciences mutually correlate and inform one another (Hestenes (2012:1). The aspects of pastoral care and counselling give a focus of our study. Though we may differ in scope, we share the same framework of practical theology which has a specialty in pastoral care and counselling. Other practical theological giants we can discuss are the likes of Heitink (1993:132) who argued the position of practical theology as having the background of crisis in the church and theology. In this respect practical theology was established to bridge the gap between theory and praxis.

Our epistemological development proceeds from Van der Ven (1993:41) who argues that empirical theology correlates with scientific research in an academic context and he emphasises the importance of praxis of the church and pastoral care in a cultural and social context. He defines the church and pastoral praxis as a hermeneutic-communicative praxis. Accordingly, the Sacrament of Confession functions within a concrete church and societal praxis in terms of the religious experiences and understanding of believers (Van der Ven 1993:41). ” There are members of the Church community who do not seem to partake in or value the Sacrament of Confession anymore probably due to modernity, technology and democratic freedom of association or political grounds and cultural practices.

Van der Ven’s (1993:20) empirical approach offers practical theology methods and tools to describe and explain the actual lives of actual people; to analyse and evaluate the texts these people use in their religious experiences; to explore and validate the interpretations of these experiences; and to investigate the hypotheses formulated regarding these experiences and texts and contexts. In practical theology, the key theory of empirical theology is hermeneutic-communicative praxis. The praxis of practical theology studies is the framework of the coming Kingdom of God. However, we may need to know the weakness in Van der Ven’s (1993) approach that his focus was on quantitative and not qualitative research. Our study is qualitative theological approach. It is argued that Van der Ven does not address theories for practice, for example homiletical, pastoral and Christian education, which is generally required for practical theological studies (Pieterse 1994:81). Unlike Van der Ven’s focus on quantitative research methods this research being inspired by Osmer’s (2008) practical theological hermeneutics and other theologians who concurred with him, we adapt Hermans’ qualitative narrative approach; where Hermans (2013) explored narratives of the self in the study of religion. He also discussed extensively on the epistemological reflections based on pragmatic notion of weak rationality. Hermans took note of lived stories or narratives of

religious experiences. He concurs with the other theologians in the afore-mentioned texts of this study.

Furthermore, as it is reviewed by other scholars, practical theology is a reflection on the faith actions of Church members who participate actively, for example, in the liturgical functions of the Church. This includes the exploration of human experience and reflection on the complex dynamics of the human encounter with God (Swinton & Mowat 2007:4). In this case, the Sacrament of Confession (which is the focus of this study) is part of the human experience that derives from worshipping God. Hence, it is argued that the Sacrament of Confession is a core element of practical theology. Through practical theology, believers and theologians can reflect on the acts of God as the Creator and human beings as creatures of God who were created in his own image. The essential three persons of God (namely God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) are emphasised in practical theology. However, this is not a set of propositions but rather factors that are embedded in a community whereby believers are shaped (Hauer 2005; Swinton & Mowat 2007:4).

In addition, practical theology that embodies the Sacrament of Confession adopts the idea of faith actions and explores the nature and faithfulness of people. The ideas of their faith actions are essential in practical theology. It is through the faith actions of parishioners that the Sacrament of Confession is used in our Churches for reconciliation and for the forgiveness of sins. In order for the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession to take shape, the clergy and committed parishioners are required to remind people about practical theological rituals and practices to encourage them to rebuild their faith actions. However, human beings freely exercise their choices and can change in any manner. As performers in their worship, human beings have the scope of improvisation to innovate their faith actions. Sometimes improvisation can bring to the fore new, hidden and forgotten aspects of the original text of the gospel. This is why there is a need that practical theologians reflect on and guide the faith actions of human beings.

It is argued further that practical theology recognises and respects the diversity of interpretation within the various expositions of the performed gospel. This is necessary to ensure that Christian communities remain faithful to God and practise faithfully the gospel teachings as their life narratives unfold. Practical theology therefore finds itself in the uneasy but critical tension between context, scripture, doctrine and tradition. The Sacrament of

Confession promotes the continuing innovative performance of the gospel as it is embodied and enacted in the life and practices of the Church as it interacts with the life and practices of the world (Swinton & Mowat 2007:5).

Practical theology informs and develops the Sacrament of Confession as human experience that draws people closer to God and motivates them, especially in the practice of worship. It has been argued already that one of the things that distinguish practical theology from other theological disciplines is its focus on human experience. However, taking human experience seriously does not imply that it is a source of revelation. Experience and human reason cannot lead us to an understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. Rather, in taking human experience seriously, practical theology acknowledges and seeks to explore the implications of the proposition that faith is a performative and embodied act. In this line of thought, the practice of the Sacrament of Confession is enlightened by the gospel. It follows that the gospel is not simply something to be believed, but also something to be lived. Therefore, in this study, the Sacrament of Confession refers to human experience where the gospel is grounded, embodied, interpreted and lived (Swinton & Mowat 2007:5).

This assertion has its basis in practical theology that forms an interpretive context which raises new questions, offers changes, and demands answers from the gospel and lived experience that are not always obvious when reflected in abstraction. It follows that the Sacrament of Confession, as human experience, is presumed to be an important locus. As such, it holds much relevance for the continuing task of interpreting scripture and tradition as well as developing human understanding and practising theology. Although the Sacrament of Confession is human experience, it is also about theological reflection within the human experience about life with God rather than an abstraction of such an experience. This is why it is argued that practical theology takes seriously the actions of God in the present and offers a contextual voice for the process of theological development (Swinton & Mowat 2007:6). With this background, we can proceed to define practical theology in different contexts.

Practical theology is a critical theological reflection on the practices of the Church, for example the Sacrament of Confession, as they interact with the practices of the world. Hence the purpose of this interaction is to ensure and to enable faithful participation of believers in God's redemptive practices to the people in the world (Swinton & Mowat 2007:6). The words "theological reflection on the practices of the Church" affirms why we seek a practical

theological framework for the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession as a Church practice. The following propositions can help us understand what practical theology entails.

2.2.1 The scope of practical theology

Practical theology as a critical enquiry of faith actions alludes to practices like the Sacrament of Confession and other Church functions performed by Christian communities. Such practices are meaningful and require honest critical reflection in order to align them with practical theology. This perception contrasts the models according to which practical theology is viewed as applied theology. It is argued that the task of applied theology is simply to apply the doctrine worked out in other theological disciplines to practical situations. Contrary to this statement, practical theology is viewed as a critical discipline that is prepared to challenge accepted assumptions, faith actions and practices of human experiences. Through human experience, the recognition of questions that human beings ask of scripture and theological traditions always emerges from the solitude of academics. In the same vein, the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession as human experience needs practical and critical thinking. By asking different questions, the practical theologian begins to understand the script differently and pushes towards modes of theological understanding and practical actions that enable faithful living. It follows that the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is a practical and critical theological reflection action.

The preceding argument affirms that practical theology is mainly a theological reflection on faith actions and human experience. However, one of the criticisms against practical theology is that at times it has lost sight of its theological roots. The way in which it has utilised other sources of knowledge, such as the social sciences, has tended to push its primary theological task into the background. This criticism is outweighed by the fact that the Sacrament of Confession, as the focus of this study, is a particular theological reflection as well as a subject of therapy in the social sciences. It is undisputable that reflections on the Sacrament of Confession can challenge academic spheres and Church circles in search of answers to the questions of human life. Hence the locus of investigation for practical theology in this study is more than the practices of the Church and the experiences of Christians. In this case, the Sacrament of Confession embraces Church activities and the social and cultural practices. Practical theological reflection embraces the human practices of the whole world. It follows that a practical theologian has to explore the interplay between the two sets of practices,

divine and secular (Swinton & Mowat 2007:6). However, the divine actions of Christians are celebrations and attestations of God's reconciling work in the world, which begins and ends in Jesus Christ. The relationship between these actions and the actions of non-Christians is one of both similarity and difference. The similarity is that all human actions both participate in and fall short of the purposes of God. The difference is that those who profess their faith and adhere to their membership of the Church have been called to make explicit the celebration of God's work (Forrester 1990:16).

The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession intervenes where the humanity of people's lives in a world created by God is being compromised. Human beings live as God's creation and implicitly or explicitly participate in the unfolding historical narrative of God. The practices of the Church cannot be understood as ontologically separate or different from the practices of the world. Both occur within God's creation and both are caught up in God's redemptive movement towards the world. However, within creation, there are profoundly fallen and broken human beings who are involved in Church practices. There is therefore a significant similarity and continuity between the practices of the Church and those of the world (Swinton & Mowat 2007:12). However, there is a radical dissimilarity and discontinuity between Church practices and that of the world. The Church differs from the world in that it notices and seeks to live out the significance of residing in a world which is recognised as the creation of God. People should bear in mind that they are residents in a place that is not their own. The reason why the Sacrament of Confession plays an important role is its affirmation of the need of redemption for human beings. The difference between the Church and the world lies in the fact that the Church recognises who Jesus is and seeks to live its life in the light of this revelation and the world does not. However, the Church's acknowledgement of creation and redemption in Christ has radical implications. It means that the Church's practices, which seek faithfully to embody the aforementioned acknowledgment, have radically different meanings and a significantly different goal or "*telos*" (Swinton & Mowat 2007:12).

The primary task of practical theology as a framework for the Sacrament of Confession is to ensure and enable faithful practices among Christians so that they can participate in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. In this line of thinking, Ackermann and Bons-Storm (1998) define practical theology as a theological discipline that is essentially involved in living, communicating and practising the life of faith. It follows that the Sacrament of Confession as

part of practical theology has a particular goal to enable faithful living and authentic Christian practice. Practical theology has a goal (*telos*) that transcends the boundaries of human experience and expectation. While at one level it certainly begins with and takes seriously human experience, that experience is neither the goal nor the end point of its reflection. Rather, the goal and end point of practical theology is to ensure, encourage and enable faithful participation in the continuing gospel narrative. The reason why parishioners should go to confession is that they have paid heed to the gospel message of reconciliation with God and with one another.

2.2.2 In search of truth

Practical theology as a framework for the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession takes seriously the gospel message in relation to human practices. This is why this study is based on this framework. It seeks to reveal and reflect on the intricate and diverse, but complementary, meanings of Christian practices and to enable faithful presence and action (Swinton & Mowat 2007:12).

In the following paragraphs, the element of truth in practical theology as a guiding principle to the Sacrament of Confession is discussed. This does not imply that the practical theologian is infallible. Instead, it means that the practical theologian can also miss the truthful facts and make omissions or unexpected errors in theology. However, he or she takes seriously the reality of sin, the need for redemption, and the inevitable uncertainty and fickleness of human knowledge and understanding. It is justifiable that we discuss the Sacrament of Confession as a Christian practice that has its truths in the traditional Church practice. Practical theology approaches this as a task of self-reflection, with a hermeneutic intervention. This means that the study gives room for theological reflections and includes different theoretical approaches. Nevertheless, the practical theologian assumes the reality of truth and the possibility of moving towards it. One can easily ascertain that practical theology is fundamentally concerned with the discernment of truth (Forrester 2000:15).

In this study, the truth of the Sacrament of Confession is enlightened by the Christian doctrine which exhorts us to live as a reconciled family of God. The refusal to take this aspect of truth seriously leads to a practice that is ill considered and dangerously responsive to the pressures of the powerful and the opportunistic. Practical theology as a branch of theology

becomes concerned with questions of truth in relation to human action. The crux of the matter is that practical theology is taken as the framework for the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession because it points to reciprocity between theory and practice. The Sacrament of Confession is not only theory but practice. Hence, this is where theological understanding not only leads to action, but also arises from practice and involvement in the life of the world towards the divine life. This is confirmed by the statement: “He who does what is true comes to the light,” (John 3:21) practical theology is therefore concerned with the doing of truth and with the search for truth in action (Forrester 2000:16).

Furthermore, after affirming truth in action, practical theology takes seriously the reality of that truth and the importance of normativity. This means that there are norms and precepts that have to be followed properly. In this case, the practice of the Sacrament of Confession is done under the guidance of priests who follow certain principles of the Christian doctrine in the Catholic Church. It is therefore the task of practical theology to explore the meaningful implications of the performance of the Sacrament of Confession as a pastoral practice.

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, theological reflection is the starting point of practical theology that is centred on human experience – in this case, the Sacrament of Confession. However, God and the revelation that he has made to human beings in Christ is the true starting point for all practical theology. It is in taking seriously the human responses that practical theology finds its reflective position and carves out an important position within the wider theological enterprise (Swinton & Mowat 2007:12).

In the following paragraph, the theological interpretation of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is discussed.

2.2.3 A theological perspective

Systematic theology can be understood as the interpreter of the doctrine and tradition, and biblical studies as the interpreter of the sacred scripture of the Christian faith. Practical theology is that aspect of the practices of the Church and world that functions as an on-going source of theological interpretation and understanding. The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is thus seen as theoretical enquiry in so far that it seeks to understand the Christian practice of this sacrament. It is also important to observe that practical theology is

there to evaluate, to criticise and to look at the relationship between what is done and what is said or professed in the Sacrament of Confession. At the same time, practical theology is a deeply practical discipline which does not only seek to understand the significance of the practice of the Sacrament of Confession, but also recognises as a primary goal the guiding and transforming function of future practices that will inform and shape the life of faith communities (Forrester 2000:15).

Lived faith, as observed in this study, is to practise the Sacrament of Confession as it is encouraged by Church tradition. At the same time, the on-going hermeneutical task of a practical theologian is to relate the forms of practice of the Sacrament of Confession carried out within scripture and tradition with a view to enable faithful practice. This hermeneutical task necessitates the practices of the Church through the development of effective reconciling and healing techniques. A careful theological exegesis of the Sacrament of Confession practices and experiences should emerge from different situations that are explored. In this chapter, the implications and details of developing an understanding of practical theology emerge from the discussion and reflection on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession, pastoral care and counselling which feed into practical theology with specialisation in pastoral therapy that is particularly important for the purpose of this study (Forrester 2000:15).

Based on experience, practical theology offers fragments and themes that emerge from particular situations and contexts. For example, the Sacrament of Confession is usually practised in the Church's confessional boxes or outside the Church at a secluded place. It is through practical theology that language, themes and patterns are used rather than systems and universal concepts. The language that is used in the Sacrament of Confession is that of accusing oneself of the sins one has committed. Its purpose is to draw us into the divine mystery by providing reflective experiences that enable us to re-imagine the world and our place within it. The language or grammar in practical theology eases people into new places and opens them up to different possibilities of Church practices that re-unites them with God (Forrester 2000:15). Furthermore, the fragments of theological truth challenge us to see the world differently and help us make sense of a world which is itself deeply fragmented. It is, however, important to recognise that these fragments are deeply connected with and crucial to a wider system of theological knowledge. The aspects of love, peace and reconciliation are fragments of the Sacrament of Confession. These aspects or elements of the Church interlink

with other disciplines that help Church members to grow spiritually. Hence, there is a necessity and potentiality of constructive conversation between practical theology and the other theological disciplines. However, the fragments and perspectives that are offered by practical theology may challenge and disturb certain accepted understandings and assumptions of human actions. This critical and prophetic role of practical theology in relation to the internal conversation between the theological disciplines is a vital dimension of practical theology's dialogical focus on enabling faithful practice in the Church (Swinton & Mowat 2007:13). However, practical theology should be able to handle complex situations that are brought about by different fragments of human practice.

Practical theology seeks critically to complexify and explore situations. To complexify is to take something that at first glance appears normal and uncomplicated and, through the process of critical reflection at various levels, reveal that it is actually complex (Swinton & Mowat 2007:13). The Sacrament of Confession seems to be easy to deal with at first glance but when it deals with the problem of suffering and sin, it becomes complex. The significance of complexifying and interpreting situations is important for practical theology and theology in general. One of the most persistent criticisms of academic theology is that rather than encouraging faith, it can create significant distancing from the life of faith. This study was aimed at exploring the meaning, emotions and spirituality of the Sacrament of Confession. It is important to realise that the questions asked of scripture and traditions from within academia are often quite different from the questions asked by a Christian community.

2.2.4 Practical theology in context

Theologians who do not take cognisance of the importance of contextual questions often fail in significant ways to address the needs and situations that are of vital significance to the people of God. In this way, the interpretive activity of the Christian community in the world is subsumed to the distanced presumptions of academic questioning. When this happens, it is easy to forget that faith exists in specific situations within which the gospel is embodied, interpreted, shaped and performed. To omit this situational dynamic interpretative questioning, which is of great importance, is a serious mistake (Farley 1983, Swinton & Mowat 2007:13). We concur with the aforementioned statement of Farley and his contemporaries. Furthermore, according to the traditional approach, theology is involved in interpretation but the object of interpretation is the historical texts. For example, what

motivates people to make use of the Sacrament of Confession is a sense of guilt. Hence, believers and Church leaders do in fact interpret situations and culture, war, marriage, death and so on as enlightened by the gospel texts. They do so directly out of the tradition without passing through an inquiry which would uncover what is occurring when we interpret a situation theologically. We do thematize interpretation as it is directed to texts. Hence, we are at home in problems of historical method, exegesis and textual hermeneutics (Poling & Mudge 1987; Swinton & Mowat 2007:14).

According to Farley (1983), hermeneutics is a way of interpreting situations that are considered important theological activities. As such, remembering this forgotten dimension is an important contribution that practical theology can offer to the field of theology. When the Sacrament of Confession is interpreted within the context of the Church, new findings can result. This does not suggest that historical texts are unimportant. Dialoguing with historical texts and Christian tradition is an important dimension of practical theology. What is argued here is that the text of human experience in general and the experience of the Church in particular hold interpretative significance for theological development in our contemporary and local contexts. However, we cannot interpret anything unless we have knowledge of the situations we are in.

Situations are complex and multifaceted, which means they have to be examined with care, rigour and discernment if they are to be effectively understood (Farley 1983). The Sacrament of Confession takes place in the situation of relationships of human beings with God and with other human beings. Hence, it is a complex situation that requires both understanding of human beings and of their relationship with God. A thorough reflection is needed to make sense of people's religious interaction. Discerning the components of a situation like the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is not simply like taking a photograph, but more like having an assessment of its proper function. Such an assessment is an act of serious theological self-criticism. The components of a situation are always of different kinds, for example different genres, individual human beings, world views, groups of various sorts, the pressure of the past, futurity, various strata of language, writing, imagery, metaphors and myths. Reading a situation is the task of identifying genres and discerning how they together constitute a situation (Poling & Mudge 1987:1).

Situations are about cultures and histories that occur within particular contexts which often have their own traditions and expectations. They involve specific forms of practice that contain history, tradition, theology, social experiences and expectations. A number of people tend to live within situations which are unreflective and uncomplicated. By doing so, many of the aspects of their situations are experienced as unimportant because they are hidden. It is only when they engage in a process of complexification that the complicated nature of their situation emerges. Here complexification means that the situations that were not taken seriously before are critically examined. In the same way, the Sacrament of Confession has to be critically examined. It may result in unnatural self-reflection on previously hidden dimensions of everyday situations (Farley 1983; Swinton & Mowat 2007:16).

Knowledge gained from “complexifying” situations and reflecting on them theologically is not independent of the knowledge gained through theological reflection on scripture and tradition. Theological knowledge gained through exploration of situations of the Sacrament of Confession, which is the focus of this study, is gained in constant dialogue with scripture and tradition and should be put through the same rigorous processes of discernment and validation as other modes of theological reflection. As Farley (1983) and others argue, similar demands are placed on the believers’ interpretation of situations of ancient texts on doctrines (Farley 1983; Poling & Mudge 1987:1; Swinton & Mowat 2007:160). It is argued in this study that the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is a subject of practical theology that does not occur apart from critical dialogue with scripture and tradition. “Tradition” refers to the way people live in their own situations and govern themselves through certain principles of life. Hence, traditions both challenge and are constrained by the wisdom and revelation of scripture. Similarly, the task of other theological disciplines can never be complete without the scriptural enlightenment gained from situational interpretation.

2.2.5 Practice in practical theology

The aforementioned argument affirms the enabling and facilitating role of critical dialogue in this study which is central to the practical theological task. If practical theology is about critical theological reflection on confession as a practice that is carried out within particular situations, it is important to clarify what is meant by the term “practice”. The Sacrament of Confession is a Christian practice that is central to the belief that members in the Church are forgiven their sins if they confess to God and reconcile with one another. Thus we have used

the term “practice” as if it has a common meaning that is shared by all. The term “practice” means considerably more than what people do. This term is more complex and needs to be discussed further.

Practical theology is focused on the practices of ordained ministers and practising parishioners in the Church. For example, the practice of the Sacrament of Confession in the Church is an act of special devotion to God that enables Christian living, moral teaching, preaching, proper evangelisation and pastoral care of individuals. Historically, practical theology has been known to focus on the technical actions of the Church rather than its theological content and intent. Within this limited understanding, the term “practice” relates first and foremost to particular technical procedures that ministers/priests must learn in order to work effectively. The present understanding is that the practical theologian uses theology, biblical studies, and historical and philosophical studies to develop techniques for ministry. This forms the basis for applied theology, which some experts refer to as the model of practical theology.

Contrary to this idea, other theological disciplines are considered not inherently practical. Dykstra (2002) observes this when he writes that “practice means the application of theory to contemporary procedure”. This means that biblical studies, history, systematic theology, philosophy and ethics all become theoretical disciplines where practice has no intrinsic place (Dykstra 2002; Murphy 2003:163; Swinton & Mowat 2007). This inevitable split between theory and practice in theological disciplines makes practical theology the main practical discipline and other theological disciplines primarily theoretical. This is very relevant to this study and why the Sacrament of Confession falls under practical theology. However, the problem with this view is that other theological disciplines become de-souled because of lack of practice and are trapped in internal conversation that ultimately makes a difference only to a select group, with no necessary relevance for the Christian community or the continuing mission of God in history (Swinton & Mowat 2007:18). Such an understanding of practice leads to an individualistic, technological, historic and abstract view of practical theology.

With the insights gained from other sources of knowledge like the social sciences, the practical theologian is charged with the responsibility to develop specialised techniques that can be put in the service of God through the practices of ordained ministers/priests. This is why it is very relevant that the Sacrament of Confession has this discipline as its framework.

The theory–practice relationship is assumed to be analogous to the relationship between science and technology, with theology offering the theoretical content and ministry perceived as the locus for technological application (Dykstra, in Murphy 2003:166). Within such a framework of understanding, the authenticity of the Sacrament of Confession as a particular practice in the Church is determined not by anything inherent in the practice but rather by the effect that it has. The theological content, development and history of the Sacrament of Confession as a practice may be deemed insignificant by practical theology. What matters most is its pragmatic potential to produce positive results. Good results can only be obtained and defined by the positive effect of the practice. When people think of practice in this way, they automatically see someone doing something (Swinton & Mowat 2007:18).

The underlying assumption in this study is that the person who is doing something to and for others is the one who is engaged in the practice. For example, the person who partakes of the Sacrament of Confession by meeting with the confessor and later on reconciles with others is practising the sacrament. In the same way, the preacher, the teacher or the counsellor is the one who is focused on the practice; others are objects or recipients of practice (Dykstra, in Murphy 2003:165). Within this understanding, it is assumed that practice is something that individuals do to one another. The individual and the action that is carried out are assumed to have no necessary connection with the wider community, or the social and historical context, within which the practice emerges and is carried out. The development of actions which have practical outcomes that result in enabling people to do things well is itself a worthy goal. When the effect of the action is understood to be a goal and an end in itself, practices become separated from their historical and theological roots and begin to lose their true meaning, purpose and goal.

The understanding of the term “practice” which underpins practical theology is of a different nature. The technological approach to practice that is outlined above overlooks the crucial fact that all human practices are historically grounded and inherently value laden. Practices such as the Sacrament of Confession and prayer have their own particular theological meanings. As the study enquires about the efficacy and meaning of the Sacrament of Confession and its therapeutic value, it also reflects on the practice of worship. It is the same with social and theological histories that have implicit norms and moral expectations. The ways in which people practise activities and the forms of practice in which they participate are therefore filled with deep meaning, purpose and direction.

The Sacrament of Confession as a practice that people participate in is also theory laden. Browning (1983) notes that the theory-laden nature of practices rules out the widely held assumption is that theory is distinct from practice. Theory and practice exist together. All human practices, even religious ones like the Sacrament of Confession, have theories behind and within them. However, theories which are so embedded in practices may be taken for granted and viewed as natural and self-evident so that people never take time to abstract them from practice (Browning 1983:6). In this study, the underlying theory of the therapeutic efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession within the framework of practical theology therefore had to be abstracted.

A value-free form of practice does not exist. Whether or not people acknowledge it, all practices are underpinned by very particular theories and theologies. In a very real sense, belief lies within the act itself. This, of course, takes people back to the metaphor of the gospel as performance that was highlighted previously and the suggestion that theology and performance are inseparable. The practice is found to be performative of particular beliefs and, as such, is an appropriate subject for critical theological enquiry. The Sacrament of Confession, when complexified and reflected on theologically, might be found to be a mode of practice that can be filled with theological content (Swinton & Mowat 2007:20).

The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is considered one of the practices that contain values, beliefs, theologies and other assumptions which – for the best part – go unnoticed until they are complexified and are noticed through theological reflection. Importantly, the Sacrament of Confession is one of the practices that are a bearer of traditions and histories. The Sacrament of Confession is not just a simple individual action; rather it is one of the communal activities that have developed within communities over extended periods of time. Even though it may be manifested in particular instances, the Sacrament of Confession as a Christian practice is always related to particular communities within specific Roman Catholic traditions that give meaning, value and direction to people's lives. As a practice, the Sacrament of Confession has to be analysed in order to improve it. MacIntyre (1981:187) defines practice as “any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve standards of excellence”. Standards of excellence are appropriate and partially definitive in forming human activities with the power to achieve excellence (MacIntyre 1981:187).

This definition is helpful in that it indicates the social and communal dimensions of the Sacrament of Confession as a practice, the significance of its internal values, in-built norms, excellences and the necessities for communal action that have to be actualised. A practice, then, (as Forrester [2000:6] argues) is not an isolated matter but takes place in fellowship and solidarity with others. The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is that it functions as a religious community practice. This is supported by Dykstra and Bass (2002), who point out that practices that are specifically Christian has a normative element which is crucial for Christian formation and faithful living.

Practices are the constituent elements of life that become incarnate when human beings live in the light of God's gift of life. Thus, when people refer to Christian practices, they have something normative and theological in mind. Each element presumes that Christian practices are set in a world created and sustained by a just and merciful God, who is now in the midst of reconciling this world through Christ. Christian practices address the needs that are basic to human existence as such, and they do so in ways that reflect God's purposes for humankind. When people participate in Christian practices such as the Sacrament of Confession, they are taking part in God's work of creation and they grow into a deeper knowledge of God's redemptive acts (Swinton & Mowat 2007:22; Dykstra & Bass 2002). The key theory is not that the practice of confession brings particular benefits to individuals or communities. The fact is that the Sacrament of Confession bears faithful witness to God from whom the practice emerges, and whom it reflects, and that it enables individuals and communities to participate faithfully in Christ's redemptive mission. Thus the efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession is not defined pragmatically by its ability to fulfil particular human needs, but by whether it participates faithfully in the divine redemptive mission (Swinton & Mowat 2007:22).

As mentioned above, the understanding of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is very different from the technique-oriented approach which has typified some aspects of the development of practical theology. According to Shuman and Meador (2003:91), techniques are forms of action which are expected to produce specific objective results that are external and instrumental to the actions, without respect to their rootedness in particular ways of life. Practices may produce goods that are external to the action, but that is not their primary point. The Sacrament of Confession is one of the Christian practices that are aimed explicitly at Christian ways of life in which they are embedded. This cannot be said of techniques,

because a technique does not require to be embedded in a way of life (Shuman & Meador 2003:91). Practices occur in situations and are therefore central to the type of theological reflection on situations that has already been discussed in this study. Reflection on the Sacrament of Confession as a Christian practice reveals deep meanings about the nature, purpose and intentions of the actions, notwithstanding the assumption that particular individuals or communities are involved irrespective of whether they are religious or not (Shuman & Meador 2003:91; Swinton & Mowat 2007:22).

The Sacrament of Confession, as the human and divine practice outlined so far, is clearly rooted within the Christian tradition. To call something Christian is to make the assumption that the activities that are described relate to a particular theological framework, a specific historical narrative-set of moral, ethical and metaphysical assumptions. All Christian practices emerge from reflection on and interpretations of the nature and purposes of the practices of God in history. People learn how to practise faithfully as they participate in and reflect upon what Forrester (2000:9) describes as follows: “the Bible speaks of a God who acts, creating, sustaining and redeeming, a God who gives the law to his people and enjoins them to be perfect as He is perfect – and that involves acting in the style or manner that God acts.” This is not the remote, apathetic god of the stoics or the deists, who is a detached lawgiver, but a God who is involved (Forrester 2000:8).

It is in enabling people to learn and participate in the communicative practices of Jesus and the continuing quest to perform them faithfully that the Sacrament of Confession as an element of practical theology finds its focus and goal. This wider theological context for enabling faithful practice is important. All human practices emerge from and seek to participate in the wider practices of God (Forrester 2000:8). Mudge & Poling (1987:61) asserts that God is not only the ultimate end but also the primary source from which all historical action, consciousness and reflection arise. The reason why the world is the arena of God’s saving activity makes human history the primary locus and the point of departure and arrival for all rational discourse about God. Theology must arise from and return to the locus of God’s universal activity – the world.

Mudge & Poling (1987:61) point to the fact that it is the reconciliatory practice of God in history as it is constituted through human praxis. This is the dynamic ground which drives the reflective, prophetic and critical dimensions of the discipline of practical theology. One of the

primary tasks of the practical theologian is to ensure that the practices of the Church remain faithful to the practices and mission of God as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his continuing redemptive practices. The Sacrament of Confession, as one of the Christian practices, must always be understood within the context of the Church and the reign of God rather than in narrowly individualistic terms (Forrester 2000:9). The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is a reflection of the Church's attempts to participate faithfully in the continuing practices of the triune God's redemptive mission to the world. One of the critical tasks of practical theology is to recognise distorted human practices and to call the Church back to the theological significance of its ministry practices and enable it to engage faithfully with the mission of God.

As stated above, practical theology is a critical theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God. It focuses on truth, development and maintenance of the faithful and transformative practice of God in the world. There is no doubt that the Sacrament of Confession is part of practical theology as part of God's mission that seeks to reflect critically and theologically on situations to provide insights and strategies which will enable movement towards faithful change. Practical theology mediates the relationship between Christian traditions (like the Sacrament of Confession) and the specific problems and challenges of the contemporary social context and parishioners in particular. It moves from practice to reflection on practice and back to practice. A dynamic movement is carried out in the light of the Christian tradition and other sources of knowledge, and is aimed at feeding back into tradition and the practice of the Church. It is the mandate of practical theology to seek to examine theories and assumptions that underlie current forms of practice and to contribute to the development and reshaping of new theories, which are then fed into the practices of the Church and the world. It is an interpretive discipline that offers new and challenging insights into Christian tradition in the light of fresh questions which emerge from particular situations. The aim of practical theology is to enable personal and communal "*phronesis*", which – according to Fowler (1995:7) – is a form of practical wisdom that combines theory and practice in the praxis of the faith actions of individuals and communities.

Finally, practical theology is a fundamental discipline which has motivation and dynamism in working out what it means to participate faithfully in God's mission. Close to experience, practical theology understands particular situations like the Sacrament of Confession within a

wider, overarching context of God's on-going mission of redemption to the world. This mission provides a critical hermeneutic guide to the practical theologian.

We have discussed the Sacrament of Confession within different contexts of practical theology with the exception of the different levels of the pastoral field. However, this study is incomplete if the Sacrament of Confession is not discussed in relation to these different levels of the pastoral field which link with pastoral therapy. After having given the background and meaning of practical theology, what follows is the pastoral field in which the Sacrament of Confession is practised. In the following section, the action field of pastoral work (with different levels in which the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is rooted) is discussed.

2.3 PASTORAL FIELD

The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is linked to the disciplines of mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy, which are different levels in the pastoral field of practical theology.

The aforementioned concepts of practical theology relate to the Sacrament of Confession because they are all variables in the pastoral field. The different levels of pastoral care are illustrated by the following diagram of the action field of pastoral work which has been adapted from Van Arkel (2005:14).

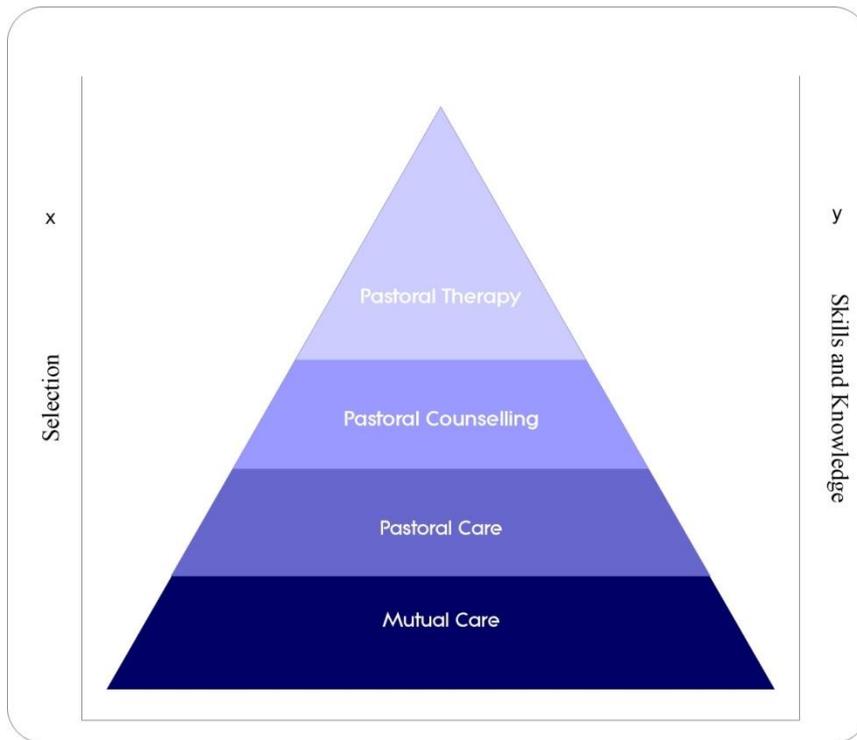


Figure 2 : The action field of pastoral work

2.3.1 Mutual care

Mutual care is the primary practice of pastoral work, the most basic and probably the most important area of the pastoral field when Church members care for each other (Van Arkel 2005). Through mutual care, the gospel is concretised in specific situations by means of dialogical caring actions. In the exercise of mutual care, love for one another becomes the essence that is realised in simplicity and spontaneity. According to Van Arkel (2005:14), mutual care is the personal, loving, dialogic concern of one person for another. Van der Geest (1983:197) explains that mutual care includes every bit of listening, empathy, understanding, encouragement and comfort whereby one person helps another. The Sacrament of Confession is also an appropriate element of mutual care because it emphasises aspects of listening, empathy, understanding, encouragement and love for one another. Zerfass (1988) conceives of mutual care as Christian hospitality (*philozenia*), which literally means love of the alien residents. To link this with the aforementioned statement, one can say that mutual care is love that is shared among people. The word “mutual” implies reciprocity. Campbell (1985:11) emphasises the aspect of reciprocity by arguing that the goal of pastoral care is to help people to know love as something that is both given and received. In this way, every caring situation is marked by reciprocal responsibility and reciprocal need. This is what the Sacrament of

Confession entails; it emphasises reciprocity. According to Furet (1986:76), mutual care is a communion of interdependence: “While consoling, I know that I also need to be consoled; while exhorting, I am opening myself to exhortation; while encouraging you today, I need your encouragement and realise that I will have to be encouraged tomorrow.”

Buber (1958:134) refers to the reciprocal nature of care as an “I–thou” relationship. This concept relates very well with the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession as members of the Church are encouraged to have mutual dialogue. True reciprocity requires equality in the relationship and this is found in mutual care. In mutual care, the giver of care is not better than the receiver; mutuality and reciprocity put both persons on the same level, where they can care for one another spontaneously and without arrogance.

In affirming mutual care, Zerfass (1988:26) reiterates that Christian hospitality is the essence of pastoral care. It is a partnership like the balance between give and take, and between host and guest. In the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession, it is a sin of omission if someone does not exercise hospitality. In the African tradition, extensive care that reflects hospitality is exercised. Nwachuku (1984:64) argues that the traditional African helping systems like the extended family, the head, a parent, a family friend or family gatherings are good examples of mutual care.

The next (second) level of care or pastoral word is pastoral care.

2.3.2 Pastoral care

Pastoral care is the dialogical caring of the people of God. This dialogical care links appropriately with the Sacrament of Confession in that spiritual direction is given to the penitent. Van Arkel (2005:32) argues that pastoral care requires more expertise than mutual care because it is the heart of all care. Whereas mutual care is primarily spontaneous, supportive and caring action, pastoral care takes a middle position between mutual care and pastoral counselling. It is part of the official building up and nurturing of the people of God who form the congregation. There is some selectivity in terms of the people who do this kind of work. Pastoral care links properly with the Sacrament of Confession, because those who conduct the sacrament are ordained ministers who have been trained on how to dialogue tactfully with the people who come for confession.

The constant visitation of Church members by elders and ordained ministers (like the deacons, priests and bishops) is part of pastoral care. Church ministers and elders visit their members regularly in order to encourage them to get closer to God and to come to Church regularly. In the same way, priests encourage their Church members to go for the Sacrament of Confession. They can also be available to people who are willing to confess their sins to a priest. By doing this, ministers or the clergy provide a ministry to their members of discerning how they live and pray. This is a caring ministry. Congregations can also develop programmes of visiting their members in a particular geographical area.

Heitink (1982:304) argues that pastoral care can be done in the form of visits on specific occasions, like visiting the sick and having regular official visits. Regular home visits are systematic in the sense that the pastor visits parishioners at their homes without any set theme like that of sickness, conversion and Church attendance. Pastoral care focuses on the ordinary lives of Church members. It is in a pastoral context that the pastor/priest tries to help people caringly to live as believers, reaching out to them in their personal and spiritual need (Lapsley 1985:246). Hulme (1981:9) affirms that pastoral care is a supportive ministry to Church members.

Although pastoral care has been described as the heart of all care, it is not well understood and does not have a very good theoretical base (Hiltner 1980:92; Van Arkel 2005:34). According to Van Arkel (2005), pastoral care has lost support in favour of professionalised pastoral counselling. However, Hiltner (1980:92) dealt with the under-emphasis of pastoral care and its role in the Church. Hiltner (1980:2) and Van Arkel (2005:34) argue that the priest/clergy did a lot of pre-counselling rather than proper counselling and should therefore take the former more seriously than the latter. However, the Sacrament of Confession as a Church practice has never been professionalised as in the case of pastoral care. It is a free gift given to Church members in order for them to reconcile with one another. The priests are engaged in giving spiritual direction to their parishioners as well as some form of counselling.

According to Van Arkel (2005:35), Clinebell (1966) – with his basic types of pastoral counselling – reduces every pastoral care activity to pastoral counselling, with the result that there is a differentiation between grief counselling and counselling of every kind of personal or family problem while pastoral care has largely disappeared. Browning (1983:10) is equally

critical of the reduction of pastoral care to pastoral counselling. Efforts were made to reinstate pastoral care within a strong moral, ecclesiastical context. This means that the pastor was empowered to relate judgements about how people should live in their contexts and situations (Browning 1983:10; Van Arkel 2005:35). This argument shows that pastoral care was once confused with pastoral counselling. The Sacrament of Confession, although it has a lot in common with pastoral care, has never been confused with pastoral counselling but it infuses pastoral counselling. This means that confession encompasses pastoral counselling and pastoral care practices.

Campbell (1985:43) views pastoral care as liberated by love and not necessarily by professionalism. Campbell notes how pastoral care has been distorted by professionalism and believes that this created inequality among believers. Professionalism, which is pastoral counselling according to Campbell (1985:47), is a kind of captivity that excludes both parties (the helper and the one who is receiving help) from the full potential of care. This entails lack of mutuality, mal-distribution of influence and power, intellectualism, neglect of a communal dimension and resistance to radical change. Pastoral care is a way of being which results in a richer way of doing (Campbell 1985:59; Van Arkel 2005:35). The Sacrament of Confession is also a way of being which cannot be professionalised in the sense that is argued above. The professional aspect only comes in on the part of ordained ministers who are trained to conduct the Sacrament of Confession in a standard way.

Pastoral care encompasses various elements, like building on historical insights, the theological aspect of pastoral care, new forms of pastoral care, lay pastoral care, selection and training, home visitation, group pastoral care, pastoral care of the sick, and pastoral care dialogue – which is not necessary to discuss in detail in this study (Van Arkel 2005:104). The study focuses on laying a foundation for pastoral work in which the Sacrament of Confession is a primary concern. From the brief discussion about pastoral care, it is necessary to review pastoral counselling because it is a constituent of psychological counselling. Psychological counselling is done in the context of pastoral work and has to be discussed before discussing pastoral therapy, which some scholars refer to as a field of specialisation. This study concurs with scholars who argue that pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy are specialisation areas. Hence, they relate well with the Sacrament of Confession as a healing ministry, except in their understanding of professionalization – which may demand some remuneration. The

Sacrament of Confession is pastoral charity, which includes mutual care, pastoral care and pastoral counselling.

2.3.3 Pastoral counselling

Pastoral counselling is the third level of care. It is a more intensive and structured form of care than mutual care and pastoral care. As a professional paradigm, pastoral counselling includes some kind of agreement and ethical norms for seeking help (Van Arkel 2005:107). Pastoral counselling functions at the same entry level as other helping professions and use healing methods to help people handle their problems and difficult situations more constructively. It offers scientific techniques (like all other behavioural approaches in counselling), but there is a fundamental difference which is expressed in the word “pastoral” because it is considered by practical theological scholars to be a ministry of availability (Van Arkel 2005:107). Pastoral counselling, therefore, concurs appropriately with the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession. However, there is a need to enrich the Sacrament of Confession with scientific techniques that can assist Church members who come to confession more positively amidst existential problems. There is a need that new strategies are adopted for the Sacrament of Confession in order to help Church members more effectively with the Sacrament of Confession.

This ministry of availability is a form of contextual caring and helping that integrates theology/religion/faith with insights from the behavioural sciences. Only professional pastors/priests in the field of counselling who have specialised knowledge of theology qualify to be pastoral counsellors. This implies that professional pastors/priests who are qualified in both theology and counselling models that are relevant to a congregational setting are pastoral counsellors. According to Van Arkel (2005:107), the forms of pastoral counselling tend to fall into categories of brief, short-term, solution-focused and narrative counselling. Pastoral counselling works within a theological framework. The Sacrament of Confession, though it works in a practical theological context, needs to be appraised with pastoral counselling concepts to fulfil its pastoral role more efficiently.

According to Stone (1996:16), pastoral counselling is a caring action that is directed at individuals, couples, families and groups who are experiencing serious problems with themselves and in their relationships with others and with God. Pastoral counselling deals

with problems that threaten their spiritual and emotional resources (Van Arkel 2005:108; Stone 1996:16). Through pastoral counselling, people are helped to realise their potential to use their opportunities and to make responsible decisions within their living contexts. This argument affirms that the elements of pastoral counselling can be adopted for the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in dealing with Church members who experience problems with their relationships with one another and with God.

Another distinctive feature of pastoral counselling is that its context is the Christian community. It mainly functions in relation to the community of faith in which the pastoral counsellor operates as a reference group of clients. In other words, the pastor/priest who does the counselling comes from the group of believers and represents that community (Van Arkel 2005:108). In the same way, the priest who conducts the Sacrament of Confession comes from the community of believers.

However, pastors/priests need pastoral counselling as a necessity for dealing with the problems of the community of believers. Oates (1959: VI) wrote:

The pastor, regardless of his training, does not enjoy the privilege of electing whether or not he will counsel with his people. They inevitably bring their problems to him for his best guidance and wisest care. He cannot avoid this if he stays in the pastoral ministry. His choice is not between counselling and not counselling, but between counselling in a disciplined and skilled way and counselling in an undisciplined and unskilled way.

It follows that a priest should be well versed in counselling skills, even during the Sacrament of Confession. There is a time of counselling during the Sacrament of Confession after the penitent confesses his or her sins. A priest who is a pastoral counsellor can be a better confessor.

Van Arkel (2005:108) concurs with Oates (1959: VI) that pastoral counselling requires discipline and the necessary skills for effective dealing with given problems as the role and function of an average pastor. Through the face-to-face encounter with desperate persons, the pastor/priest as the minister of reconciliation has a widened and deepened channel for

communication of the gospel of Christ to those who experience problems. Capps (1998:viii) emphasises the essence of pastoral counselling in the life of the congregation by arguing that pastoral counselling responds to a fundamental human need to give systematic constructive attention to the ways in which individuals tell their stories in order to develop new and more fulfilling life stories. He links the narrative theme with the innovative forms of counselling that are emerging from the brief-therapy movement to provide a flexible, short-term form of pastoral counselling that is suited to congregational pastoral counselling (Capps 1998: viii; Van Arkel 2005:109).

(1) *The context of pastoral counselling*

Sharp (1999:71) argues that the context of pastoral counselling is the ministry of the Church. Hiltner and Colston (1961:7) affirm that besides pastoral counselling, the pastor has several functions (like preaching, instruction and celebration of sacraments). The minister's central task is to bring men and women of God into conscious acknowledgement of their dependence upon Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, aiding them in that faith to live Christian lives. With the Sacrament of Confession, the priest's central task is to listen to the penitent and absolve him or her from his or her sins. There is a coherent relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and pastoral counselling; there is an interrelationship and a measure of overlapping between pastoral counselling and other forms of ministry (Van Arkel 2005:112; Patton 1990: 850).

According to the AAPC (2000:71), a pastoral counsellor should be an ordained minister who is practising in a Christian congregation. A pastoral counsellor has to be a person who has been authorised by a religious endorsing body through ordination, consecration or equivalent as determined by the person's religious authority to exercise specific religious leadership and service within the congregation. In the same way, the one who conducts the Sacrament of Confession is an ordained priest with the faculties granted to him of hearing confession. Before ordination, a priest is examined first through given cases that may arise during the Sacrament of Confession. The ordination aspect is also emphasised by Patton (1990:849), who says that a pastoral counsellor should be committed to an education for religious ministry in an appropriate setting and accountable to a religious community.

However, people are still debating whether pastoral counselling should only be confined to pastors in institutional churches or should be given to congregation members who are not ordained. In accordance with this line of thinking, the AAPC (2000:72) link pastoral counselling to the ministry and to the faith communities who endorse ministers. Over the years, they have demanded that pastoral counsellors should be in good standing with religious endorsing bodies that certify them as ministers and should maintain a continuing responsible relationship with their local religious communities (Van Arkel 2005:113; Clinebell 1964:18; AAPC 2000:72; Van Arkel 2000:105). Similarly, the Sacrament of Confession is only reserved for priests in the Catholic Church who are in good standing with their local bishops and who have full priesthood.

Pastoral counsellors therefore practise their counselling in Christian communities or “*ekklesia*”. Greider, Johnston and Leslie (1999:23), in their discussion on pastoral theology, define “*ekklesia*” as the biblically promised human community of God that is infused with justice and love. Pastoral counsellors work in and with a community through all the intersections of human existence: the ordinary and the ecstatic, birth and death, celebration and pain, public and private, and past and future. The priests who exercise the Sacrament of Confession visit people in their main parishes, missions and small outstations. Priests can also conduct confessions in small Christian communities when they celebrate Holy Mass with Church members.

(2) *A form of pastoral work*

The distinctive character of pastoral counselling are derived from pastoral work. It is in the field of pastoral work that all other caring actions, like mutual care and pastoral care, are performed. Holifield (1983:12) emphasises the need to treat all fields of pastoral work as equal. Each pastoral field can be developed in its own right without any infighting or usurpation of the entire field by one branch at the expense of the others. No pastoral field is inferior to any other or has to play a subordinate role (Van Arkel 2005:115; Holifield 1983:12). The Sacrament of Confession can also work without any conflict with mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. The only difference could be that the Sacrament of Confession cannot be in the aforementioned disciplines. This does not mean that the disciplines are inferior to the Sacrament of Confession because of the unique and sacramental nature of confession. The Sacrament of Confession, mutual care, pastoral care,

pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy can be conducted by the same person – an ordained priest who exercises the ministry of availability to the people of God.

Patton (1993:213) describes pastoral counselling as a ministry of availability and introduction. Its essence is the pastor's availability and that of helping persons to make connections with other caregivers. The idea of introduction is brought by Oates (1982:262 & 263), who refers to the pastor as someone who reveals Christ through the Holy Spirit and in turn introduces people to God.

The term "availability" means that a pastor is accessible or can be reached by everybody. Van Arkel (2005:116) argues that the philosophical meaning of availability includes the idea of spiritual availability, openness to the other, readiness to respond, forthrightness, the offer and even the very idea of hospitality. According to Hiltner (1949:128), availability includes evaluating and deciding on the unit of care. Patton (1993:220–222) emphasises the aspect of availability and argues that a pastoral counsellor is a representative of an image of life and its meaning is affirmed by his religious community.

Patton (1993:225) argues further that pastors should be available to all people but may run short of time to attend to all the problematic situations in great depth. In such a case where pastors cannot access all their parishioners who have problems, they can introduce them to other professionals with different competences. According to Patton (1993:225), the following could be the reasons for referral: (1) lack of time; (2) training that is insufficient or inappropriate to the situation at hand; (3) and involvement with the counsellee's family that is too close to allow the pastor to function professionally in a personal matter.

There is no contradiction between the Sacrament of Confession and pastoral counselling. Pastoral counselling can feed into the Sacrament of Confession to enrich it.

(3) *Communal and contextual systems approaches*

According to Greider et al (1999:22), it is generally agreed that communalisation and contextualisation are no longer optional in the theory and practice of effective practical theology, pastoral care and counselling (Van Arkel 2005:122). We cannot exclude the Sacrament of Confession from communal and contextual systems approaches. It operates

well in the community of believers and in the context of the Church. Hence, it relates and functions together with pastoral counselling and pastoral care. Patton (1993:4) identified three paradigms of pastoral care, namely: the classical, the clinical-pastoral and the communal-contextual paradigm.

The communal-contextual paradigm involves shifting Church authority away from the clerical-hierarchical structures towards particular Christian communities. The communal-contextual systems approach goes beyond the clergy to include the caring community of clergy and laity (Van Arkel 2005:122; Patton 1993:27). Although all three paradigms are important in pastoral care, the new emphasis is on the communal-contextual approach. This empowers the caring community and emphasises the various contexts for care rather than pastoral care as the work of the ordained minister. In the new communal-contextual approach, pastoral work is understood as a ministry of the faith community which reminds members of God's scattered people that they are remembered (Van Arkel 2005:122; Patton 1993:27).

The contextual approach to pastoral counselling is just as important as the communal one. Patton (1993:39) argues that the social situation, in all its uniqueness, informs the thoughts and actions of the Christian community's reflection. The variables like race, gender, power, and morality need special attention in a contextual approach. The idea of the contextual approach is derived from Poling (1995:177), who argues that a problem is situated in a context. People need to acknowledge some tension between their own conscious moral principles and their implicit social and material interests. The people of God are called to care for each other through hearing and remembering each other. If this is the case, then the central act of pastoral caring is not problem solving but hearing and remembering in a relationship. Human problems form the contextual background for pastoral care (Van Arkel 2005:122; Patton 1993:40).

Gerkin (1997:35) argues that there are four nexus points for the contextual approach, namely: (1) tradition; (2) individuals and family; (3) community; and (4) cultural context. Gerkin's (1997) quadrilateral structure of care involves paying attention to issues and concerns in the contemporary cultural context. This context influences how people understand caring aspects of the Church's ministry. Heitink (1998:191) adds that the social aspect plays a dominant part as an explicit ethical component.

(4) *An African perspective*

Lartey (1997a:9) discusses the African multicultural perspective which is basically contextual to Africa. An anthropological understanding of culture is that it is a distinctive way of life of a group of people. This includes ideas, values and meanings embodied in different institutions of the society. In the same way, the Sacrament of Confession can be linked to the practices of different African people which are outside the context of the Church. There are practices in social relationships that link beliefs and customs to the ways in which objects are used and physical life is organised (Van Arkel 2005:125; Lartey 1997a:10).

The pastor's interpretation of theology and psychology occurs in a particular cultural setting. The dynamic interaction of different aspects of a cultural context provides a specific cultural interpretive framework. In an African multicultural perspective, pastoral counsellors are listeners and interpreters of their people's stories. People come with their problems to be listened to and know that there is someone who can interpret their stories. The stories that are told are in ordinary day to day language that depicts the relationships of brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and even the extended family. However, pastoral counsellors have to use their expertise to interpret the language, symbols and images of their clients. People who come to the Sacrament of Confession live together and interact in different ways in their communities. When they feel that they have offended God and one another, they come for confession to the priest/pastor.

According to Augsburg (1986:13), a pastoral counsellor should be an intercultural person. The intercultural person is not culture free but is culturally aware. Awareness of one's culture can free one to disconnect one's identity from cultural externals and to live on the boundary, crossing over and coming back with increasing freedom. In Africa, with its diversified cultures, the multicultural aspect should be taken seriously by pastoral counsellors and pastors of souls (Van Arkel 2005:126; Mampolo 1991:105, Augsburg 1986:18). Lartey's (1997a:11 & 12) resolve to follow an intercultural approach, as opposed to reductionism and stereotyping in any form, bridges Church-related activities and social ones. Interculturality is a creative response to African pluralistic communities. It focuses on contextuality, multiple perspectives and authentic participation (Van Arkel 2005:127; Lartey 1997a:11 & 12). The concepts of forgiveness and restitution in the Sacrament of Confession have resemblances in different African communities and different cultures. Paying restitution or compensation

when somebody is wronged is often practised by the people of Southern Africa in their different community contexts. Whenever an individual person or family wrongs another, there are intercultural ways of compensating (like bringing a token of a goat, a cock or an ox to the wronged person or family as a way of admitting guilt) depending on the intensity of the wrong that has been committed. Such a token can cement again the broken relationship and bring back persons or families that were not united before to reconcile with one another. In this case, the communal, contextual and multicultural aspects of the Sacrament of Confession cannot be disputed among the Zimbabwean Shonas, Ndebeles and other Africans in their local contexts.

The Sacrament of Confession can have a healthy relationship with other helping disciplines (as discussed below).

(5) *Other helping disciplines*

Every helping profession may define on actual problem from a particular angle. Each profession is limited and specific in addressing only a part of reality. According to Pruyser (1976:16), no profession has the whole truth and no interpretation is more real than any other. There is a common area, but a great deal of differentiation lies within it (Van Arkel 2005:128; Pruyser 1976:16).

The distinctive characteristic of a pastoral counsellor is that he or she can use different disciplines to help parishioners. In the same vein, the Sacrament of Confession is infused in the pastoral discipline and can make a contribution to other disciplines, even outside pastoral circles as is shown in the diagram below.

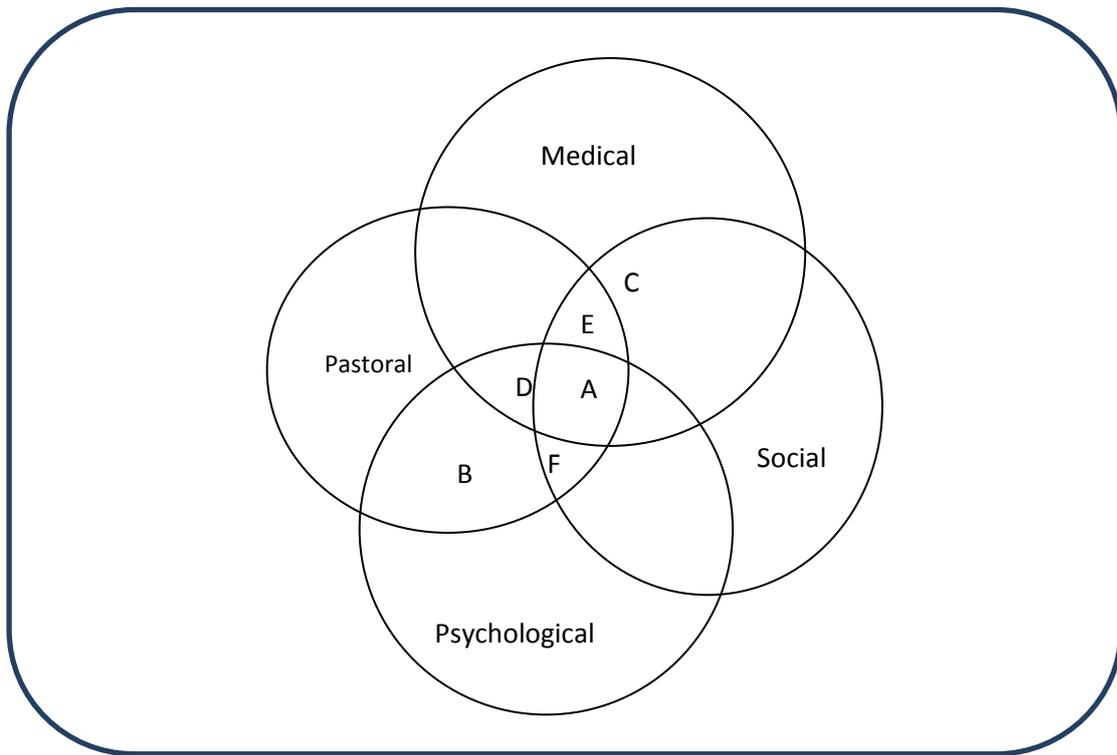


Figure 3 : The helping disciplines

A = All together

B = Pastoral and psychological

C = Pastoral and medical

D = Pastoral, medical and psychological

E = Pastoral, medical and social

F = Pastoral, psychological and social

Area C combines pastoral work and medical help. This means that pastoral work sometimes needs medical help to have an effective healing outcome. This collaboration in the healing field is necessary. Area D could be the sphere of mental health where pastoral work collaborates with medical and psychological expertise. It has been argued in Church circles that good confessors in the Sacrament of Confession are good psychiatrists and have some psychological background. It has been proved that people who go for confession regularly have low suicidal tendencies because they are well reconciled with God and with one another.

Van Arkel (2005:130) propounds that all the aforementioned disciplines have a great deal in common and their aims correspond broadly with differing emphases, depending on the particular ambit in which one works. Each discipline makes its own contribution that can help someone to live a better life. This is why the Sacrament of Confession is infused in the discipline of pastoral work and has a lot in common with pastoral care and pastoral counselling. All professions that are practised by believers have pastoral moments and elements. Pastoral work has no prerogative to religion, and the pastor does not have a copyright on the use of scripture and prayer. Yet each sphere has an area where specific professional expertise and specialisation distinguishes itself from the others. The effectiveness of a pastoral counsellor and his or her professionalism depend on the quality of the interpretive framework he or she uses. In order to understand human behaviour well, the pastor should have the know-how of culture and psychology. Boisen (1992:10) notes that pastors' frame of reference is naturally shaped mainly by their knowledge of theology and their personal theology. Pastors have their idiosyncratic views of Christian doctrines and concepts of God, Christology, the Holy Spirit and the Church that are shaped by their personal experience. The same holds for the Sacrament of Confession and counselling, where personal nuances decisively influence the quality of pastoral counselling or the Sacrament of Confession that is performed (Van Arkel 2005:133; Boisen 1992:10).

(6) *The sacramental character of pastoral counselling*

According to Van Arkel (2005:134), pastoral counselling has a distinctive aura that is associated with the context of the clerical office of a minister of the Word. This clerical position gives sacramental dignity to the office of pastoral counselling which relates properly with the Sacrament of Confession. The Church is the community from which pastoral counselling and the Sacrament of Confession emanate. According to Heitink (1977:350), pastoral work is a service that can be rendered in the Church and in society at large. Oates (1974:18) connects pastoral counselling with the Church when he writes that the uniquely pastoral dimension of counselling rests in the distinctly communal character of the pastor's counselling. Pastoral counselling is more than a simple dialogue. Hiltner (1961:29–31) refers to four distinctive factors: (1) the setting, (2) expectation, (3) shift in relationship, and (4) aims and limitations. The expectation is the parishioner's perception of the pastor and the way that he conducts his work. The shift in relationship means that the pastor and the parishioner create a common rapport in the pastoral counselling context. This also applies to

the Sacrament of Confession: if the priest is not in good rapport with Church members, very few people will avail themselves of confession. Aims and limitations mean that the pastoral counsellor exercises his work according to his competence as he plans together with the parishioner. If it is beyond his scope, the pastoral counsellor can do a referral to other professional services.

The Christians' theological perspective is shaped by the Bible and the message of scripture. The central message from the Bible is that God sent his only begotten Son out of love for a sinful world. In the same way, when a pastor wrestles with the problems of the parishioners, he should operate in a conceptual framework of grace, redemption and atonement (Van Arkel 2005:136). However, pastors must not manipulate the Bible by reducing its message to impeachable insights. The salvific authority of the Bible gives shape to the ethics that pastors use in pastoral counselling and for the Sacrament of Confession. Through the use of the Bible, pastoral counselling and the Sacrament of Confession can help to make pastors more humane and creative.

Heitink (1984:40) defines pastoral counselling as a helping relationship in the light of and in association with the gospel of Christ and his congregation. The evangelical character of pastoral counselling is that it is performed for Christ's sake. The Sacrament of Confession is also performed for Christ's sake, and for the salvation of souls. It is performed as the service of the dynamic movement, trusting and hoping that all is done for the service of the people of God (Van Arkel 2005:137; Heitink 1984:40). "Compassion", "visiting", "saving", "reign" and "encounter" describe the evangelical character of pastoral counselling and the Sacrament of Confession. This means that there is an involvement with Christ's intervention in the work of the pastor during counselling and the Sacrament of Confession.

In the following section, pastoral therapy and its relationship with the Sacrament of Confession are discussed.

2.3.4 Pastoral therapy

Pastoral therapy is the most specialised form of care. According to Van Arkel (2005:184), long-term reconstructive therapeutic methods are used in pastoral therapy to heal deep chronic problems. It deals with problems in greater depth and the healing action may take

longer than that of pastoral counselling. The Sacrament of Confession and pastoral therapy relate in the sense that both belong to the pastoral field. Both are concerned with the healing of souls. However, pastoral therapy is more specialised than the Sacrament of Confession in terms of therapeutic methods. While pastoral therapy is more scientific, the Sacrament of Confession is more traditional and doctrinal. Pastoral therapy is more inclusive and more applicable to modern times (Van Arkel 2005:183).

Gerkin (1997:72), Clinebell (1984) and Van Arkel (2005:185) discuss the development from pastoral psychotherapy to pastoral therapy. The term “pastoral therapy” was coined in South Africa, with the consequence that “psychotherapy” refers to psychologically-informed therapy or a therapy that is done from a perspective of psychology. This is where pastoral therapy differs from the Sacrament of Confession, in the sense that pastoral therapy is dominated by the scientific and behavioural sciences. In other words, pastoral therapy is more inclined to psychotherapy that is done in the pastoral field. In pastoral therapy, there is more inclination to psychology than to pastoral work. Pastoral workers who have learned psychotherapy and psychology belong to this discipline of pastoral therapy. Some argue that clinical psychologists and psychiatrists in Church circles are pastoral therapists because they have received specialised training. Pastoral workers in South Africa who are well informed in psychology are not registered with the Professional Board for Psychology (Van Arkel 2005:187). Pastoral therapists realise that healing involves more than removing obstacles to personal growth, gaining insight, and achieving differentiation and curing individual dysfunctions (Van Arkel 2005:187; Van den Blink 1995:203 - 204).

Therapy (from the Greek word “*therapeuo*”) means “I heal or I cure dysfunctionalities”. It keeps in line with developments in the general field of the helping professions in pastoral work, which have also opted for the wider term “therapy” rather than “psychotherapy”. Pastoral therapy is not less than pastoral psychotherapy, but incorporates the recent developments in the field of the helping professions into pastoral work. According to Van Arkel (2005:188), the term “pastoral therapy” is a better indication of where pastoral theologians are in the development of their profession. It goes beyond the close link with psychology, reaching out for greater independence from its old allies. Pastoral therapy can link with the Sacrament of Confession in that it can inform it and furnish the Sacrament of Confession with the listening skills and availability of the priest.

Reconstructive therapeutic short-term and long-term methods are used in pastoral therapy to heal deep chronic problems. It exists to help people who are restricted in their development and choices to attain fulfilment. Insights from theological disciplines and other fields such as the behavioural sciences are integrated into this movement which tries to help individuals, couples and families to cope with the difficulties and uncertainties confronting them (Van Arkel 2005:188).

According to Van Arkel (2005:188), pastoral therapy deals with problems in greater depth and it may take longer than pastoral counselling. Whereas pastoral counselling works with a single significant problem, pastoral therapy deals with various problems. Pastoral therapy is used to attend to other factors which may contribute to the development of similar situations (Van Arkel 2005:188). Pastoral therapy is a developing profession of people who have a calling to do therapy mainly from a pastoral perspective. Therefore pastoral therapists draw insights from their theological training and from their in-depth knowledge and skills in therapy. Pastoral therapists need more supervised clinical training hours. The balance between the two fields will be maintained by the bipolar hermeneutical position and actions of the pastoral therapist (Van Arkel 2005:189). No harm will come from incorporating pastoral therapy into the Sacrament of Confession in a collaborative way to heal human souls with deep chronic problems.

Pastoral therapists work from a spiritual and theological perspective, taking care of the troubled, the hurt, the abused or the oppressed by using the resources of forgiveness and renewal to heal and make whole and to help them to discover the possibility and presence of God's grace in their lives. Gerkin (1986:30) affirms that pastoral therapists provide the ministry of presence, which is full of hope. Pastoral therapy gives people a platform to reconnect with their own narratives of faith, giving human life meaning, affirming people, and helping them to rediscover their self-worth and rekindle hope (Van Arkel 2005:189; Osmer 2010:30; Van den Blink 1995:205).

There is a distinction between pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. The distinction is more academic than practical, but it is important for educational planning and for recognition of a professional identity. The well-noted distinction is that of depth and duration, in which pastoral therapy overtakes pastoral counselling. Another distinction is that pastoral counselling is more centred in the congregational setting as a ministerial function while

pastoral therapists specialise mostly in therapeutic activities. The training and study of pastoral therapy is more focused on the development of knowledge and educational programmes of choice, while pastoral therapy is a focal point for students (Van Arkel 2005:189; Van den Blink 1995:205).

Van den Blink (1995:206 & 207) propounds the psycho-system perspective of pastoral psychotherapy, of which people can adapt the material and use it for pastoral therapy. This perspective takes into account the person who is doing the pastoral therapy (the pastoral therapist) and the environment in which he or she operates. The emphasis in Van den Blink's definition is not on what pastoral therapy is as a disembodied activity, what its essence is, or what characteristics and credentials make someone a pastoral therapist, but rather on the person of the pastoral therapist in the activity, in the process and in the context of doing pastoral therapy (Van Arkel 2005:189; Van den Blink 1995:207). A psycho-system definition of pastoral therapy assumes that there is no such thing as pastoral therapy without women and men, and that what men and women do is always influenced by the environment in which they live and work. It helps people to understand better the ramifications of social change. Van Arkel (2005:189) would add the importance of "*ekklesia*" as argued before in this chapter by pastoral theologians like Greider, Johnson and Leslie (1999:26–29). The psycho-system perspective of pastoral therapy delineates pastoral therapy into three characteristics, namely: communal, functional and intentional (Van Arkel 2001:190):

- (1) The communal characteristic refers to the faith community, of which pastoral therapists are members through participation and where they are spiritually nurtured and anchored. This community of faith does not have to be established churches or denominations. It may be a religious order, an intentional group of colleagues or a house church (*domus ekklesia*). However, it should have meaning and continuity for those who participate in it.
- (2) The functional characteristic refers to the external factors that define someone as a pastoral therapist, for example ordination or endorsement by one's faith group, seminary education, training in therapy, accreditation, the setting in which one works, and the expectations of those who come for help. The functional issue defines the professional relationships and accountability structures of pastoral therapy.

- (3) The intentional characteristic refers to the internal, subjective beliefs and commitments that define someone as a pastoral therapist, for example theological convictions, faith and spirituality, value, commitments, basic assumptions about the human conditions, a sense of identity as a caring person who is linked to the historical traditions of the Church and a determination to the Christian faith. The internal factors are called intentional because of their purposive quality. They shape human behaviour irrespective of whether we are aware of them. They guide human choices and belief. The intentional presupposes the human condition's basic assumptions and the nature of reality.

For someone to claim the designation "pastoral therapist", he or she should have communal, functional and intentional characteristics. This distinctive process retains a needed flexibility and at the same time points to the significance of often overlooked dimensions of the community of faith and the spirituality of the pastoral therapist (Van Arkel 2005:190). Flexibility in the definition of pastoral therapy is necessary when the whole profession of pastoral therapy is in flux in terms of its identity, its theory and the focus of its practice. This is especially true when more pastoral counsellors receive their training and continue to affiliate with secular psychiatric or mental health institutions, and when many engage in part-time or full-time private practice. The communal, functional and intentional characteristics of pastoral therapists cannot be equally weighted. People can no longer speak of pastoral therapy when one characteristic is missing. This can help in integrating lay pastoral counsellors in pastoral therapy (Van Arkel 2005:191). When it comes to the Sacrament of Confession, there is a noted difference with pastoral therapy because laypeople cannot train as confessors in the Catholic Church. Laypeople only have an obligation to go to confession to the priests who are trained to conduct the Sacrament of Confession. If laypeople learn pastoral therapy, it is for their benefit only and not for the benefit of Church members to confess better. If priests learn pastoral therapy, this could be an added advantage when they conduct the Sacrament of Confession as they will have a specialised background in the healing ministry. Pastoral therapy is like all other forms of pastoral work which cannot be privatised without the accountability of the congregation or an endorsing health board. Pastoral therapists may not necessarily be ordained ministers, but their official relationship with a community of faith is non-negotiable (Van Arkel 2005:191).

2.3.4.1 As a professional action

A pastoral therapist should be a professional. A professional is somebody who is called or employed to do specialised work which requires specialised knowledge and skills. A profession is characterised by and conforms to academic, technical and ethical procedures, standards and codes which articulate the culture of a specific group of peer professionals. Here there are some boundaries with the Sacrament of Confession in the sense that only priests are eligible and have the faculty to hear confessions. They can train as pastoral therapists but they cannot work for personal gain, like earning money through the Sacrament of Confession or through pastoral therapy. If priests learn pastoral therapy, it is an added advantage to their priestly training that they can manage the Sacrament of Confession and pastoral work in general in a better way. For people who are not priests, pastoral therapy is often both a principal occupation and source of financial gain to those who practise it (Van Arkel 2005:193; Van Gerwen 1990:54; Murphy, 1990b:959). Congregational or church ministry in most churches is now taken as a profession, with those who follow it having specialised knowledge and skills in preaching; pastoral work and counselling as well as an understanding of the scripture, worship and liturgy. It is not open to all persons who are not trained for them. The educational training and skills that are needed are well defined and controlled. Most churches have agreed in principle to professionalise pastoral therapy as a profession within a profession or the acknowledgement of a specialised field within the general ministerial profession (Van Arkel 2005:193; Van Arkel 1999:95; Murphy, 1990 b: 542).

The word “professionalism” comes from the Latin word “*professio*”, which means “public declaration of intent or vow” (Van Arkel 2005:193; Campbell 1985:31). The original meaning of the word referred to a public declaration of faith associated with a religious life of obedience by priests, brothers and nuns. In a secular world and in the world of industry professionalism, it refers to specialised occupations or professions as opposed to unskilled work. The concept of a profession in modern times has undergone a transformation that indicates social class distinction. It has assumed socio-economic status. In this context, a professional is someone who is officious in his or her work and uses power appropriately based on the authority of expertise to make suggestions and recommendations that are received or rejected voluntarily (Van Arkel 2005:194).

However, the professionalisation of ministerial work is taken differently in various religious denominations. Some have a negative view of it while others take it positively. Some think that all ministerial work is a vocation through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and need not to be professionalised because it is a way of secularising the ministry of God, while others think that it is a source of motivation to professionalise any ministry in order to recognise the knowledge and skills acquired by individuals in various fields of ministry (Murphy 1990b:960). However, Campbell (1985) and Hiltner (1949) advise that there are dangers of professionalising the ministries without seriously looking at the outcomes. This means that pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy can be professionalised without diluting their theological contexts by adapting a lot from the behavioural sciences. At the moment, the pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy practised in Southern Africa are under the supervision of the South African Association of Pastoral workers (SAAP) who monitor the standardisation, accreditation, certification, licensing and ethical codes of pastoral workers and counsellors.

2.3.4.2 Psychotherapy

The term “psychotherapy” is derived from the Greek words “*psyche*” and “*therapeuo*”. “*Psyche*” includes meanings of “self”, “inner life”, “person”, “life principle”, “earthly life” and “soul”. These words are mainly used in the New Testament to refer to the person’s inner life and as a centre of life that goes beyond Earth (Van Arkel 2005:186).

“*Therapeuo*” is used in the New Testament in the sense of healing, curing and serving. According to Hartung (1990:860), “*therapeuo*” is always used in such a way that the reference is not about medical treatment but about the power of the ultimate rule of God. The combination of the two Greek words means that the healing of the life force is central to humankind, both in their earthly existence and beyond (Van Arkel 2005:186; Hartung 1990:861).

Psychotherapeutic methods involve different healing relationships. Some are structured interaction with the therapist, while others focus on the clients’ attitude (like trust and belief in the therapist’s competence and integrity, a perception of the therapist as an emphatic and caring human being, the desire to change and hope for change). According to Strunk (1990:1022 & 1023), therapies can be classified as traditional or modern. Traditional

therapies are communal in nature, full of rituals and symbolism. Modern therapies are individual and rational; they claim their basis in scientific principles.

Psychotherapists are professionals who thoughtfully apply psychological principles and techniques with a view to resolving emotional problems and disorders. Pastoral therapy works within a framework that is based on theories such as theories on human nature, personality, development, motivation, psychopathology, the change process and personality growth (Van Arkel 2005:206, Narramore 1990 cited in Lyall 1995: 38-40).

Psychotherapies can be viewed in a broad cluster, like psychoanalysis or psychodynamics which are strongly influenced by traditional Freudian psychoanalysis. They express their main concern with the unconscious, behaviourist and cognitive domains which can be traced to scientific laboratories. Psychotherapies also have epistemological appreciations, like the existential/humanistic and transpersonal approaches that tend to be based on philosophical, cultural and religious systems. Although these are highly pluralistic methods, they are serious attempts to be holistic in both theory and praxis. Eclectic psychotherapies often struggle to synthesise a variety of psychotherapeutic approaches. In order to honour a systemic notion and the specific psychotherapies, some therapies focus on idiosyncratic cultural or sub-cultural phenomena (Strunk 1990:1022 & 1023 and Van Arkel 2005:199). Psychotherapy and the Sacrament of Confession differ in the sense that psychotherapies are done outside pastoral work. Furthermore, psychotherapy is a human science and the Sacrament of Confession belongs to the divine domain. In most cases, psychotherapy operates outside Church circles and can be done for financial gain. How psychotherapy relates with the Sacrament of Confession is only in the person who is the focus of treatment. The priest focuses on the cure of souls for salvation, while the psychotherapist focuses on the mental faculties of a human being who has to live according to world norms and standards. Since there is an argument that psychological counselling is dominating or threatening the Sacrament of Confession, it is important to discuss psychology in pastoral therapy and observe whether there is any relationship with the Sacrament of Confession.

2.3.4.3 Psychological counselling in pastoral therapy

Since pastoral therapy is a specialised discipline, psychology and psychotherapy is blended in pastoral work. If the Sacrament of Confession has components of psychology, psychotherapy,

pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy, members in the Church would prefer it to other disciplines like psychology or psychotherapy. It is therefore important for this study to review psychology in pastoral therapy and its relationship to the Sacrament of Confession. According to Egan (1998:15–17), the following dictates are important for professionals in psychology and pastoral therapy as well as confessors in the Sacrament of Confession because all have to explore the mental faculties and behaviour of human beings:

- a working knowledge of applied developmental psychology: how people develop or create their lives across their lifespan and the impact of environmental factors such as culture and socio-economic status on development
- an understanding of the principles of cognitive psychology as applied in helping, since the way that people think and construct their worlds has a great deal to do with getting into and out of trouble
- the ability to deal with the principles of human behaviour (what we know about incentives, rewards and punishment) in the helping process, since wrestling with problem situations and undeveloped opportunities always involves incentives and rewards
- the applied personality theory, since this area of psychology helps us to understand in very practical ways what motivates people and many of the ways in which individuals differ from one another
- an understanding of clients as psychosomatic beings and the interaction between physical and psychological states
- abnormal psychology: a systematic understanding of the ways in which individuals get into psychological trouble
- an understanding of the ways in which people act in social settings
- an understanding of diversity of age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, culture, social and economic standing
- an understanding of the needs and problems of special populations such as the physically challenged, substance abusers and the homeless
- an understanding of the dynamics of the helping professions as they are currently practised in society, together with the challenges they face

Since all disciplines in the helping field, including the Sacrament of Confession, are aimed at assisting human beings to face life challenges and have a proper relationship with God, theological insights are necessary to enlighten the helping professions through God-inspired actions (Van Arkel 2005:206; Egan 1998:15–17). Psychotherapy and psychology are therefore relevant to pastoral work in which the Sacrament of Confession is a component.

Psychotherapy and psychological counselling are secular sciences that are aimed at addressing human problems by applying psychological skills. When these two are adapted to pastoral work, they are enlightened by the gospel and motivation for salvation. They are no longer isolated sciences but part of the disciplines in the field of pastoral work. This means that their relationship with the Sacrament of Confession is unavoidable as long as they become a component of pastoral work. Although psychotherapy and psychology can work on their own without pastoral work, once they are incorporated in pastoral work, there is a close relationship in terms of working in the context of pastoral work.

However, the problem statement of this study is that the influence and dominance of psychological counselling pose a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession. The implication here is that psychological counselling and psychotherapy compete with the Sacrament of Confession in Zimbabwe. Yet Turneyson (1946) argues that the two are incorporated in pastoral work, which is the context of the Sacrament of Confession, to make it more effective in dealing with pastoral problems that demand psychological skills. Turneyson (1946) argues further that pastoral work relies heavily on the methods and techniques of psychotherapy. In other words, contrary to our problem statement, Turneyson (1946) argues that psychotherapy and psychological counselling have played a key role in the development of pastoral work which is part of the context of the Sacrament of Confession (Van Arkel 2005:208; Heitink 1977:254).

One can conclude that psychological counselling and psychotherapy may be competing with pastoral work or become a threat to the Sacrament of Confession if they function solely as professional disciplines in a clinical context. When they are incorporated in pastoral work, they edify and enhance the efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession.

Turneyson (1946) is very appreciative of the big role that psychological counselling and psychotherapy have played in pastoral work. However, he is ambivalent in his approach to

their interrelationship. He points out those genuine pastoral workers have always also been psychologists. Turneyson even places psychotherapy, psychological counselling and pastoral work under one umbrella of healing. For him, pastoral workers have no cause to question psychotherapy, to mistrust it or to replace it. However, in this study, the bone of contention is that the Sacrament of Confession is losing its credibility due to psychological counselling and psychotherapy. This means that psychological counselling and psychotherapy are not part of pastoral work but stand on their own as secular sciences that compete with the Sacrament of Confession, which is a component of pastoral work. This problem is addressed in chapter 5 of this thesis in the discussion on the empirical findings of the study in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe.

In Turneyson's (1946) second approach, pastoral work is more than psychotherapy since salvation is more than healing. He is supported by Boisen (1876–1966), the founder of clinical pastoral training, who argues that the task and method of the pastor and psychotherapist are inseparable. For Boisen, the distinctiveness of pastoral work is more a question of perspective. Compared to therapists, pastors are better able to grasp the meaning and crisis of people's lives at the level of ultimate loyalties (Van Arkel 2005:209; Hiltner 1949:26; Hiltner & Colston 1962:27).

The context of pastoral work is determined by the church setting (Hiltner & Colston 1962:27). In the same way, the context of the Sacrament of Confession is determined by the community of believers. Clinebell (1966) refers to general pastoral care as the establishment of a relationship between a client and a pastor. This concurs very well with the Sacrament of Confession, where the relationship between the confessor (the priest) and the penitent (the Church member) is of great significance. According to Clinebell (1966:20), effective pastoral work enhances people's ability to form relationships, which in turn satisfies basic personality needs. The satisfaction should be the extent in which their needs are fulfilled. The following become possible: coping with problems and responsibilities; growth towards fulfilment of one's unique personality; forming constructive relationships; an increasingly meaningful relationship with God; and acting as an instrument of renewal in one's home, community and Church (Van Arkel 2005:210; Clinebell 1966:20). This argument is not in conflict with the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession. According to Clinebell (1966:49), pastoral action is a religious activity in terms of its resources, staff, effect, philosophy, instrumentality and ultimate focus of interest (which is God and human faith actions). To offer a wider

horizon on the context of the Sacrament of Confession as a Church healing discipline, it is important to discuss clinical pastoral education (CPE) – which can give some historical insights in the Sacrament of Confession.

2.3.4.5 Clinical pastoral education

CPE was introduced in Europe and America as a way of integrating pastoral work and psychotherapy. In the 1950s, many therapeutic schools emerged and were widely accepted. Psychoanalysis has been virtually synonymous with therapy (Van Arkel 2005:211).

The new person-centred therapy that was introduced by Carl Rogers (1957) was found to be more compatible with pastoral work. Rogerian counselling became a paradigm for pastoral practice where the pastor could encourage people to live well by dealing with physical, psychological and spiritual needs. Faber (1975:23) argues that the development of CPE had opened a way to the world of psychotherapy for pastors. This also brought integration between pastoral work and psychotherapy. However, the fact that pastoral work and psychotherapy had common ground did not mean that psychotherapists had a clearer understanding of pastoral work or that pastors were automatically given a place in the general clinical care of human beings (Faber 1975:23; Van Arkel 2005:211).

Faber (1975:108) uses the term “pastoral therapy”, although he discerns a great difference between pastoral work and therapy. He does not detract from the fact that a pastor who is doing pastoral work is also giving therapy. The insights gained from psychotherapy empowered modern pastors to operate openly, making them different from their predecessors. It is underscored that the essence of pastoral therapy is pastoral work: helping people to see their lives in freedom, ultimately directed towards a life lived in the light of God (Van Arkel 2005:211; Faber 1975:108 & 109).

It is argued that psychotherapy, being a behavioural science, usually neglect or ignore the relationship with the living God. This creates a boundary between psychotherapy and pastoral work. However, pastors can learn quite a lot from psychotherapeutic methodologies. Ries (1973:32) argues that the relationship between psychotherapy and pastoral work is a continuum.

According to Affermann (1974), pastoral workers and psychotherapists should know their limits. Pastoral workers should respect the fact that healing is the domain of medicine. Conversely, one cannot expect psychotherapy to resolve all problems and answer every existential question. The area for which psychotherapy claims responsibility is that of psychology. It is only in this framework that it can produce results. With regard to the relationship between pastoral work and psychotherapy, after the period where pastoral work was regarded as a helper or ancillary to psychotherapy, a period of cooperation is now called for (Van Arkel 2005:213). The question that may arise is whether theology wants to partner with psychotherapy.

Tacke (1975) argues that one has only to look at human beings to learn about God. According to Benner (1987: ix), psychotherapy is traceable to the Christian tradition of the cure for and care of souls. Psychotherapy and Christianity assist people to become whole. The two are concerned with the salvation of humanity, but they differ in terms of the applied methodologies. The various forms of psychotherapy either concur with the Christian concept of humanity and the concomitant process or growth to maturity, or are in conflict with it (Van Arkel 2005:214).

The above critics agree that pastoral work and psychotherapy or psychological counselling can work together without conflict. This implies that the Sacrament of Confession can also work with psychotherapy despite some differences that may exist between the two (as argued above). However, pastoral work should continue to maintain its identity even amidst the submerging behavioural sciences.

Psychology and psychotherapy can therefore be used in pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy without conflict. However, people like Adams (1970: xxi) developed nouthetic counselling, which is purely biblical as a reaction to the integration of psychology and psychotherapy in pastoral work. Scharfenberg (1993) opposes Adams by arguing that any counselling theory that has no relationship with psychology is contemptuous and polemic. Psychology is needed for behaviour modification and areas of human reality. "If I pursue a theology without being aware of its implicit psychology, then I do not convey freedom" (Scharfenberg 1993:98).

However, there are many models of psychology which may augment the Sacrament of Confession in pastoral work, such as Egan's healing (therapeutic) model of psychological counselling.

2.3.4.6 A therapeutic model

People may wonder why Egan's model (2007) is discussed here in the context of the Sacrament of Confession. This model of healing has a lot of variables in common with the Sacrament of Confession in pastoral work. Variables such as empathy, respect, love, listening and communication (to mention but a few) are included in this healing model. When it is argued that psychological counselling can mould the Sacrament of Confession, what is meant is that there are good variables that can help to shape better the Sacrament of Confession without disregarding its status as a sacrament.

Egan (1998) propounded a therapeutic model in his book *The skilled helper: A problem-management and opportunity development approach to helping*. This model creates the context for pastoral therapy. It shows that pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy works well with communication skills. The following principles can be used in pastoral therapy (Egan 1998; Van Arkel 2005:217):

- There is no counselling/therapy without a proper relationship between therapist and client (in other words, therapy is a relationship).
- Therapy and counselling are a working alliance. The working collaboration between client and helper is based on agreement on the goals and tasks of therapy and the development of an attachment bond. Therapy means working together, and the outcomes depend on the competence and motivation of the pastor and the parishioner and on the quality of their "therapeutic interaction".
- All therapy is structured by values. The values are part of a broader structure of assumptions, beliefs, values, norms and religious convictions.

Respect for others and the genuineness of the therapist are very important values in therapy. Respect should be practised by therapists through his or her attitude and actions, for example to have actions that does not harm clients without allowing therapists to follow their own

agenda. Basic ethical norms should be followed and those who breach the codes should be dealt with firmly. Respect is shown through the competence and commitment of the therapist. The more respect that is given to the client, the more motivated he or she becomes to improve his or her skills.

Genuineness or congruence is found in people who are at ease with themselves and do not have to play a part and create an impression of importance. Genuine pastors do not need to take refuge in the role of the important therapist or whatever clerical office they may have. They are non-defensive because they know their own weaknesses and strengths – and can even allow clients to attack and be negative in certain situations.

(1) *Understand multiculturalism and diversity*

In a multicultural society, it is important to respect other people's cultures and to be sensitive to how it may affect their problems. The way that they act, what they want, and how they think and act differently should be considered. Culture is defined in terms of skin colour, language, or country or area of origin. In a deeper sense, culture is the way of life of a particular group of people who live together in a special setting. Each person in diverse situations has different cultures that relate to their environment.

(2) *Understand diversity*

It is important for pastors to understand their parishioners or clients' problem situations contextually. The way that illness is experienced by a 20 year old man and an 80 year old woman are totally different. This helps to develop different tasks accordingly and to understand differences even in families. However, pastors may not be prepared for every situation that they face in pastoral therapy. The pastoral therapist may face some situations that need his discretion. However, it is important to know some areas of great sensitivity and to react to them accordingly.

(3) *Challenge whatever blind spots you may have*

As human beings, pastors have their biases, preferences, cultural and religious values, and negative reactions which may influence clients to have a negative attitude. These things may

cause blind spots that have a negative impact on pastoral therapy (Van Arkel 2005:219). The following hints may help the pastor to deal effectively with people who seek assistance:

- Tailor your interventions in a diversity-sensitive way.
- Knowledge and practical understanding should be translated into appropriate interventions.
- As people are sensitive of different cultural values, pastoral therapy should adapt in certain circumstances.

(4) *Understand and value the individual*

Genuine helpers should understand the broad characteristics, needs and behaviours of the populations with whom they work. It is important that therapists adapt broad parameters and the counselling process to individual situations (Van Arkel 2005:219).

Egan (1998:49 & 50), Weinrach and Thomas (1996), and Van Arkel (2005:220) give some guidelines on how pastoral therapists can be better helpers. The following can help therapists to be more effective (Van Arkel 2005:220):

- Place the needs of the client above all other considerations.
- Identify and focus on whatever frame of reference, self-definition or belief system is central to any client, bearing in mind (but not restricting oneself to) issues of diversity.
- Select counselling/therapy interventions on the basis of the client's agenda. Do not impose a social or political agenda on the therapeutic/counselling relationship.
- Make sure that your own values do not adversely affect a client's best interests.
- Avoid cultural stereotyping. Do not over-generalise. Recognise that within-group differences are often more extensive than between-group differences.
- Do not define diversity narrowly. The client's concern about unattractiveness deserves the helper's engagement just as much as the client's concern about racial intolerance.

- Provide opportunities for practitioners to be trained in the working knowledge and skills associated with diversity-sensitive counselling/therapy.
- Create an environment that supports professional tolerance.

2.3.4.7 Communication skills

Communication skills are essential elements of developing the relationship and interacting with clients in order to reach the goals of therapy. Many authors agree that while pastoral work has theological relevance in the therapeutic process, empathetic dialogue makes pastoral therapy more appropriate. Empathy is conducive to Christian attitude and is needed for successful helping dialogue. Even in the Sacrament of Confession, the priest needs empathy as he listens to the penitent or the one who confesses his or her sins in the confessional. Empathy can be derived from biblical contexts where Jesus loved his audience, used non-verbal communication, listened actively, had compassion, used probes and challenged the people to whom he spoke (Van Arkel 2005:221).

Egan (1998:60) and Van Arkel (2005:221) concur on communication skills and their character. Both argue that communication skills are extensions of everyday life skills in interpersonal transactions. In fact, all prospective pastoral therapists should enter into training programmes with a basic set of interpersonal communication skills. The training process would only help them to adapt the skills to the helping process. However, some of the problems of clients may not tally with the training. Some programmes may focus exclusively on communication skills, while others may focus on different areas of life.

According to Egan (1998:60) and Van Arkel (2005:221 & 222), productive and effective communication skills should meet the following conditions:

- The skills and techniques must become part of the helper's humanity and not just bits of technology in the helping process.
- Communication skills and helping techniques should serve the purpose of the helping process.

- They should be permeated and directed by the values that are part of pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. This means that pastoral workers should evaluate the techniques and skills offered in terms of Christian morality.
- Pastoral therapy focuses on five interwoven skills, namely attending, listening, responding empathically, probing and challenging.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter was an exploration of a practical theological framework with special reference to pastoral care and counselling. The relationship between psychotherapy and practical theology were discussed; and pastoral care and counselling, and how they relate to, the Sacrament of Confession, were discussed.

The definition of practical theology, its context and theology as a discipline in which the Sacrament of Confession functions were explored. The key issue in this chapter was that practical theology is the reflection of the faith actions of Church members. The scope of practical theology is critical enquiry into the faith actions of Christian communities. This implies that practical theologians look at the gospel message in relation to human practices. The insight that comes from this chapter is that practical theology, as an aspect of church practice, is an on-going source of theological understanding. One can derive from this chapter that the Sacrament of Confession can operate in the context of practical theology without problems. The similarities that were highlighted in this chapter were that theology and action cannot be separated but work hand in hand. It was confirmed that in the pastoral field, mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy all belong to the ministry of the Church. The differences noted in pastoral theology are the approaches one would choose. For example, one person may choose the communal approach system and the other may choose the contextual approach system in order to deal with the actions of believers. It was noted that the African perspective on practical theology is multicultural, while Western approaches are multi-disciplinary. It was realised that the Sacrament of Confession can operate in both multicultural and multidisciplinary approaches. The other factors that were discussed were medical, psychological, social, pastoral and cultural. The interaction between these factors creates a healthy working field of different approaches that brings to the fore the similarities and differences between practical theology and social science theories. In a way, these

paradigms answered the research questions, especially with regard to the sacramental character of psychological counselling and the psychological character of pastoral therapy in which the Sacrament of Confession belongs.

Other aspects that were discussed in this chapter were the field of pastoral work in which mutual care, pastoral care; pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy operate. It was noted that pastoral therapy as the most specialised care and the pastoral therapist, as a professional caregiver, impart knowledge and skills to the field of pastoral work. The main elements of healing or curing the soul and service rendered to the people of God were linked to the Sacrament of Confession. The relationship between psychotherapy, psychological counselling, pastoral work and the Sacrament of Confession was discussed as residing in to the human sciences and divine science. Finally, Egan's skilled helper model was discussed as one of the therapeutic models in pastoral therapy that can assist in the practice of the Sacrament of Confession. The skilled helper model was highlighted as a necessary component of psychological counselling that is ancillary to the practice of the Sacrament of Confession.

After having reviewed the relevant literature on the Sacrament of Confession, psychological counselling and psychotherapy in this chapter, the theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is the literature study on the Sacrament of Confession and how it is practised in the Church. This is done by reviewing the work of different theorists who have already dealt with the subject of confession in different spheres of pastoral work. Through the literature study, an appropriate and relevant theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession is sought. The relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling and psychotherapy is also important. Socio-cultural perspectives of the Shona people in the Masvingo area will cast light on how they perceive the Sacrament of Confession as a practice of faith. The argument that the Sacrament of Confession is becoming irrelevant in the contemporary world cannot go unchallenged. Through the literature study, the sacramental role and the therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession, and the growing preference for psychological counselling and psychotherapy, are explored. The meaning of the therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession in relation to psychological counselling and psychotherapy are assessed. Notwithstanding that pastoral counselling plays a role in the Sacrament of Confession, it is important that the relationship between the two is reviewed. The variables that relate to the Sacrament of Confession (such as spiritual healing, spiritual direction, guidance and spiritual care) are examined. Finally, contemporary views that confession is contained in psychological counselling and psychotherapy and/or that psychological counselling and psychotherapy are contained in the Sacrament of Confession are analysed.

3.2 SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION: A HISTORICAL PRACTICE IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The central problem with the Sacrament of Confession in the early 16th century was how penance was administered. In one case, priests treated the matter lightly and the impious people did not take the Sacrament of Confession or absolution seriously. In a second case, priests would require complete lists of sins or threatened not to grant forgiveness to those who sought the sacrament. In a third case, priests taught that freedom from sin and its

penalties could be paid for through acts of penance and by buying indulgences. All three these practices were prevalent in the history of the Sacrament of Confession, and undermined God's mercy and grace through forgiveness on account of Christ (Klink 1993:220).

According to Klink (1993) and Stumpf (1996), the Sacrament of Confession was once under attack but the reformers did not want to abandon it completely. Instead of dropping the Sacrament of Confession, the Church fathers had to revitalise it and returned to it the biblical emphasis of proclaiming God's forgiveness and spiritual healing. In principle, the Sacrament of Confession was on the same level with the "mutual conversation" (*inutuum colloquium*) and the "consolation of the brethren" (*consolationem fratrum*) (Klink 1993:120). The Sacrament of Confession called for the priest as a "carer for souls", (Klink 1993) and not what one would call a judge. "Here it became incontrovertibly evident how earnestly the care of every single member of the congregation was made the priest's duty" (Stumpf 1996:223).

The Sacrament of Confession, like baptism and the Eucharist, was administered personally and individually but in a communal rite. While no compulsion or internal need should have motivated the Sacrament of Confession, it had to be available on a regular basis to all and each person in the Church was encouraged to use it (Stumpf 1996:223).

The Sacrament of Confession became the rule for all who wished to partake of Holy Communion. Chemnitz (1981) writes that no one could receive the Lord's Supper unless they first – by general or private confession – attested their repentance and faith to the priest of the Church, who on that occasion would enter into private discussion with individuals. "The rite of the Sacrament of Confession was retained and used in our Churches chiefly for the sake of absolution, so that it might be rightly and solitarily sought, received, and used in earnest repentance and true faith" (Klink 1993:124). Today the tradition of the Sacrament of Confession still stands. Some people prefer to call it private confession rather than the Sacrament of Confession.

Chemnitz (1981) argues that in the Reformed churches, a preparatory service was instituted in place of private confession. In the course of time, voices were raised in churches against the insistence on private confession as the "*sine qua non*" (something necessary) for one's admission to the Church. Much of the complaints stemmed from the fact that in the populous parishes in larger cities there were few priests who availed

themselves for the Sacrament of Confession, yet there were many people who needed to confess their sins (Klink 1993:124). The priests simply could not hear the confessions of all who desired to make use of the Sacrament of Confession because parishioners arrived in large numbers and therefore the sacrament became a perfunctory practice (Klink 1993:223).

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CC 1992:356), the Sacrament of Confession is one of the **healing sacraments** in the Church. It heals human beings because they are like earthenware vessels that are weak and can break easily (2 Corinthians 4:7). It is argued that Christians need to be sustained from breaking and be restored from falling by making use of the Sacrament of Confession. Ogoe (2010:7) contends that the Sacrament of Confession has a healing effect and it paves the way to freedom, especially in this era that is characterised by so-called freedom and needless attachment to material things. Through its healing effect, the Sacrament of Confession invokes Christ to intervene as the great healer of souls that are weakened and lost by sin. In the same vein, Paul argues in a letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 5:1) that as long as human beings are still in an earthly tent, they are subject to sin, suffering, illness and death. This is why Flannery (2007:11) argues that as an intervention, those who approach the Sacrament of Confession obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offences they committed against him and are at the same time reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, example and prayer labours for their conversion. Flannery (2007:11) underscores the healing effect of the Sacrament of Confession to those who practise it in the name of Jesus Christ, the great physician.

The Lord Jesus Christ (who is the great physician of souls and bodies) willed that his Church continues (in the power of the Holy Spirit) his work of healing and salvation through the Sacrament of Confession. For example, the Spirit speaks to the penitent as follows:

I wish you were either hot or cold! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. You say, how rich I am! And how well I have done! I have everything I want in the world. In fact, though you do not know it, you are the most pitiful wretch, poor, blind and naked. So I advise you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, to make you truly rich and white clothes to put on to hide the shame of your

nakedness and ointment for your eyes so that you may see. All whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Be on your mettle therefore and repent. (Holy Bible - New Revised Standard Version, Revelation 3:14–20).

The penitent is the one who confesses to the priest in the Sacrament of Confession; the confessor is the priest who is conducting the Sacrament of Confession. The purpose of the Sacrament of Confession or penance is to function as the healing sacrament that strengthens weakened and lost souls. It is called the sacrament of penance, since it concentrates on the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion (De Mello 1994:119; CC 1992:357; Mandava 2011:1, Ogoe 2010:8).

De Mello (1994:118) argues that the Sacrament of Confession is **real repentance**, which is a way to experience Christ. This repentance requires an ardent desire in the penitent to meet Christ through constant petition and prayer. In the book of Revelation (2:1–5), the penitent is reminded to reflect on his or her sin and repent: “Think from what height you have fallen; repent and do as you once did. Otherwise, if you do not repent, I shall come to you and remove your lamp from its place.” It is called the Sacrament of Confession, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. The Sacrament of Confession or repentance is indeed the fundamental disposition of a Christian and an abiding disposition. The first thing that one has to do is to confess one's sinfulness. Ogoe (2010:44) cites the penitential prayer: “I confess to Almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words in what I have done and in what I have failed to do. Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault, therefore I ask the Blessed Mary ever virgin and you my brothers and sisters to pray for me to the Lord our God.”

There should be no excuses, no claims and no self-complacency when one confesses one's sins (De Mello 1994:120). The person must confess his or her inability to get out of sinfulness and attain an absolute need for God's saving power in Jesus, because although the will to do well is there, it is not reflected in deed – as is clear in the following quotation:

The good which I want to do I fail to do: what I do is the wrong which is against my will: and if what I do is against my will, clearly it is no longer I who am the agent, but sin that has its lodging in me, I discover this

principle then, that when I want to do the right, only the wrong is within my reach. In my inmost self, I delight in the law of God but I perceive that there is in my bodily members a different law, fighting against the law that my reason approves and making me a prisoner under the law that is in my members, the law of sin. Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death? God alone through Jesus Christ our Lord can rescue me. I give thanks to God alone. (Romans 7:18–25);

In a profound sense, it is also a confession, acknowledgement and praise of the holiness of God and of his mercy towards sinful people. The Sacrament of Confession is referred to as the **Sacrament of Forgiveness** since through the priest's sacramental absolution, God grants the penitent pardon and peace. It is called the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** because it impacts the sinner through the love of God who reconciles: "Be reconciled to God" (CC 1992:358). Richards (2003:37) concurs that the Sacrament of Confession is one of the key Christian doctrines that imply the forgiveness of sins. Jesus preached the good news that God is always forgiving, no matter what wrongs they commit. He treats good people and bad people the same. The Catholics celebrate this extraordinary generosity of God in the Sacrament of Confession, which can also be called the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Ogoue 2010:13).

A number of older Catholics remember being taken as children, week after week, to have the Sacrament of Confession. It was a set routine of the time to go to confession regularly (Richards 2003:36). The penitents (sinners) went into a confessional box – a dark, small room with a grill – and spoke anonymously to the priest hidden behind a screen. The penitents gave a list of their sins and waited for a few words of encouragement from the priest. The priest then gave the penitents a penance in some form of prayer to say. The penitents would then have an act of contrition (sorrow for sins) and the priest would say words of absolution (forgiveness) (Richards 2003; CC 1992).

This tradition, which is a pattern of the Sacrament of Confession, is still helping some Catholics to come to terms with God and their neighbours. However, Richards (2003) laments that the tradition of the Church seems to be declining dramatically as a way of celebrating God's forgiveness of sin. Many reasons are suggested for the change in behaviour

of Catholics. For example, some people – through lack of faith and prayer – are no longer aware of their sin or feel a need for forgiveness. Others have rebelled against the low self-image and the threatening view of God encouraged by frequent confession (Richards 2003:37). Many have grown uncertain about what is sinful and what is not, especially in matters of sex (for example, contraception and abortion).

Richards (2003:37) is already sensing some tendency of contingency and ambivalence in people towards the Sacrament of Confession when he argues that more people feel that constant confession encourages a sense of selfishness and that it does not address the far wider sinfulness of racism, tribalism, exploitation, abuse of children and women, and exploitation of the poor. This phenomenon was confirmed by a Catholic priest who, after an observation, summarised the Sacrament of Confession as follows: “The Sacrament of Confession, in the experience of many people, had belonged to a spirituality which reflected an obsession with sin and a sense of remorse. It encouraged within people a very poor self-image, with little experience of forgiveness and that sense of being accepted” (Wilkinson 1987:32). One could concur with the priest’s assertion there is a loss in people with regard to the pastoral confessional value of the Sacrament of Confession.

However, Richards (2003:37) has not lost hope in the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession when he argues that Catholics today have not lost their sense of the sinfulness of themselves and of the world. They have returned to the scripture to find the liberating news that God loves them without measure and that Jesus seeks out sinners to shower them with compassion. When Jesus was criticised for keeping the company of sinners and outcasts, he replied: “It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners” (Mark 2:17). One of the powerful parables in the gospels about confession is the story of the prodigal son. He came to his senses and went back to apologise to his father (Luke 15:11–32). In this view, one could argue that the Sacrament of Confession faced challenges at this time, but there is yet no threat to its extinction. Hence, the scripture confirms its existence among the believers.

3.3 SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION FROM A SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE

As a follow-up from the aforementioned argument, scripture presents repentance as a necessary tool to reconcile with one another and with God. “God commands all people

everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19). “From that time on, Jesus began to preach, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 4:17). Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying “repent ye”, et cetera intended that the whole life of believers should be penitence (Klink 1993:119). Confession of sins is therefore called for in scripture because there is forgiveness from God: “If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Repentance and forgiveness are tied to our baptism: “Peter replied, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

Scripture abounds with many references to the Sacrament of Confession. The priest confesses the sins of the people in Leviticus 16:21; personal sins are to be confessed according to Numbers 5:7; David’s personal confession to the prophet Nathan and his absolution are found in 2 Samuel 12:13; it is implied that people made confession of their sins to John the Baptist in Mark 1:5; Peter confessed to Jesus in Luke 5:8; it is implied that Paul heard confessions from the Ephesians in Acts 19:18; James urges confession to one another in James 5:16. The teaching of the Sacrament of Confession and absolution is an important part of scriptural witness and Christian practice (Klink 1993:219). The Sacrament of Confession was designed because of the need of people to be saved from their sinful ways of life. We could probably not talk of the Sacrament of Confession if people were not contaminated by sin. The sinful situations of the people of God necessitated the existence of the Sacrament of Confession.

3.4 CONTINGENCY OF PEOPLE

According to Ogoe (2010:8), men and women of today subtly and yet much more profoundly, seem to gradually lose the sense of the sacred and for that matter the sense of sin. It is a fact that these days many parishioners are no longer valuing the importance of confession in most Churches. A small number of parishioners in most parishes avail themselves for this important Sacrament of Confession. It has become a common phenomenon that modern people ignore to go for confessions and probably think that they can forge ahead without that sacrament (Mandava 2011:1; Ogoe 2010:8; ZCBC 2011b:16). The **shunning** of the

Sacrament of Confession suggests that people could have a better alternative that have replaced the Sacrament of Confession. If there is no alternative, it means the sinful situation of people is overweighing them to the extent that they have no power to attain the Sacrament of Confession for salvation of their souls. Hence, the scripture confirms that true freedom comes when people confess their sins and when they are psychologically reconciled with their inner selves, with their neighbours and (above all) with God, whose incredible mercy is far bigger and greater than human weakness (Ogoe 2010:8, De Mello 1994:120).

Richards (2003:37) observes that over the past years, some members in the Catholic Church have developed a new understanding of sin, stressing its communal nature. The older Church language spoke of original sin as a stain on the soul of individuals that is inherited at birth from Adam. Nowadays, many Catholics consider original sin to be the sinful situation of the whole world into which we are born. For example, wars, extortion and corruption in many countries of the world lead to exploitation of the poor (Richards 2003:37). Probably such a global phenomenon has twisted the understanding of sin among many people of different nations. It becomes very difficult with this view to take the Sacrament of Confession as an individual affair or as a communal affair. In the past, it was easier for an individual to go to confession after scrutinising one's failures and try to meet the Lord in the confessional. If everybody sins, the pastoral role of confession becomes diminished.

However, we hear arguments that many Catholics feel responsible for the world and have exchanged the tradition of personal confession for a commitment to the victims of a sinful world (Richards 2003:37). According to Richards (2003:38), it was this emphasis that brought a renewal of the Sacrament of Confession and a change of name from penance to reconciliation at the Second Vatican Council. In 1980, Pope John Paul II called a Synod of Bishops to discuss "reconciliation and penance in the mission of the Church".

In the light of the pope's call for reconciliation and penance, the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) came up with an action plan for promoting reconciliation, justice and peace based on the document *Africae Munus* (ZCBC 2011b:16). Many Christians in Africa take an ambivalent stance towards the Sacrament of Reconciliation, because these same Christians are often scrupulous in the use of traditional rites of reconciliation. In order to assist the Catholic faithful to walk an authentic path of "*metanoia*" (conversion), the bishops had to revisit the rite of this sacrament. They had to celebrate this sacrament with the

whole person refocused on the encounter with Christ. However, it would be more sensible for the bishops to commission a serious study of traditional African reconciliation ceremonies to evaluate their positive effects and limitations. It was felt that the different dioceses have to design a reconciliation and forgiveness training manual. It is also important to celebrate a reconciliation and forgiveness day. Songs should be composed that promote the spirit of the synod in particular justice, peace and reconciliation (ZCBC 2001:16). A protracted discussion produced a balance between reflections on personal sin and those on social sin. Some Church leaders felt that there should be less emphasis on personal failings and more on social justice as the search for social justice could lead to reconciliation with God (ZCBC 2001:16).

Stressing the social aspect of the Sacrament of Confession, Richards (2003:38) cites that a chaplain at a certain school discovered a new way of approaching the Sacrament of Confession (or Reconciliation) by making individuals confess to each other in public and to come afterwards for private confession if they chose to. Groups of friends would come together to talk about their problems, weaknesses and worries. They would speak openly about their failings to each other. In other words, the students rediscovered the need to confess their sinfulness before the community instead of going to a priest (Richards 2003:38). However, the Church encourages people to go to confession even after confessing to one another, especially individuals who have wronged each other. Despite the fact that some people prefer to confess to one another than to go to a priest, there is a further argument that the Sacrament of Confession is losing its meaning through the weakening sense of sin.

3.5 WEAKENING SENSE OF SIN

Ogoe (2010:13) testifies that nowadays people in the Catholic Church do not need an expert to tell them that the Sacrament of Confession is in a sharp and worrying decline. This phenomenon is observed on the part of both the ministers of the sacrament and the faithful. Ogoe (2010:13) observes that there is a contradiction in worship when he remarks that a small number of people turn up for confession, yet there are large queues for Holy Communion. The implication here is that it is difficult for parishioners to expose themselves to a priest to confess their sins. It follows that they find it easy to receive Holy Communion even without confessing their sins to a priest. The questions that should be asked are: Why do the parishioners shun their priests who should absolve them when they confess their sins?

Where do the parishioners practice their confessions? The latter question should probably be answered first to give a clue for the answer to the former question.

It is important to know where confessions have to take place. In the Catholic tradition, there are small grilled cabins called confessionals at the corners of our Churches. These are meant for Church members to use for the Sacrament of Confession. A priest is meant to sit on a chair on one side of the grilled cabin and the penitent has to kneel on the other side. The two do not see each other face to face but can hear each other. It is at such grilled cabins that parishioners should queue for confession to the priest at a stipulated time. However, Ogoe (2010:13) laments the fact that nowadays there is a lack of proper confessionals in most Churches and the priests seem to have little interest in conducting the Sacrament of Confession. In some parishes, the confessionals have been converted into sitting places, hence the lack of dignity and respect for the place of confession. This probably answers why people are no longer interested to go to their priests for confession: they feel that they are exposed during the process. Catechesis on the Sacrament of Confession is now dwindling and taken for granted, which leads to a virtual silence on the subject. This also leads to a lack of adequate education on the Sacrament of Confession and its effective monitoring by the priests (Ogoe 2010:13). One can envisage what happens when there is no proper education on the Sacrament of Confession and its monitoring by the priests who are its custodians.

According to De Mello (1994:121), some people no longer worry about sin. Ogoe (2010:15) concurs that many people no longer go for confession because of the weakening and trivialising sense of sin among the people in the Church. However, during the time of Christ, it was something that Jesus seemed to give much importance to. At the Last Supper, Jesus said: "This is the cup of my blood; the blood of the new and everlasting covenant ... this blood is to be shed for you and for all people so that sins may be forgiven." These are the words reiterated by a priest in the most solemn moment of the Eucharist. On another occasion Jesus said: "... receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive any person's sins they stand forgiven; if you pronounce them not forgiven, they remain" (John 20:23). In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus bids people daily bread, moral strength to fight temptation and the forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness of sin is of vital importance to Jesus (De Mello 1994:122). Despite the fact that there are priests and parishioners who no longer value the importance of the Sacrament of Confession, there are still staunch Catholics in many parishes who are distressed by the fact that parishioners no longer come for confession because people are not seriously practising it.

Some people attribute this ambivalence and tendency of contingency to the signs of the modern era, where there is a lot of technology and the advent of new sciences. Due to science and technology, the seriousness of sin is diluted and taken for granted by modern-era parishioners. On this note, Pope Pius XII (back in 1946) commented that the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin due to the advent of new sciences. In other words, the pope could see the danger of people staying in sin without realising that they were sinning. However, he concluded that it is only through a repentant heart that sin is realised and shunned. We need therefore to reflect more on the meaning of repentance in the following paragraphs.

The meaning of repentance and the role of psychological counselling/ psychotherapy

Repentance means awareness of sin and the disposition of sorrow for it. This is rendered in Greek by the word “*metanoia*”, which indicates a total change of heart and mind. Repentance is a turning of the human heart and mind away from selfishness towards God. It goes together with the commandment of Jesus: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with your entire mind, and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27, De Mello 1994:122; Mandava 2011:4; Ogoe, 2010:88). The purpose of repenting of one’s sin is to make one live in the grace of God.

The Catholic Church teaches that one should confess one’s sin in order to live in the grace of God. When one is in the state of grace, one can receive the Eucharist – which is the font and summit of Christian worship. By receiving the Eucharist, one is accepting the presence of Christ in one’s life. The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Holy See 2010) states that confession should be used to cleanse and heal people’s souls considering the fact that people are weak, and that they can sin from time to time. The *Lumen Gentium* (number 8) (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council 2010) clearly emphasises that the Church is continually engaged in repentance and renewal. The Sacrament of Confession restores and strengthens the members of the Church who had sinned to have a fundamental gift of “*metanoia*”, a complete change. Such a complete change of the soul cannot be done through any human science like psychological counselling and psychotherapy, because of the existence of sin. It is only the Sacrament of Confession that is competent to address the problem of sin and Christ’s redemption thereof.

Tournier (1983:68) realises that the human sciences, like psychological counselling and psychotherapy, have some dominance in human life in the modern era. However, he cautions that in psychological counselling and psychotherapy, the one who offers help is a specialist in the social sciences but also a sinner who needs the Sacrament of Confession for the forgiveness of sin and the healing of the soul. Tournier (1983:68) says that the confessor (whom he refers to as a patient) needs the Sacrament of Confession and that confession is just as therapeutic to the psychotherapist as the patient. "I am as guilty, as powerless, as inferior and as desperate as he/she is, I am his/her companion in repentance and grace" (Tournier 1983:68).

Furthermore, Thurian (2005:31) writes that the ministry of absolution forms a part of the mission of the Church and is given to humanity in so far as one is united with Christ in the Church. In this respect, the Sacrament of Confession remains necessary to the Church until the consummation of the world (Thurian 2005:31). Contrary to the aforementioned statement, it has been taken for granted that some people can prefer psychological counselling or psychotherapy to the Sacrament of Confession. However, there is still an argument that psychological counselling and psychotherapy can give solace to the person who has sinned, but it does not go to the root of the problem of sin and human suffering. Louw (2000:169) and Frankl (1962) are convinced that human suffering is not the result of sin or an effect of evil. They argue that human suffering makes one sensitive to self-examination and the possibility of guilt. If sufferers become aware of their personal sins or their own irresponsible transgressions which have a bearing on their suffering, it is their task to repent and to confess their sins" (Louw 2000:169). Otherwise human suffering as such should be an opportunity for the sufferer to view God as a companion and an empowering agent in life. Louw (2000:172) argues further that the will of God is manifested during suffering in a sufferer's heart, aptitude and attitude. Makamure (2009:4) concurs that human suffering is not the result of sin; sin exists in the people of God whether they are in a state of suffering or in a state of joy. In order for them to be liberated from the bondage of sin, only the Sacrament of Confession can cure the deepest conflict in the human heart (that is, sin) even though people ignore it (Makamure 2009:4).

A glimpse at the history of the Church shows that John Calvin (1560: III, IV, 14) argued that when the congregation realises the graveness of their sins, it is only the mercy of God that saves them. However, it is not trivial consolation to have Christ's ambassadors presently

furnished with the mandate of absolution, pronounced in the name of his minister/priest and through his authority. Autton (1963:43) concurs that it is not what the priest does that is all-important in determining the result or direction of the counselling he gives to the people of God, but what he himself is in the moment of the Sacrament of Confession.

The mention of direction and counselling leads to what Pope Pius XII (1953) emphasised in his discourse to the delegates of the Fifth Congress of Psychotherapy and Clinical Psychology:

It is certain that no purely psychological treatment will cure genuine sense of guilt. Even if psychotherapists, perhaps in good faith, question its existence, it still abides ... As every Catholic Christian knows, that the means of eliminating the fault consists in contrition and sacramental absolution by the priests ... in the present, the doctor should rather direct his patient towards God, and to those who have the power to remit the fault itself in the name of God. (Pope Pius XII 1953)

The pope was not undermining psychological counselling and psychotherapy, nor was he exalting the Sacrament of Confession. He emphasised that each discipline plays a role on behalf of human beings, depending on its level of competence. If one discipline meets challenges that are beyond its competence, it should refer to the relevant authorities. The Catholic Church's law and catechism embrace the healing and counselling aspects of the Sacrament of Confession as the mandate of a priest.

3.6 HEALING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING IN THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

The Code of Canon Law (Vatican 2007b:959) states that in hearing confession, the priest has to remember that he is a judge and a healer of souls. In the Sacrament of Confession, the faithful who confess their sins to a lawful minister/priest have to be sorrowful for their sins. The priest who hears confession is competent to give some psychological counselling and spiritual direction during confession. This is meant to assist the confessor to amend in life and receive God's absolution. At the same time, the confessor is reconciled with the Church – which by sinning, he or she wounded (Vatican 2007b:959). The Catholic Church documents

confirm that the priest is ordained by God as a minister of divine mercies. In this respect, the priest does not only diagnose the problems of the faithful, but seeks to heal the soul which has been wounded by sin (CC 1992:1422). Hence, the priest conducts the Sacrament of Confession for the Church members since the disclosure or confession of sins by them is an essential element of the sacrament. In a profound sense, it is acknowledgement of “confession” and praise of the holiness of God and of his mercy towards sinful people (CC 1992:1424). By virtue of their work, priests are pastoral counsellors and healers of souls. They participate in the healing ministry of Jesus through actively listening to those who seek pastoral support and guidance (Igo 2005:81).

In support of the priests’ counselling during confession, Hurding (2008:299) writes that the prime goal of counselling during the Sacrament of Confession must be that the clients will hear God’s call to radical change through spiritual direction that is a true turning away from self-centredness to God-centeredness through faith in Christ. This stage of counselling is reached when the client gets an awareness of wrong thinking, emotions and behaviour that can be turned into confession and assurance of forgiveness (Hurding 2008:299). In this respect, confession becomes a crucial part of the cleansing and healing process. The priest, who is the confessor, becomes instrumental in the declaration of God’s forgiveness (Hurding 2008:317). The priest does not only declare forgiveness of sins to the confessor but also gives spiritual counselling. This spiritual counselling in the course of confession prepares the individual soul to pour out all his or her consciously repressed and hidden sins, burdens, grief and sorrows (Weatherhead, in Hurding 2008).

The aforementioned argument links the Sacrament of Confession with psychological counselling and psychotherapy in the form of spiritual direction. The spiritual direction that the priest gives during confession is a process of seeking the leading guidance of the Holy Spirit in a similar form of as psychological counselling and psychotherapy. This link between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling and psychotherapy is important, because simple psychological counselling has limited value if it does not take place within the context of real pastoral ministry to the soul (Thurian 2005:69). The Sacrament of Confession as a pastoral practice should infuse psychological counselling and psychotherapy in assisting Church members who have different problems to practise their faith better. Thus a review of healing and pastoral counselling follows.

3.6.1 Healing and pastoral counselling

Pastoral counselling is not counselling in the psychiatric sense, although there are some similarities. Pastoral counselling has a spiritual framework and perspective, and a practical theological design, because it puts human beings in relationship with God and thereby answers their transcendental needs (Curran 1959:28).

Furthermore, pastoral counselling is akin to – but not synonymous with – the Sacrament of Confession. Pastoral counselling can address the problem of human suffering. When it comes to human suffering, Louw (2000:172) and Frankl (1962) are experts who view the meaning of human suffering as the subject of pastoral care and counselling. Pastoral counselling must be used to help the faithful to discover how to suffer. It attempts to build a new disposition towards suffering, as well as a new perspective on suffering, with the assistance of Jesus Christ who suffered for us. Therefore, suffering becomes a task and a calling whereby one embodies God's presence and comfort to deal with the existential problem (Louw 2000:172). As a point of departure, the Sacrament of Confession does not only deal with sin and guilt, but also touches human suffering. This is not confirming that sin is the root cause of human suffering; it is only affirming that sin itself can be part of human suffering. This is why there is a need for absolution and forgiveness as a way of liberating the soul of the sufferer. This is where pastoral counselling and the Sacrament of Confession should blend in bringing in the presence of God so that the sufferer can find meaning in suffering with a liberated soul.

There are existential suffering challenges like sicknesses, wars, deaths and economic hardships which cannot be addressed by the Sacrament of Confession alone. This is where pastoral counselling fits in – to address such existential problems of Church members who have also realised their sins and have confessed them in the Sacrament of Confession. McGarry (2009:9) argues that the Sacrament of Confession is a form of pastoral counselling and pastoral counselling is a form of confession, but there is still a difference between them. Pastoral counselling deals with symptoms of human suffering at its causes; the Sacrament of Confession deals directly with the causes of sin and guilt. This is why the reformation did not do away with the Sacrament of Confession, but elevated it to its proper position as a practice in the Church during worship services. It changed from an obligation to a privilege, from a method of control to the application of the gospel that liberates and frees the individual from the bondage of fear and guilt (Hurding 2008:319; Klink 1993:225).

From this argument, one can note that pastoral counselling and the Sacrament of Confession are not parallel entities but that they work on a continuum. The priest who is also a pastoral counsellor has the opportunity to use both methods as long as he is efficient in both. Our Lord Jesus Christ used to release many a burdened soul from the guilt of sin that plagued them and at the same time cured them. With the removal of sin and guilt during the Sacrament of Confession, fear, frustration and negativism are also removed. With the offering of pastoral counselling and spiritual direction during the Sacrament of Confession, the confessor is strengthened to have new coping strategies to live as a good Catholic Christian. Greater use of the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling should be made to relief troubled souls, and more people should be encouraged to use the Sacrament of Confession because it contains some elements of psychological counselling and psychotherapy. In other words, there should not be a threat or competition between the two, but rather mutual cooperation to heal members of the Church who have problems. This could be taken as an age-old privilege, which is often paraded in modern Church circles as a new process and a discovery in pastoral counselling (Fritz 1945:118; Autton 1963:137).

It is not easy to identify a pastoral counselling session as it develops in the priest's office or in the confessional as a potential confession. Sometimes it goes so quickly and quietly that the counsellor who is a priest misses it before he can turn the conversation back to the problem of sin, encourage repentance and bring absolution. An opportunity for people to come for private confession is better than a call for counselling or spiritual direction. This is why it could be possible to have both at the same time and in the same place. If one does them separately, one would see that counselling evokes ideas of negotiating, finding compromises, doing comparisons with other models of behaviour from the world and turning to introspection for answers. Yet, when it is included in the Sacrament of Confession, the confessor may be free to express him or herself in the environment of prayer and absolution. Even to the uninitiated, the Sacrament of Confession pictures the confessor stating the sins of his or her life to a God who is both a judge who hates sin and a healer who cures. One would be talking to a listening Saviour who liberates, died for sins and in His word is real forgiveness through his priest (Autton 1963:139).

There is a view that it would be more honest in the ministry of souls if pastoral counselling and the Sacrament of Confession were viewed as separate entities. However, McGarry (2009)

argues that there is no need to separate the two, because they are done for the same person in the same environment by the trained priest with the same professional qualifications. Offering a time and place for the Sacrament of Confession would encourage those who seek forgiveness to come forward. One would expect continued crossover between the Sacrament of Confession and pastoral counselling (McGarry 2009:20). Fry (1981:137), quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer on the Sacrament of Confession and **spiritual care**, gives insight on the subject. Fry (1981) does not dichotomise pastoral counselling and the Sacrament of Confession, but treats them as one entity. Thus, the goal of all spiritual care is the confession that people are sinners and need spiritual healing. This confession actualises itself pre-eminently in the confessional. The confessional box is the essential focus for all spiritual care (Fry 1981:137). This argument leads us to the regeneration and sustenance of the Church members by the Sacrament of Confession.

3.6.2 Regeneration through the Sacrament of Confession

By repudiating sin, the penitent is saying that he or she wants to restart his or her life and depart from the old ways of life to begin anew. The Sacrament of Confession helps the believer to be Christ-like. In this way, he or she receives the grace that enables him or her to live his or her life as a converted person and to persevere in the life of faith. This, according to the Catholic faith, is the struggle of conversion that is directed towards the holiness and eternal life to which the Lord is calling all of us (Flannery 2007:40). The inclusion of counselling in the Sacrament of Confession also guides and sustains the Church members to find meaning of life after being given the absolution by the priest.

In counselling, the confessor (penitent) – through the confessor (priest) – stands in the presence of Christ to develop in the life of a Christian who has confessed his or her sins. This transformation displays a Christ-centred unity and a maturity that attains to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Hurding 2008:399). In his book *Roots and Shoots*, Hurding (2008:399) notes that counselling in the Sacrament of Confession impacts the individual in his or her decision to come closer to God and have a new response to life. The Lord's strengthening presence is fully realised in the Sacrament of Confession when the he extends his pardoning hand through the absolution by the hand of a priest (Hurding 2008:399). The goal of pastoral counselling is that the person can explore what is troubling him or her and move towards being less burdened and more equipped with confidence and ways of coping.

The confessor (the priest) therefore hopes that the confessor will be a changed person who will be able to face his or her difficulties with new strength (Igo 2005:81).

This brings us to the question of whether psychological counselling or psychotherapy should interact with the Sacrament of Confession. We have already had an overview in chapter one of psychotherapy as only an advanced level of psychological counselling. It cannot be excluded in the Sacrament of Confession when counselling is required. In the following section, the relationship between psychotherapy and the Sacrament of Confession is discussed.

3.7 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOTHERAPY AND CONFESSION

Psychotherapy, as a behavioural science, does not oppose the Sacrament of Confession. Remember that Zvaiwa (2009) argues that the influence and dominance of psychological counselling and psychotherapy are a threat that can lead to the extinction of the Sacrament of Confession.

However, as already demonstrated by scholars referred to in this chapter (McGarry 2009; Igo 2005; Hurding 2008; Fry 1981; Klink 1993; Autton 1963), psychotherapy are not necessarily in opposition to the Sacrament of Confession. The two can relate as reciprocal practices in the healing and pastoral disciplines. Even the Church, in documents like the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992:1444) does not oppose the application of psychotherapy in the healing ministry. Psychotherapy does not weaken the Christian's sense of sin and responsibility, but rather enhances it. Autton (1963) points out that when psychotherapy is taken as a substitute for confession, the priest must stand firm because the psychotherapist is only a recipient of the patient's ambivalent feelings. This process is known as transference (Autton 1963:134). In this respect, the counsellor who is not a priest is not concerned with the gravity of sin but only to seek a psychological balance. The therapist may therefore argue that the priest should guard jealously the Sacrament of Confession. The priest himself becomes the representation of the moral order which the penitent has violated. Autton (1963:135) argues that confession probes to bring the past into reality, like what is done in psychotherapy. However, psychotherapy does not help to remit earlier decisions or events because the future is viewed as a strong pulling power on the client's will to change and make responsible choices (Clinebell 1984:84). It is important to note that the two disciplines have their role in human

life without conflicting with each other. However, it must be noted that when the Christian psychologist has accomplished his or her task, he or she is to direct Christian patients towards the spiritual ministry of the Church (Thurian 2005:99).

McGarry (2009:20) writes that there is nothing like pure psychological counselling or psychotherapy, because human beings are psychosomatic creatures. This means that they have both body and soul that need psychotherapy and the Sacrament of Confession at the same time. People may therefore experience difficulty in drawing a distinction between what is spiritual and what is psychological (McGarry 2009:20). However, Makamure (2009:7) suggests that priests who are confessors are not psychologists, but they can get insight from psychology as a helpful and valuable tool as they conduct the Sacrament of Confession. Tournier (1983:68) argues that people are at pains looking for a confessor and where it is not possible, they consult medical doctors. In other words, Tournier does not draw a distinction between the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy. He further argues that as for the Roman Catholic patients, he (as a psychologist or psychotherapist) encouraged them to seek priestly absolution under the ruling of their faith (Tournier 1983:68). Thus he valued the Sacrament of Confession more than psychological counselling and psychotherapy. However, Tournier (1983) contends that there is a strong mutual relationship between psychotherapy and the Sacrament of Confession.

Although there is no conflict between the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy, the distinction should be clearly demonstrated because pastoral counselling is partly present in the Sacrament of Confession. It is to be considered part of the larger domain of pastoral care, which is the chief work of the priest. The priest considers this caring function to be primarily of a spiritual nature and to be exercised through the ministrations of shepherding his flock (Bier 1959:24). Psychotherapy and confession are distinguished but not separated. Although they are different in function, they overlap in the actual healing process – the minister exercises the pastoral function and he should not become a “little doctor or a little psychotherapist if he did not train for it” (Tillich 1956). Because a human being is body, mind and spirit, the person’s health depends upon the harmonious functioning of the whole system. The Sacrament of Confession can work with other health disciplines as part of medical and pastoral tasks that are inseparable requirements of the human person. This co-operation with the whole person correlates with Christ’s command to his disciples to heal and preach by using available human disciplines (Tillich 1956:46).

However, in accordance with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 1992), the Sacrament of Confession is indispensable as a channel of grace and a tool for the salvation of mankind. Makamure (2007:7) demonstrates that the Sacrament of Confession cannot be substituted by psychological counselling and psychotherapy because the Sacrament of Confession was instituted by God and through it, God communicates his grace to the penitent; its main concern is sin. In his argument, Makamure (2009) does not dismiss the presence of psychotherapy in the Sacrament of Confession but maintains that psychotherapy cannot replace the Sacrament of Confession. Thus Makamure (2009) is not disputing that psychotherapy can assist the Sacrament of Confession with psychological insight. It is true that psychotherapy, which is a human science, seeks to heal the psychological imbalances of a human person. Its relationship to the Sacrament of Confession is that of supporting it with relevant skills to make confession more effective. There is no contradiction between the two; they enrich each other. It is important to note that a confessor who is a priest can be better equipped if he uses psychological skills from psychotherapy when counselling the penitent. However, the indispensability of the Sacrament of Confession cannot be refuted in the Church's pastoral ministry (Makamure 2009:7). This leads us to another view of confession and psychotherapy from Stevenson's (2006) point of view. He views the two as having similarities in that they are conducted in private.

According to Stevenson (2006), the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy take place in private. This is what is encouraged by the Catholic Church – to have private confessions. However, Stevenson (2006) laments that the use of private confession to God in the presence of a minister has fallen into disuse. Stevenson (2006) cites a humiliating experience as one of the reasons for the disuse of the Sacrament of Confession.: “In the first place, private confession is a very painful and humiliating experience to undergo, as it should be” (Stevenson 2006:165).

Stevenson argues further that to confess one's sins to God before a priest demands that the penitent gives up all semblance of pride, acknowledges that one has failed God, neighbour and oneself in that one has not been able to live the type of life which God would have expected one to live. It is a painful experience because in confession there is no provision for the penitent to place the blame on anyone else but on himself or herself because of his or her failure; the penitent is forced to acknowledge that he or she has sinned “by his/her own fault, by his/her own most grievous fault” (Stevenson 2006:165).

The results of healing by undergoing this painful experience of private confession are very positive. Stevenson (2006) relates one experience that he had in confession as an example of how some people feel when they enter the confessionals. Those who have undergone confession for the first time describe their subsequent feelings as akin to euphoria or excitement “because for the first time in my life, I have felt really forgiven and at peace with God”. Just as no one really knows what it means to be in love until the experience has been personalised, no one understands what forgiveness is like until they have been forgiven for their sins (Stevenson 2006:165).

One could argue that the Church offers an “easier way out” in terms of confessions. Many Christians, following the path of least resistance, depend upon general confessions for the assurance that they have found forgiveness for their sins from God. While it is in most cases acceptable to make corporate confessions, the assurance of forgiveness must remain of a corporate nature and one’s experience becomes that of finding God's forgiveness everywhere. If one does not find a sense of forgiveness in the Church, he or she becomes disillusioned with the Church’s ability to ease his or her burden of guilt and so he or she searches elsewhere for it (Stevenson 2006:165). In general, the Church does not succeed in helping people to find forgiveness for feelings of guilt and sin. The Church instead increases feelings of guilt by preaching about original sin in an attempt to point out how the ordinary Christian falls short of the mark in his or her daily life because of his or her pride. This increases Christians’ sense of guilt, to the extent that they attend the Sacrament of Confession frequently (Stevenson 2006:166).

Roberts’ theory (1950), which is based on his experiences in the 1950s, rests on the argument that keeping the tradition of the Sacrament of Confession private still remains relevant. According to Roberts (1950:119), the failure of the Church in not conveying God's forgiveness does not rest solely upon those who do not prefer private confession. There is an equal danger on the other side when Churches require private confession on a regular basis, regardless of the need or the desire for it. It tends to become a meaningless rite that is devoid of any real significance. The effect of this latter approach is hard to determine, but one thing can be said in its favour: At least it puts in front of the sinner the “temptation” for forgiveness, which would not otherwise be there if it were left for them to decide when they need it (Roberts 1950:119). Roberts apparently equates the Sacrament of Confession with psychotherapy, especially in terms of what he calls “private confession”. He argues that in

contemporary society, the guilt-ridden individual seeks relief from his or her sense of sin in the more popular havens of psychotherapy. Psychotherapists have been called the “confessors of the twentieth century” (Roberts 1950:119). It is good, at this point, to look at this form of alleviation of guilt and to compare it with what the Church has to offer in private confession.

On the surface, the similarities between psychotherapy and private confession are very close. The patient comes in with a sense of insecurity or guilt and discusses his innermost desires and feelings with the psychotherapist in a spirit of confidence (Roberts 1950:121). The psychotherapist provides an atmosphere of acceptance, and the penitent knows that no matter what they have done and no matter how shameful their attitudes might be, they will always find acceptance. In this type of situation, where the psychotherapist is very understanding, the patient finds that he or she can open up and confide his or her innermost fears and guilt to another, knowing that he or she is not alone with his or her problems. The process whereby the patient does this is called “transference”. Transference comes about when the acceptance by the psychotherapist is so complete that the patient is able to treat him or her as a figure in his or her childhood and can relive the childhood experiences about which he or she is troubled. Through this experience of being able to relive past experiences with someone who is able to help him or her to interpret them, the individual is enabled to differentiate between a real sense and a false sense (Roberts 1950:122). The theory that underlies this process is that once one is able to see the truth about them clearly, one will be able to choose and to do what is right and most fulfilling for one’s own needs. This process is very valuable from a theological point of view in that it can condense and simplify for the Christian the problems with which he or she is confronted. It can save them from much needless worry about situations over which they have no control (Roberts 1950:123).

Psychotherapy can help the Christian by determining the “true voluntariness of a moral decision; it has much to teach him in regard to the influence of the environment, heredity and upbringing on the moral act” (Roberts 1950:123). In short, psychotherapy can help to separate sins from moral diseases. An act, in order to be sinful, must be committed voluntarily with the full consent of the will in order for one to be culpable, while a normal disease is a “morbid complex giving rise to uncontrollable impulses for which the individual cannot be held fully responsible” (Roberts 1950:123). The insights of Roberts (1950) are still relevant in this modern age with regard to the relationship between private confession and psychotherapy. In other words, his argument is that the Sacrament of Confession and

psychotherapy do not exclude each other. However, as Makamure (2009) has argued before that psychotherapy cannot deal with sin, he seems to concur with Thornton (1963) who asserts that absolution from one's sins is only in the realm of the Sacrament of Confession. This leads us to reflect on Thornton's (1963) discussion below about the efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession.

According to Thornton (1963), there is an area in which psychotherapy cannot be used: that is real guilt and sin. There is no provision in psychotherapy for absolving the penitent from guilt for wilful action for which he or she alone is responsible and for which there can be no rationalisation. It is up to the injured parties to forgive each other and to go for the Sacrament of Confession (Thornton 1963:301). The essential difference between the approach of psychotherapy and that of confession is that psychotherapy is geared towards dealing with what lies in the unconscious, while confession is geared towards dealing with what lies in the realm of the conscious acts of the will. As Mackintosh (1961:43) describes it: "Our attitude to God, evoked by the way in which alone we can conceive him, is like an iceberg. A small amount appears above the surface of consciousness; below the iceberg is the vast submerged mass we do not see." The essential difference between the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy are made clear by Thornton (1963) and Mackintosh (1961). Although their arguments and ideas are dated, they still make a contribution to the relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy, and they still have relevance in this modern era.

Thornton (1963) argues further that in dealing with real guilt; the confessor or a priest (unlike the psychotherapist) does not allow the confessor (penitent) to undergo any experience of transference. The priest remains uninvolved during the very brief session in order that his position as an "ear of God", which he holds by virtue of the fact that he is permitted to absolve sins in God's name, might be maintained. He does not permit the penitent to ramble freely about whatever might be on his mind at the time of the confession (Thornton 1963:302). The attitude and actions of the priest during confession discourage any type of personal relationship from developing during the time of the confession. He tries to remain a means through which God grants the confessor (penitent) formal forgiveness rather than an object on which the penitent may centre his emotions in working out his problems, as would be proper in the area of pastoral counselling. The Sacrament of Confession centres on objective guilt rather than the subjective feelings of the penitent (other than establishing the fact that the penitent should show the proper amount of sorrow for the sinful acts he or she

committed). The focal point of the confession is the absolution, in which God reveals his acceptance of the sinner despite his or her sins and brings him or her back into communion with himself because of his love (Thornton 1963:302).

To validate his argument on the essence of the Sacrament of Confession, Thornton (1963) points out that in the 18th century, Francis White (an English man) described the ends of private confession as being

first, to inform, instruct, and counsel Christian people in their particular actions; secondly, if they are delinquents, to reprove them and make them understand the danger of their sin; thirdly, to comfort those that are afflicted, and truly penitent, and to assure them of remission of sins by the word of absolution; fourthly, to prepare Christian people to the worthy receiving of the Holy Communion. (Thornton 1963:302)

Bonhoeffer (1954) adds that confession can also be described as being much like a surgical removal of the sin which “obstructs the natural growth and function of the physical and the spiritual organism” (Bonhoeffer 1954:113). This is only to underscore the essence of the Sacrament of Confession. The dynamics of the Sacrament of Confession, as explained by Roberts (1950) is discussed in the next paragraph.

According to Roberts (1950:51), the dynamics of the Sacrament of Confession differ from those of psychotherapy in that one meets (in the person of the confessor or priest) a personification of the entire congregation – the whole being found in one of its parts. It is by means of the Sacrament of Confession that the Christian is again restored to fellowship with the whole. The purpose of making the confession in the presence of another Christian is that it is only in confessing to one who has made confessions of his or her own and who has experienced his or her own sin, forgiven by the power of the cross, that one can have an experience of being forgiven by God without being judged by human standards. It is in the presence of a psychotherapist that one can allow himself or herself to be sick, and in the presence of a forgiven Christian brother or sister that one can allow himself or herself to be a sinner (Roberts 1950:51). At the same time, it is a most humiliating experience to have to confess one’s sins to one’s peer. It is because this humiliation is so hard that we continually

scheme to evade confessing to a brother or sister. Our eyes are blinded so that we no longer see the promise and the glory in such a basement.

The glory in such abasement is that it is only in dying to our old way of life that we can be born again to a new relationship and communion with God. This death to our old sinful ways is necessary for us to be reunited to God after our wilful separation from Him through our sin. Martin Luther, long back in the history of the Church, made it quite emphatic that he considered confession to be a necessary element of the Christian life in this respect: when I admonish you to confession, I am admonishing you to be a Christian. (White 1957:74)

The dynamics of the Sacrament of Confession lead us further to the common goals of the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy. Both disciplines strive to bring the individual back to his or her true and rightful state of being. From the psychotherapist's point of view, the individual's state should be one of self-fulfilment and enjoyment of life; from the priest/confessor's point of view, it might be summed up by the opening words of faith that "... a person's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him/her forever". Both psychotherapy and the Sacrament of Confession operate under the theory that ultimate security lies in facing reality: "We reach security only by a trustful acceptance of the full truth about ourselves and others, not by evasion of it" (Roberts 1950:54).

Roberts 1950:54 affirms that the Sacrament of Confession pronounces that "...there is a healing power in reality ... our healing or saving means acceptance of our finitude by the infinite."

The difference between the two practices is that for psychotherapy, reality lies in us while for the Sacrament of Confession, reality lies ultimately in God's will. It must be noted that psychotherapy can give us valuable insights into the reasons why people sin; the fact that they do sin and what is to be done once they do sin are questions for which the Church must take full responsibility (Roberts 1950:55). After noting the differences between the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy, Roberts (1950) highlights the necessity of the Sacrament of Confession for a Christian. He asserts that in our contemporary society, the need for the Sacrament of Confession cannot be disputed. He argues that it is impossible for

one to become a follower of Christ and be an inheritor of the kingdom of God unless one dies to one's old ways of life and is born anew. The death to sin must be suffered by each Christian individually; it follows that one must make one's confession as an individual. This calls for the Sacrament of Confession to play its pastoral role for a Christian. In our society of "short-cuts" and easy requirements, the Church must be weary of falling into the temptation of dispensing cheap grace-granting forgiveness to those who are not really penitent but who are getting by on appearances. As the physician of souls, the Church has the responsibility to see that those who "cannot quiet their consciences ... and are troubled with any weighty matter" that cannot be relieved by the use of confession be given the education and the opportunity to make a private confession when the need arises (Roberts 1950:130). Instead of focusing mainly on the practices of the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy, we need to view the priest as the custodian of the Sacrament of Confession who plays his confessional role as a priest.

3.7.1 The confessional role of the priest

If Kierkegaard is right in saying that "the opposite of sin is not virtue, but faith", then the effective use of confession by the priest might well result in an increase of faith in the saving work of Christ as a real answer to the problems of the contemporary world. One comes to have faith through the experiences that one has had in seeing God operate in one's life once one undergoes private confession (Tillich 1949:83). The sinner no longer only hears about God, but he or she begins to know him because he or she has seen him in action in breaking down the barriers he or she erected through sin. In the film *Shoes of the fisherman*, the pope (after discussing this issue with several of his business-hardened cardinals) points to a confessional and says: "Once a week I come and sit here for two hours, to hear the confession of anyone who chooses to come ... You both know what this ministry of the tribunal is like. The good ones come, the bad ones stay away; but every so often there arrives the soul in distress, the one who needs a special cooperation from the confessor to lead him/her back to God" (William 2006:53). Morris (1963:229) explains: "It is a lottery, always a gamble on the moment and the man, and the fruitfulness of the word one plucks from one's own heart. And yet there, in that stuffy little box, is the whole meaning of the faith, the private speech of humanity with his/her Creator, 'myself between as man's servant and God's mercy'."

The priest remains capable of ensuring some degree of quality for those who are entrusted to his care. West (1963) reminded the priests of their confessional role when he wrote that we speak the languages of psychology, learning theory, programme management, administration and (to varying degrees) theology. We award certificates and, to honour the elect, carry out rituals which are more and more devoid of prayer, for fear of not being inclusive (West 1963:15). In other words, West was aware that to some priests, the confessional role has become only a duty in which they do not want much involvement. Such a task requires total commitment to the service of God and his people. This is why West further argues that all the successes are worthy and good and the result of hard work. He stresses that there is a need for total service in the midst of trial and error. Commitment by pastors of souls is needed for the on-going spiritual growth of the people of God, who need to be cherished. Colleagues in the allied professions have come to appreciate the priestly professional standing and the contributions in the field of pastoral therapy more. However, a prophetic question stands at the edge of pastoral work and begs many people's attention: What profit does one gain if one wins the whole world but loses one's soul in the process? Humanity has gained much, but have we counted our losses? We may not have lost our souls, but there is a danger, especially when the pastors of souls seem reticent to engage in soul language in their interactions with others. For most pastors, the scripture is the centre of discourse, but there is a whole body of soul language that supports these primary texts (West 1963:229).

The argument goes further to the notion that the priests as pastors of souls should be well versed in scripture and the traditions of the Church. West (1963) was already aware that priests were specialists in their discipline as pastoral therapists. He emphasised that as pastoral therapists, pastors should be versed in the more ancient wisdom traditions – Jewish and Christian, as well as others – that carry the language of the soul. After all, long before Freud and Jung, there were astute clinicians such as Catherine of Siena, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Those who have studied spirituality have learned that there was a marvellous sophistication in the methodology designed by these spiritual teachers who discovered the secret of listening to men and women's souls (West 1963:229).

Underneath the cultural, historical and religious veneer of a particular time or period, these universal insights into the human heart are as scientific and measurable as any theory of human psychology. In fact, spiritual direction training entails the same kind of intense process in individual and group supervision as do pastoral care and counselling training

programmes (Mackintosh 1961:82). In the world, people are still hungry after decades of popular psychology and the materialism of the mind. All the technical books cannot be and all the self-help books have not proved helpful. The world's hunger is a soul hunger. Thus the time has come to reclaim a spiritual heritage that is rich, full and capable of satisfying the soul (Mahwah 1983:31).

After this argument on the strong stance of the confessional role of priests, Nouwen (1980) – as a parish priest and psychotherapist – had his own experiences of his time that can help us to evaluate our own experiences in this modern era. Nouwen (1980:242) presents his personal experience as a priest and therapist to illustrate his argument of multiple relationships to his parishioners as a pastor, preacher, psychotherapist, confessor, friend and administrator. He started an analytic-type therapy with a man who was a member of the Board of Trustees and also a chairperson of the Stewardship Committee of his parish. In the course of psychotherapy, the client developed strong negative father transference and suddenly one Sunday acted out the negative transference by sabotaging their plan for a stewardship canvass of the Church members. Reasoning with him was to no avail. The Church budget was at risk. Nouwen was in an inevitable conflict-of-interest situation between loyalty to the client and to himself and the Church. The man said in effect: “It is not that I hate you that I am doing this”. In fact, he did like him. But because Nouwen reminded him of his father and because of his unconscious negative father transference to him during this phase, he directed his pent-up anger of his father at Nouwen and the Church, and severely damaged the plan for a stewardship programme. This and similar experiences of Nouwen's colleagues in parish ministries confirmed in his mind the impossibility of working with conflicted unconscious impulses and negative transferences in multiple-relationship settings. Nouwen's experiences as a pastor and therapist may not give a thrust to what we want with regard to the relationship of psychotherapy and the Sacrament of Confession, but it points to how one can synthesise the two without having any conflict between these practices.

Nouwen's principle of non-multiple relationships applies to providing therapeutic services to clergy and clergy families. It is important that the pastoral psychotherapist should not be under the same administrative umbrella as the clergy-client. Pastors of a sponsoring Church or members of the Board of Trustees of a pastoral counselling centre have multiple relationships with a pastoral psychotherapist who serves on the staff of the centre. Similarly, pastoral psychotherapists have multiple relationships with colleagues at an annual conference

or a presbytery, but can avoid this multiplicity to some extent by working with members of another conference or presbytery. Like missionaries, pastoral psychotherapists must go into the wilderness of new relationships that are not connected to their friendly, familiar home churches and support systems (Nouwen 1980:242). In the same way, when one is conducting the Sacrament of Confession, it has more impact when one goes to another, unfamiliar community. Why Nouwen's point is important here is because parishioners may shun the Sacrament of Confession just as they shun going to a familiar therapist because of familiarity. It becomes more effective if a pastor goes and practice to a community that is new to him in order to avoid embarrassing people who may not feel free to come to the pastor whom they know for confession.

The point of a non-multiple relationship for ministry to the repressed, conflicted and unconscious through pastoral psychotherapy leads to many disagreements and misunderstandings among pastoral psychotherapists, parish ministers and other leaders. Ordained ministries such as these are necessary to reach the conflicted unconscious in people so that they may be wholehearted in their faith in God and authentic in their love of others (Nouwen 1980:242). Nouwen is a good example of a pastoral therapist who was into practise as such. What he relates to us is more than psychological counselling that can be done by an ordinary pastor; it is a speciality of a trained pastor in the field of pastoral psychotherapy. Ministering to the unconscious seems to us another exclusive ministry that is more than general pastoral work. This means that pastors should be able to reach people with different disabilities, including the mentally challenged.

Pastoral psychotherapy should focus on the unconscious that is repressed and in conflict with the conscious intentions in order for Christians to be cared for wholeheartedly. Otherwise, they are divided within themselves, their loyalties are split, and 'no person can serve two masters at the same time' (Nouwen 1980:242).

The point here is that Nouwen suggests that when a pastor specialises in psychotherapy, he should only concentrate on psychotherapy in order to provide a total service to those who need it. He suggests that there should be collaboration with other pastors who may not be focusing on psychotherapy as such but on general pastoral work, including conducting the Sacrament of Confession. The two functions should be performed by two separate priests,

each ministering to and counselling the same parishioner simultaneously. They will not perform the same services and, therefore, will not be competitive. This means that parish ministers will not refer parishioners to pastoral psychotherapists if referral means that the former discontinue their pastoral care and counselling. Parish ministers should provide pastoral care to everyone, including severely disturbed individuals, but also be open to the possibility of referring anyone to pastoral psychotherapy within the same parish community. Nouwen's argument is helpful to priests who are already in the field of pastoral therapy so that they can collaborate in assisting the parishioner who may suffer in different ways. He also advocates for more training in psychotherapy on the part of priests so that referral is done within the same community.

Nouwen (1980) argues further that the traditional descriptions of the functions of preaching the word and administering the sacraments are not adequate for the Church's ordained ministry today. The Church's ministry must be expanded to include ministry to the unconscious, otherwise the Church is providing half a ministry to half a person. To fulfil the Church's task and mission, the Church must accept new approaches to ministry that incorporate contemporary understandings of human behaviour. According to Nouwen (1980), pastoral ministry with persons who may be affected by spiritual suffering includes at least the following:

- (1) *Confession/Acknowledgement.* A good start is to acknowledge our own fleshliness – an acknowledgement that will have to be repeated from time to time. Broken or not, our nature is organic. Even our personality is biological. We have no gospel that we are not in need of ourselves (Nouwen 1980:243). The pastor's own personality is an "earthen vessel" for the gospel. This should be most obvious with the Apostle Paul himself. The impressions we get of his personality are not ingratiating, but that personality has mediated to us the gospel of grace itself (Nouwen 1980:244).
- (2) *Proclamation/Advocacy:* The gospel gives us a framework for dealing with human brokenness, but only if we preach it. Advocacy is an extension of our preaching. In a variety of situations, we have the opportunity to make it known that we see someone as human. Another sort of advocacy is to press for the use of treatments that are now available but not widespread (Nouwen 1980:244).

- (3) *Listening/Learning*: Getting specific information about people's conditions is an extension of the listening part of ministry. This should provide a basis for deciding how much information to seek and when to seek it. Some quite specific information is pertinent, for example that the inability to handle sequences can be mistaken for apathy or a short attention span (Nouwen 1980:244).
- (4) *Worship/Encouragement of faith*: Worship services and Bible study are regularly held in special care wards. There is no doubt that these services are worthwhile and that patients/parishioners have faith.
- (5) *Maintaining the moral point of view, but without condemnation*. No judgment is expected.
- (6) *Praying/Hoping*. With our parishioners, or for them, it is part of the ministry to pray for the "*parousia*" (the second coming of Jesus) and sustain the hopeful conviction that fleshly corruption is not the last word.
- (7) *Wise pasturing for persons throughout life*. Apparently, one's "premorbid personality" has a considerable effect on how one will handle brain trauma. It would appear that to follow pastoral care throughout life is an investment towards coping in the event of later brain damage or any emotional disturbance.

Having gone through Nouwen's experiences of psychotherapy, we can say that we have witnessed the impact of psychological counselling and psychotherapy in pastoral work that is practised by a priest. It has been noted before that even the Sacrament of Confession is not excluded in the healing ministry. However, the review of the relationship of the Sacrament of Confession with psychological counselling and psychotherapy is not yet exhausted. This leads to the contributions of pastoral counselling and psychotherapy in pastoral therapy, which is discussed in the next section.

3.7.2 Contributions of pastoral counselling and psychotherapy in pastoral therapy

Weigert (1998) argues that there was a time in primitive societies when the function of the priest and the healer were not separated but united in one person. This was a time of prevailing magical thought and action. Nowadays ministers and psychiatrists meet on a more rational basis for the purpose of mutual aid. Under the cultural conditions of mass society, the need for understanding individual emotional conflicts has become increasingly urgent (Weigert 1998:160). There are many individuals who do not suffer from illnesses defined by

medical diagnosis. Instead, they are suffering from ill-defined unhappiness, loneliness, rootlessness and the meaninglessness of living. They may not want to face their religious or spiritual conflicts, or they may avoid the Church and turn to a psychotherapist for help. Others who still have some emotional attachment to a Church and are prejudiced against psychiatry may turn with the very same problems to a minister (Weigert 1998:160). Worldwide, this widespread need for help in individual conflicts gives rise to a new professional group of pastoral counsellors who in the framework of the Church specialise in individual counselling, using the knowledge and the techniques of modern psychotherapy to help their members. There is a practical and common base for individual pastoral counselling and psychotherapy in understanding humans (Lind 2006:1). The human understanding referred to here is that of acquiring insight into human behavioural sciences (like the psychodynamic approach). In the next paragraph, some aspects of human behavioural sciences that are necessary for effectively conducting pastoral work are discussed.

To be an expert in psychodynamic observation which includes a grasp and management of transference and counter-transference is time and energy consuming and cannot be combined with the duties of a general medical practice or the priest's obligations in an extended parish. Similarities can be drawn between modern psychotherapy and the new specialty of pastoral counselling that grows out of the need for help in the widespread neurotic context of misery of our time (Lind 2006:1). Although the professional background of a pastor and a psychotherapist is different, their common purpose (service to the suffering individual) brings them together. Both try to reach an understanding that transcends the barriers of communication between the two professional groups. Sociological studies compare the different "untranslatable" terminologies of two symbol systems that attempt to grasp different aspects of reality as well as the different social roles and expectations that characterise minister and client on the one hand and psychotherapist and patient on the other hand. The physician's role is necessarily authoritative when the diagnosis reveals that the patient is unable to take care of him or herself (Lind 2006:269–273). Otherwise the pastor would have intervened to give pastoral care which even includes the Sacrament of Confession. When the patient can be helped through surgical, pharmacological or other external intervention, he or she has to follow the physician's orders. However, when the patient's suffering can only be relieved by means of a change in the patient's inner attitude (Louw 1984), the doctor–patient relationship is no longer authoritative; it becomes a relationship of mutual participation (Lind 2006:269).

Similarly, in pastoral counselling the authoritative role of the minister can become obsolete, because the counselee cannot simply obey the minister's orders to have faith when he or she doubts and despairs; to love his or her neighbour when he or she hates and keeps grudges; and to practise devotion when he or she is full of bitterness. A change in inner attitude – in religious terms, a conversion – has to take place and can be reached in a partnership of searching for new understanding. The pastor needs the diagnostic advice of a physician if there is any doubt that the patient can profit from a counselling service through active participation or that he or she is disabled to such a degree that he or she cannot actively participate and needs medical care (Weigert 1998:160). The minister's parishioner and the patient in psychotherapy may hold onto the expectation that he or she can remain passive in the hope that the minister or the doctor might take the active role as a magic healer or redeemer. However, these roles that the helper is expected to play are more an obstacle than a help in the search for understanding what ails the counselee and of how he or she can learn to accept help (Lind 2006:270).

Verbal frame of references in psychiatry or theology can also become an obstacle rather than a help if it is not handled carefully. The sophisticated patient might have preconceived ideas about feelings of inferiority; the counselee of the minister might have deep-seated illusions about unpardonable sin or his own self-justification (Weigert 1998:160). Such abstractions are mostly far removed from spontaneous emotional experience and represent resistance against the process of self-scrutiny which can initiate a change of inner attitude. Clichés have to be debunked before the minister and the counselee can both arrive at the genuine emotions that dissolve congealed habit patterns and permit new decisions (Lind 2006:1).

A look at the similarities in the minister's and the psychotherapist's task from two viewpoints, that of confession and that of conversion, will be helpful here. Both concepts belong in the minister's universe of discourse, yet they may also be profitably translated into the psychiatrist's frame of reference. A counselee approaches his or her helper with a need for confession. The penitent does not necessarily talk about his or her guilt or sin, but considers him or herself a failure. He or she does not make use of potentialities. The penitent may not get enough satisfaction out of intimate relationships and work. He or she may be caught in conflicts in which he or she cannot arrive at decisions. This can lead to depression, and he or she may antagonise a partner or feels exploited by the partner. When an organic illness that required medical attention has been ruled out, and when the patient is able and

willing to take some responsibility for himself or herself in the healing process, he or she turns to a psychiatrist or a minister to learn to understand the causes of his or her suffering and how they can be removed (Lind 2006:1). We can affirm that the therapist and the priest have important roles to play in the life of human beings; they should offer their expert services as much as they can. They can either assist the parishioners by using their expertise or they can refrain from practice when they see that they are ineffective, but short-cuts should be avoided.

Short-cut solutions (like exhortation, reassurance and uninformed guidance) are frequently ineffective, because they offer only transient solace or they represent gifts that the distressed patient cannot yet integrate. They even increase the painful distance between the patient's real being and the ideals he or she cannot live up to. In our time, the psychiatrist and the pastoral counsellor frequently arrive at the conviction that a change in the inner attitude of the patient or counselee can take place only when he or she is able to confess not only what he or she knows about himself or herself, but also what is hidden from his or her awareness. Since the Freudian discoveries about the unconscious mind, they no longer rely solely on the surface self-presentation of a patient. Every patient or counselee in our time and age has been exposed to so many social pressures that he or she approaches his or her helper with distrust. This distrust may be expressed in a readiness to win the helper's approval through hypocritical submission to the expressed or unexpressed wishes, suggestions and ideals of the authority figure, or the patient may test his or her helper's forbearance through withdrawal, defiance, and/or conscious or unconscious deception (Lind 2006:1).

There have always been spiritual leaders and gifted healers who intuitively looked through external appearances to the core of the personality and were able to communicate their insight to the counselee. The modern knowledge of psychodynamics has made such insight accessible not only to persons with exceptional inspirational gifts. A trained person can learn to look through a network of lies, self-deception, illusion, and rationalisation that separate the suffering individual from the sources of vital energy, and that have made his or her emotions and other attributes of his or her vital impulses partially enigmatic. But the suffering individual has to participate in the investigation. It mostly turns out that through their participation, their engagement in a process of investigation distracts some of the self-tormenting impulses of the counselee's vitality. In this kind of confessional work, doctor and

patient and pastor and counselee have to invest a quantity of time and quality time as well as energy (Lind 2006:1).

A confession that has become an empty ritual does not reach the depth of individual suffering. The counselee only gradually learns soul-searching communication. He or she needs time; an atmosphere of calmness that shuts out every-day distractions and a non-judgmental, sympathetic listener to whom he or she can reveal without fear of being forced into conformity or rejected through condemnation. If this confessional self-revelation becomes the goal of a common enterprise in which the counsellor and the counselee collaborate, their mutual communications builds trust in each other. This trust will help to dismiss misleading imagination which human beings are inclined to, and they will discover the psychological truth about themselves (William 1957:77).

In an effective confession, there must be a grasp of the psychological phenomena that psychology counsellors have called transference and counter-transference. These phenomena of repetition and identification show a clinging to congealed patterns of past relations and to roles that both partners in such an investigation attribute to the other and to themselves – roles that mask the original, truthful “I and Thou” in the here and now of their encounter:

The psychological truth cannot be found by logical deductions and abstractions alone. The encounter of the spontaneous “I and Thou” springs from a trust that can afford to drop the more or less stereotyped masks and roles of defence and gradually reveal the innermost self of the patient or counselee. But he is only able to respond with cleansing sincerity to a counsellor who has purged his own reactions by his self-scrutiny from impulsive or compulsive wishes and fears in his approach to the partner. A human helper is never free from the wish to succeed or from the fear to fail, but he can learn to tame his impatience, to become aware of his preconceived ideas and prejudices, the egocentricity of his strivings, and to adapt them to the partner’s pace and slowly growing understanding so that all interpretations and explanations are concentrated toward the goal to transcend the present conflicts and to regain the wholeness and integrity of the suffering partner. (Buber, in William 1957:78).

In religious experience, the regaining of wholeness is called conversion. It is a conversion from a life-negating attitude to a life-confirming, integrative attitude. Such a conversion hits a person sometimes with lightning power, as William (1957:78) demonstrates in his studies:

The psychotherapist hopes for a similar transformation of his patient, but this is seldom experienced with dramatic suddenness, since the psychoanalyst, particularly the analyst of the classical Freudian school, embarks on a long-term exploration of the individual patient's past. He tries to avoid directions and suggestive influences that impose on the patient the helper's own values; he attempts to liberate gradually step by step the synthetic function of the ego by tracing the causes of dissociation back into early childhood. In other schools of psychotherapy, attention is more concentrated on the aim of re-adaptation of the patient in the present situation. In order to understand the phenomenon of conversion, it may be useful to throw a short glimpse into the causes of disintegration and reintegration in human development.

A discussion about the relationship between confession and psychoanalysis from an individual and communal perspective is necessary at this point.

3.7.3 The Sacrament of Confession and psychoanalysis

A comparison between what St Augustine (398 AD) experienced in the Sacrament of Confession and early psychoanalysis is very relevant for this study because St Augustine touches on personal sin which later affects community living. St Augustine's confessions can help one to understand the pastoral role and the confessional value of the Sacrament of Confession when the penitent or confessor takes it seriously. In the introspective process of psychoanalysis, the "confession" is made far easier than when one makes confession before a priest or a fellow Christian. The "analysed" or counselee knows that the counsellor is broadminded, while the analyst or counsellor is committed not to be judgmental and to be as permissive as possible in every respect. All popular moral requirements were, in the early era, placed aside in psychoanalysis. The analysed could speak about his or her inner life without restraint or being fearful of moral judgment (Smith 1995:134). In the case of the Sacrament of Confession, as a result of introspection, St Augustine saw himself standing before his own

Christian criteria. The same is true today when a person makes confession before a fellow Christian or a priest and becomes critical through self-introspection (Smith 1995:138).

St Augustine gave us no “manual” of the Sacrament of Confession to follow for our ministry of soul care. Instead, he offered us something far greater (St Augustine 398 AD: XIV 14). He brought his own confession before God and his own people. He confessed openly his sins and showed clearly his selfishness, his vices, the ugliness of his character and his desperate need for inward healing through absolution (St Augustine 398 AD:XIV 14). Here we see the crucial difference between psychoanalysis and the Sacrament of Confession with regard to the relief given to the person. The one who makes confession in psychoanalysis gains relief from some symptoms as interpreted by the analyst (McGarry 2009:20). For example, Freud himself was much more honest at this point. He freely admitted that the insights gained in psychoanalysis did not give him as much healing as he initially presupposed. In fact, his analytic theory is really based on some kind of faith, as he himself admitted. It is the patient’s “belief in the wisdom of the doctor, faith in another human person is a healing remedy in the findings of the analyst” (Smith 1995:138).

The Christian who makes confession before the priest does not rely merely on the integrity of the priest. In the Church fathers’ understanding, the priest is “the servant of the sinner” who tries to help the person who is confessing to unburden his or her heart before God. The declaration of forgiveness offers infinitely more than relieving one’s symptoms. Our conscience is torturing and convicting us; “our heart condemns us” (1 John 4:20). It is exactly this condemning heart that cannot be muted by mere rationalisations. The strong, inner condemning voice can only be silenced by trustfully clinging to God’s forgiving love in the Sacrament of Confession because God is greater than the human heart (Smith 1995:138). If the confessor has grasped the meaning of going for the Sacrament of Confession, why then is there still the tendency of a defence mechanism? Probably because one would be led to think that there could be something more than his or her choice for defence mechanisms.

3.7.4 The Sacrament of Confession versus defence mechanisms

Why St Augustine is relevant in this study is because he gives a practical example of defence mechanisms which may discourage parishioners from attending confession. Defence

mechanisms can only be dealt with when one accuses oneself of the sins one has committed and is ready to repent through the Sacrament of Confession.

St Augustine characterises the desire to defend oneself in clear sin as a pernicious form of “*superbia*” (pride). He sees this in the story of the fall and the self-justification of Adam and Eve. Eve: “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.” Adam: “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate.” St Augustine points out that there is not a word of begging for pardon, no word of entreaty for healing. He puts it thus: “Pride seeks to refer its wickedness to another” (St Augustine 398 AD: XIV 14). Here is a sign of inward dishonesty that is manifested by a human being.

From our own lives and in the work of ministry, we know clearly that inward dishonesty can bring all sorts of defences in order to justify oneself from wrongdoing (Smith 1995:132). The human tendency to have defence mechanisms is caused by pride and denial of reality. This is why, in the history of psychology, Freud in his work of psychoanalysis declared that one of his aims was to alleviate the neurosis of defence mechanism. He did this by educating the person to develop inward honesty. His goal was to enable the patient to admit fully the secret intentions within in order that he or she would disclose to the analyst things not shared with anyone else. In this way, the patient could be freed from the destructive influence of these inward dishonesties (Smith 1995:132). Likewise, the great Christian philosopher Max Scheler (1928) rightly emphasised that the confession of sins is a part of the “self-healing” of the soul (in Smith 1995:132).

The aforementioned argument brings the healing effect of the Sacrament of Confession into focus. It is this therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession that is illustrated in the explanation of the “resident alien” in the next paragraph.

The basic trait of the “resident alien”, as St Augustine used this picture of the Christian, is to see one’s true citizenship as being in the invisible City of God and therefore having permanently to fight the tendencies produced by original sin. The more fully the person is aware of himself or herself, the more there is the recognition of the inward energy of original sin as pride (*superbia*) that is self-pleasing and alienation from God. There are two ways to react to this growing distance from God. One is simply to pursue the direction of pleasure, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (I John 2:16). The other is to

go the opposite direction as a “resident alien”. The person who lives with the “resident alien” consciousness sees his or her direction as a straight and ideal way but in reality, there are many detours and obstacles. It is filled with all kinds of setbacks. The “resident alien” is conscious of seeking after the things above while yearning for a true homeland. On the other hand, the “things below” can tempt and distract the person (Smith 1995:132). This argument gives meaning to the need for the Sacrament of Confession. Its efficacy and meaning is illustrated in the resident self. In the following paragraph, the therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession is described on an individual and communal basis in pastoral care.

3.8 NARRATIVES OF CONFESSION ON AN INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL BASIS IN PASTORAL CARE

As noted above, St Augustine’s “resident alien” is a person who realises that his or her life on Earth is a pilgrimage and is not permanent. This explanation can help us to handle the Sacrament of Confession on an individual and communal basis in pastoral care.

The following questions lead one to reflect more on the Sacrament of Confession (Smith 1995:129). Should the Christian be like everyone else, totally involved in the affairs of this world and totally immersed in its passions and pursuits? Should the aims of the Christian include the search for enjoyment of life, for possessions, and for high position and status in society? Or should the Christian strive for something even higher, having some distance and detachment from these other aims and desires without denying their relative value? Smith (1995:129) helps us to reflect on St Augustine’s confessions in order to have a vivid picture of confession in pastoral care. The above questions were posed in pursuit of the real truth in this earthly life. There are admonitions in scripture which come to mind, such as that in 1 Peter 2:11 & 12: “I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” Here the Christian is characterised as not really being a citizen of this world, but in some way an alien or a stranger. The Sacrament of Confession prepares parishioners to live critical and virtuous lives on Earth.

According to Smith (1995:135) what makes a Christian confess his or her sins is the realisation that this world is transient or passing. The Christian is a citizen of another

“country”, a citizen with full rights of citizenship there. The writer to the Ephesians (2:19 & 20) says, “So, then, you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus, himself, being the chief cornerstone.”

This attitude is a basic orientation in the life of a Christian. The question arises: Is this “resident alien” attitude healthy and wholesome, or would it – in our lives as modern Christians – create more problems and conflicts and lead to psychic sickness? Or is this “resident alien” consciousness a very healthy attitude – a healing attitude that could offer help to a person in recovering from inward conflict, psychic distortion and sickness, and lead him or her to inner wholeness (Acts 3:16)? These questions lead to further questions: How useful or how harmful is the Sacrament of Confession for our work in pastoral care? Does this metaphor of the “resident alien” help us to admonish, to comfort and to edify our Christian values (Smith 1995:130)? The related questions that we have asked before can only be answered in view of the concept of original sin, which is reviewed in the next section.

3.8.1 The concept of original sin

Smith (1995) does not view original sin as a single fact in dim prehistory. It is a psychological reality that is present in the unconscious and is made conscious when one sees its consequences. It resides in humanity permanently (Smith 1995:130). The basic attitude of original sin is pride (*superbia*), a corrupt and perverse self-exaltation, an attempt to be above everyone else without regard to the needs of others and to dominate or manipulate others, even to the point of cruelty. It is the separation from the source of all goodness (that is, from God) and making oneself central in life instead of him. “When the soul abandons him to whom it ought to cleave as its end and becomes the highest principle to itself, this makes the soul smaller than it was when it cleaved to God who supremely is, who exists in himself” (St Augustine 398 AD:XIV 15). Original sin is a permanent tendency in a person to abandon God, either in a crude or subtle form. This (pride) could be the reason why people shun the Sacrament of Confession, because they do not want to be humiliated by saying out their sins before a priest. St Augustine argued that such pride of wanting to be superior is caused by original sin.

According to St Augustine (in Smith 1995:130), pride separates a person from God; it also splits the inner life of the individual and pits the person against himself or herself. One's lowest drives rebel against good common sense and reason. In his penetrating observations in his *Confessions* (398 AD), St Augustine gave numerous examples of the effects of original sin. He looked back on his vain ambition to be a "star" in the theatre of the world. He found his morbid, hypocritical ambition far worse than his simple craving for sensual pleasures. He looked with great pain at his irresponsibility in relation to the woman (his concubine) who loved him deeply and bore him a son, and his abandonment of her, as further evidence of this (Smith 1995:130). The point here is that the emotions and the restlessness experienced by St Augustine point to the need for him, as a Christian, to have a deep reflection on life that leads towards the Sacrament of Confession. His lifeline was marked with critical incidents where he could mark high or low points in his relationship with God and the people in the world. We cannot deny that as an individual, St Augustine developed emotions that determined his meaning of life, his spirituality and his choices towards the Sacrament of Confession and its therapeutic effect.

3.8.2 Narratives of St Augustine on the therapeutic effect of the Sacrament of Confession

The experience of St Augustine helps us to see how the Sacrament of Confession can cure one who is in a sinful state to realise the presence of God in his or her life.

St Augustine looked back at his arrogance concerning the Holy Scripture, which at first seemed to him primitive and incomprehensible. He looked to the word of God for some special, exalted wisdom. In retrospect, he viewed his attitude simply as self-deception. He looked back on his life and observed his permanent desertion of his heavenly Father, who secretly guided him and who (as he felt) was constantly calling him to be one of his children. In all this, he saw his conversion back to Christianity as a long and agonisingly torturous experience (Smith 1995:130).

St Augustine reflected on how there had always been resistance in him to the loving voice of his heavenly Father who was calling him through Jesus Christ. He looked back and saw God's great mercy as, at times, a very severe mercy (*severa misericordia*). He recognised that God gives such painful experiences to his children in order to educate them and enable them

to grow into becoming real persons. He poignantly recalled how, driven as he had been for worldly power and prestige, he was permanently anxious over his effort to falsely flatter and fawn over powerful people with whom he could gain favour. He saw himself, overwhelmed by his ambition, based on lying and falsehoods and as far worse off than a drunken tramp he met on the street in Milan. He thought that at least this poor, inebriated wretch was easily satisfied with a few momentary enjoyments, while he himself was permanently in a state of restless unhappiness (Smith 1995:130).

When St Augustine used the word “*superbia*”, it is usually translated as “pride”. But the word “pride” is too small to describe the full impact of “*superbia*”. It really means an inordinate arrogance which is an insult to divinity: “for pride is the beginning of every sin, and what is pride but the craving for perverse exaltation?” (St Augustine 398 AD: XIV 3). St Augustine’s word that is translated as “exaltation” here is “*celsitudo*”, which means an extremely high, lofty position, up into heaven. “It happens when the soul abandons him to whom the soul ought to cling and becomes a kind of end to itself” (St Augustine 398 AD: XIV 3). By this turning to oneself, Augustine contended that the person does not become larger or a more broadminded or finer person. Rather, this turning to oneself narrows one and shrinks the person inwardly in order to acknowledge one’s unworthiness and confess one’s sins (Smith 1995:130).

It is easy to abandon God and to please oneself as if God does not exist. Therefore, the Holy Scripture designates the proud by another name: “self-pleasers”. Proud people are those who please themselves. It is good to have the heart uplifted, not towards one’s own ego as this would simply be pride. We need to lift our hearts toward the Lord, which is obedience and at the same time humility. In other words, humility leads people to confess their unworthiness before God.

Humility, for St Augustine (St Augustine 398 AD: XIV 18), is symbolised by standing at the foot of a mountain, looking up, and thus appreciating fully its grandeur and height. So humility, as he understands it here, is an appreciation of the higher spiritual values, and being uplifted and joyful because of such perception. A characteristic of humility is that it uplifts the heart; a characteristic of arrogance is that it drags down the heart. He points out that when the words “You shall be like gods” (Genesis 3:5) were spoken to Adam and Eve, they would not have been ensnared into open sin had they not already begun to please themselves.

Adler (1937) finds the words “You shall be like gods”, extremely significant. He considers this attitude striving to be god-like – a basic cause of mental derangement and emotional conflict. The person with such acute feelings of inferiority combines it with the inordinate striving for superiority, the striving to be powerful and honoured, to be dominating. All this exploitation of others makes one highly vulnerable and easily susceptible to psychic wounds. Sooner or later, the person feels inwardly deeply wounded. Moreover, he or she can wound countless others, can excite individuals to conflict, and can even be the driving force behind terrible mass murders and wars. Such a person cannot easily see the need to go to confession because of the morass of sin in which he or she is sinking (Smith 1995:130).

The healing power of humility in pastoral care cannot be overestimated. Leaders in the field of psychotherapy remind us of what genuine honour and respect for the patient or client can mean in the healing process. Family therapy speaks of how vitally important it is that each member of the family be aware of the therapist’s sincere respect for the person, and of what this can mean for the healing process by enabling the family to grow in mutual love and respect. A similar emphasis on the high regard for the patient and on engendering this attitude in the patient toward others as a means of finding healing is present in the works of Tournier (1983), Frankl (1933) and others. St Augustine maintained that humility is not only the ability to see the greatness of God and to cling to him, but to see the great value of the other person. In fact, he pointed out that humility inclines one to see the other person as greater than oneself (Smith 1995:131). The tension within oneself can have an external influence on others if it is not dealt with properly.

In the next section, the tension within oneself that can cause one to be restless in life is reviewed.

3.8.3 St Augustine’s narratives on the problem of making ultimate choices

The tension within oneself can come as a result of indecision to make proper choices in life in view of a number of choices that the world offers to the individual. Because human beings have freedom of choice, they can use their affectivity or emotions to go by what attracts them. Such choices can affect others in different ways, yet it can start with one individual and then affect others. In St Augustine’s thinking, the concept of the “resident alien” is related

systematically to others. It is important to review one of the concepts that relate to the “resident alien” concept, since it has implications for the Sacrament of Confession.

The two loves

Due to the constant struggle against the power of original sin, the soul of the “resident alien” is in permanent tension. There are two powers which are pulling in opposite directions. St Augustine speaks of them as “two loves”. The two cities, the heavenly and the earthly, are founded by these two loves. The one is love of oneself (which is characteristic of the earthly city). This love of oneself goes so far as to disregard God. The other, the heavenly love, goes so far in loving God as to forget oneself. The one love glorifies in oneself and seeks glory from others, while the other love glories in God. However, the great glory of the other is God who gives witness in one’s conscience. The one loves ruling, dominating and subduing, while the other seeks to serve another in love. The one delights in its own strength and the other has God as its strength (St Augustine 398 AD: XIV 28). According to St Augustine, the “resident alien” is drawn by this heavenly love, even though he or she follows it imperfectly because of all the inordinate ties with the “earthly city”. The more this “resident alien’s” consciousness develops in the Christian, the less the person is tied to himself or herself in a kind of self-idolatry. St Augustine asserted that the more one makes oneself a false god, the more one makes God an enemy. But if one really loves God, one also loves those who are loved by God. This means truly seeing God as a God of love and understanding how much one is loved by him. The “resident alien” is conscious of how great God’s love is for him or her and is thus profoundly aware of how much God loves the sinner who is so bound up in the life of the “earthly city” (Smith 1995:132).

St Augustine saw a peculiar, very positive type of self-love in this “resident alien”, consciousness flowing directly out of love for God. This self-love includes the desire for one’s salvation; the desire to possess goodness of character and to be helpful to one’s neighbour; and the yearning to be near God and to be a citizen in the city of God. “The one who knows that he/she loves himself/herself loves God. The one who does not love God, even if he/she loves himself/herself, it can be truly said that he/she hates himself/herself” (St Augustine 398 AD:IV 14, 18). “We love ourselves the more we love God” (St Augustine 398 AD: VIII 8, 12). This kind of “intelligent self-love” (*intelligenti amare se ipsum*) (St Augustine 398 AD: X 3) needs to be elicited and strengthened in the process of pastoral care.

Frequently, Christians who come to the pastor are so burdened, or even inwardly debilitated, that they no longer accept the message of God's unconditional love for them (Smith 1995:133). In summary, St Augustine testified that love of self leads to love of God, and love of God makes us love others. The reason why people go to confession is because they lack the love of self and of God.

After this fascinating discussion on the tension within oneself, how grace and free will relate to a person who is in need of the Sacrament of Confession is discussed next.

3.8.4 St Augustine's narratives on grace and free will

According to Smith (1995:133), the "resident alien" battles to win freedom from the enslaving power of original sin by exercising free will. The gift of God's grace means the increase of this freedom which gives hope for complete victory. In spite of sometimes speaking about irresistible grace or divine transformation of the human will (that is, from being unwilling to willing, from being unbelieving to believing, from being pagan to becoming a Christian), St Augustine emphasised the freedom of the human will even stronger in the later years of his life as a pastor and bishop. Even when he spoke about "irresistible grace" that rescues the sinner, this was not some kind of mechanical action or crude coercion but the gift of God's Spirit working within the person and increasing his or her freedom and dignity. This experience of irresistible grace was therapeutic for St Augustine: "At last I am conclusively persuaded by the goodness and greatness of God's love to follow his leading without hesitation. The stubborn resistance of my egoism and its lusts for power and pleasure are defeated by the insight into God's great care for me. The way he wants to lead me is the only true direction" (St Augustine 398 AD: X 4).

This emphasis on the freedom of will comes out in a treatise on grace and free will that he wrote just a few years before he died, "The Holy Scripture revealed to us that in humanity there is free will." In this treatise, St Augustine refers to John 15:22, Romans 1:18–20 and James 1:13–15. In the light of these texts, he claims that humankind knows God's will but does not do it and is therefore without excuse. He points out that it would have been senseless for God to give orders or commandments if a person does not have the free will to fulfil them: "Does it mean that there are so many commandments of God which are to be kept and the fulfilling of which God orders? How could God order if there is no free will? Does not

God clearly say that by his own free will human beings can stand in God's law?" St Augustine (398 AD: IV 7) went on to say: "To live a good life and to do rightly, it is necessary for the person to have a free will. The same can be said about God's grace, without which we cannot do anything really good."

In practical life, free will usually means either the possibility to choose the goals of my activity or to choose the ways of action (that is, how to reach these goals). Simple observations from daily life confirm that free will is present in everyone's life. However, this free will is always limited by external situations which narrow the choice down in one direction (St Augustine 398 AD: X 4). There are other limitations that are imposed by internal psychic conflict, compulsion, fear, passion and prejudice (Smith 1995:134). These limitations can lead us to have a tendency of contingency in which we cannot have control over our choices of the events that recur in our lives. We probably let some events take precedence as influenced by God as a Supreme Power.

In view of St Augustine's emphasis on the absoluteness and consistent character of God's providence and predestination on the one hand and on the power of original sin on the other, one would expect from God a full denial of the freedom of the will. Instead, St Augustine made a strong case in favour of freedom. But how can God determine or move our will, or direct it, without limiting our freedom remains a mystery. Here we can only use the analogy of persuasion when our will are changed, but our decision of changing it is free. Free will comes from within the person (Smith 1995:134). It turns out that every good act of free will is a gift of God's grace, without which nothing really good is possible: "We have always a free will, but not always a good will. Our will is not free from righteousness if it serves sin. It is free from sin if it serves righteousness and then it is good. Grace, however, is always good, and through grace, a person of evil will become a person of good will" (St Augustine 398 AD: XV 31).

St Augustine's strong affirmation of free will is very important for this study on pastoral care and its rationale for confession. Many times, the pastor must clearly admonish the parishioner or counselee, calling on that person's ability to make a decision regarding a vital, moral issue or in regard to upholding a sacred value. Not only in admonishing, but also in the pastor's function of comforting, this awareness of the freedom of the will can be a great help for the suffering and guilty person. There may be nothing that the counselee or parishioner can do

about a personal tragedy, but the pastor can still encourage him or her to take a stand on the kind of attitude he or she takes towards the tragedy (Smith 1995:134).

An insightful perspective of Frankl (1939) is his theory of logotherapy, which he calls “freedom of the will”. By logotherapy, Frankl implied that one gets healed through the word and its meaning. Louw (2000) concurs that the freedom of the will is instrumental in understanding the meaning of suffering. This necessity to hold up despite overwhelming trials manifests the value of the freedom of the will, which priests and pastoral counsellors should see in their parishioners. Along with that freedom, parishioners use the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church to confess their sins. This sense of free will can help the parishioner to feel that the pastor respects him or her as a free, responsible person and not merely sees him or her as a bundle of reflexes and instincts or as some kind of machine or object (Frankl 1939). Free will spurs us to look into the future with the Christian conviction of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead after his suffering.

3.8.5 St Augustine’s narratives on the resurrection as “example” (*exemplum*) and “sacrament” (*sacramentum*)

The “resident alien” lives with a vision of his or her future homecoming to the city of God as well as a present experience of that life, even in his or her daily life on Earth. This awareness comes through contemplating two aspects of the resurrection of our Lord (Smith 1995:135). As an example, St Augustine pointed out that we need to constantly remember that our Lord’s resurrection is followed by the resurrection of the believer at the end of time, the resurrection of the dead. He pointed to the episode when the risen Christ, in speaking to his disciples, called them to “touch and see” (Luke 24:39) as a confirmation of the resurrection of all his believers (St Augustine 398 AD: IV 3, 6). With reference to the sacrament, St Augustine used the term “sacrament”, in a very general sense, as it was used in the Latin New Testament and the early fathers. “Sacrament”, for him, means a sacred sign that sanctifies. In this usage, it means something concrete and visual that points to some spiritual reality. This refers to a resurrection within the believer, the “sacrament of the inner person” (*sacramentum interioris hominis*) or “sacrament of renewal” (*sacramentum renovationis*). This inward resurrection is possible if the person embraces the divine greatness of the risen Lord and sees him as equal to the Father. In this connection, St Augustine refers to the words of Jesus to Mary Magdalene in John 20:17: “Do not touch me because I have not yet ascended to the

Father.” The “touching” here, St Augustine said, is not to be understood in the corporeal or bodily sense but spiritually, “touching” him refers to ascending to the Father and being equal with the Father. St Augustine explains this as a vital teaching. The Christian is not to consider Jesus only as a human person, albeit the most noble and sacred, but is to cling to him as the risen and ascended Lord (St Augustine 398 AD: IV 3, 7).

This inner, spiritual resurrection starts ever again with the pain of repentance, with the death of the old and the resurrection of the new within. Faith in this risen, ascended Lord, who justifies the sinner, grows in the believer. The believer is daily renewed by this risen Lord himself, being without sin, having died for sinners and who joins the believer in mystical union (St Augustine 398 AD: IV 7, 11). The person to whom God gives the gift to live in this “sacrament of resurrection” is a “resident alien” in this world. This person’s “leading motive” in this life is the longing for one’s true home country and for the immediate nearness to God. This longing was active even in the days when the person seemed to be totally dominated by “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life”, and, in this way, totally alienated from God. If this “heavenly longing” dominates, does this imply that the person has to neglect the duties of this life and be fully isolated from it? St Augustine's answer was clearly “No!” (St Augustine 398 AD: IV 7, 11). One can view St Augustine as someone whose life story was full of meaning, action and spirituality of the transcendent. To clarify this further, a reflection on his intentionality, contemplation and action is appropriate.

3.8.6 St Augustine’s narratives on the contemplation of intentionality, meaning and spiritual action

According to St Augustine, a believer in God does not live in a vacuum where there is no intentionality, contemplation of the meaning of life and action that is led by spiritual contemplation. The believer, conscious of being a stranger on Earth, embraces a life of contemplation and action. St Augustine considered it a great thing to contemplate first the whole creation (corporeal and spiritual, visible and invisible), this world and the world to come, and then to contemplate the creator and learn from God himself (St Augustine 398 AD: XIX 19). For him, this did not mean that the person has visions, hears voices, or necessarily apprehends images or symbols. Rather, it meant that the person is in the presence of truth itself and gains new, relevant insights given to the mind. St Augustine pointed out that our minds, if helped by God, can see much more than we anticipate. In some ways, the

human mind is a vast mystery. He spoke of it as an abyss that can have an uncanny depth of insight (St Augustine 398 AD: XLI 13). On the other hand, our human reason has suffered all kinds of distortions and, left to itself, it cannot reach such depths. Therefore, we are often unable to perceive (or even tolerate) the unchangeable light of God's presence. Our minds must be gradually healed and renewed to be capable of such unspeakable bliss. He said: "The mind needs to be filled with faith to be purified" (St Augustine 398 AD: XI 2).

One way in which St Augustine urged contemplation is by focusing on the beauty and harmony of creation and to look at God's creation for the "traces of the trinity" (*vestigia trinitatis*). He emphasised the beauty and grandeur of creation as a whole. He enjoyed it as an artist, not simply forcing himself to admire it. Spontaneously, hymns of praise erupted within him. St Augustine's concentration on Christ and his resurrection was revealed through his appreciation of creation. For him, creation was good, nature was good and, as far as the person was concerned, in spite of corruption, that person (as created by God) was good (St Augustine 398 AD: XI 22). He eloquently described the beauty of the things in God's creation and the pleasure that this provides for the beholder. In creation, he truly saw the goodness of God (Smith 1995:130).

Another direction of contemplation of God for St Augustine was through a return to oneself (*intus se ipsum redire*). In his treatise "On the true religion", St Augustine invited the reader not to go "on the outside" (*foras*), but to enter into oneself, because the truth lives "within the inner person". The next step in this inward movement was as follows: "If you find yourself changeable, transcend yourself and search for God as the Foundational Reality" (St Augustine 398 AD: XXIX 72). In another treatise, "On the teacher", he said that "God is to be looked for and adored in the secret rooms of the human personality, which is called the 'inner person'. There, he wills to have his temple" (St Augustine 398 AD: XXIX 158). Both of these statements indicate fundamental and ultimate life goals for St Augustine, which led him to spiritual introspection where he joined interpretive psychology with religious contemplation (Smith 1995:136).

While emphasising the contemplative life of a stranger in this life, St Augustine nevertheless saw this as just one part of his existential experience; it was not the whole. The other side of life for him was activity or action: "No one has a right to lead such a life of contemplation as to forget in his/her own case the service due to his/her neighbour; nor has anyone a right to be

so immersed in active life as to neglect the contemplation of God. The charm of leisure must not be indolent vacancy of mind, but the investigation or discovery of truth, that every one may make solid attainments without grudging that others do the same” (St Augustine 398 AD:XIX 19). The tension between contemplation and action is a fundamental issue in the ministry of pastoral care. There are more “burned out” priests and laypeople who have been dedicated servants of the Church. This dedication has led them to frenetic activity and an inner emptiness where they are almost devoid of a life of prayer and contemplation.

Smith (1995) argues for the “resident alien” as a picture of the genuine Christian which St Augustine received from Scripture. This “resident alien’s” consciousness had as its interpreter (for St Augustine) not only his mind, but mainly his heart and another mysterious “teacher” within (we might call it the “unconscious”) who spoke to him a language without sounds or sensual visions. For him the “teacher” was Christ speaking within. He thus turned away from outside noises and cares and looked to the inner person of the heart to receive the insights given by these kinds of “revelations”. This “way into oneself”, and observing what is going on in this process, is usually called introspection. St Augustine, in choosing this way, was at first overwhelmed by the greatness of God, the Foundational Reality, and only then did he see the smallness and transitoriness of his own existence. Smith (1995:137) views this kind of introspection as the main factor for St Augustine in the formation of his “resident alien” consciousness.

From the preceding sketch of St Augustine’s psychology of the character of the “resident alien” (Smith 1995), it is necessary to address the questions posited at the beginning about the Sacrament of Confession: What are the dangers, and the benefits, of this attitude for us and for our ministry of pastoral care? The introspective process can easily lead to a morbid self-scrutiny, into what Adler (1937) called neurotic “self-boundedness”. It can lead to an excessive narcissism in which the person can lose the “resident” aspect of this picture of the Christian life and become only a stranger to others and to the immediacy of life. This egoistic generation in our cultures has been particularly susceptible to such an obsession with the self. This can only lead to what is claimed to be **the sin** (*homo in se incurvatus*), the person turned in on himself or herself. What then are the benefits that St Augustine found as vital for his own Christian life as a “resident alien” and for his work as a priest? The reason why he was telling his life story was because of his deep self-introspection, which is discussed in the next paragraph.

Introspection, for St Augustine, according to Smith (1995), clearly meant to meet God in one's own soul. At the same time, it meant seeing one's own person – one's own interior person – in God's light. This implies judging oneself with the criteria of Christian morality. However, for St Augustine, seeing his interior life before God meant more. In God's light, people see how much darkness there is within them. We see our pettiness, our self-centeredness, our selfishness – which lead to a consciousness of guilt that leaves us inwardly pained and tortured. **Confession of the self as a sinner before God was thus vital for St Augustine and for other Christians, not only for own inner healing but also in the pastoral care of the people of God** (Smith 1995:138).

What have been discussed so far with regard to the Sacrament of Confession gives a picture of what a confessor is and how he or she can become conscious of his or her sinfulness in the presence of other people and in the presence of God. Before this discussion about self-introspection that leads towards the Sacrament of Confession is concluded, the healing of memories has to be reviewed. Our past is full of mixed memories and experiences that can cause us joy and trauma. Sometimes such experiences can lead us to hatred of self and of other people (St Augustine 398 AD).

3.8.7 Augustine's narratives on the healing of memories

Another fruit of St Augustine's way of introspection which also has implications for the Sacrament of Confession has to do with the so-called "healing of memories". Many members of the Church live with painful, traumatic and sometimes devastating memories that prevent them from truly hearing the gospel of God's forgiving love. These "dark continents of the soul" need to be evangelised (Smith 1995:139). St Augustine had many painful memories. However, he found something else as he went back to those memories. It was the clear consciousness of God's guidance. Returning to those memories, he recognised that those painful, anguished times in his life were a part of God's "severe mercy" (*severa misericordia*), of God's loving care. He saw that God was guiding him, even in those times when he deserted God (St Augustine 398 AD).

Memories, for St Augustine, had special import. One's memory was not outside the person as a special psychic function, as if the memory were independent from the individual. For St Augustine, my memory was "I myself". In the process of introspection, he would travel

through his past. But the painful, cutting edges of these past memories were removed by God, whom he felt as a companion in his travels (Smith 1995:139). The central benefit of this introspective process for St Augustine was him “seeing” the deep, passionate love for God hidden within himself as a “resident alien”. It was his perception that he would not really find his rest, his true home, his true destiny, until he could rest in God. This highest, most sublime love for God within him did not imply that it swallowed up all his other lesser loves. Rather, he saw all of these other loves – love of one’s betrothed; love of spouse, family, friends; love of beauty, art, music and nature – as flowing from this love for God. He asked God, as a “resident alien”, to order in him all these loves (*ordinate in me caritatem*) (Smith 1995:139).

How can this love for God find expression? In St Augustine’s psychology, the question was solved in this way: A person can love God by loving one’s neighbour, that sister or brother who is somehow linked to one’s life and destiny. By loving one’s neighbour, one loves – because God is love or love is God. When someone loves another person, the love that one experiences for that other is closer to him or her than that of the other person. Thus, one sees that the love he or she experiences within self in his or her love for a neighbour witnesses to God’s love within oneself (Smith 1995:139).

The priest is the person who provides pastoral care and sees numerous depressed and mentally disturbed people in the ministry. These people are often filled with self-hatred and self-loathing, with a pervasive sense of worthlessness. Where these people can somehow be guided into loving and caring for another, there is great potential for healing and recovery through the Sacrament of Confession. This is a form of “intelligent self-love” that can be encouraged in the healing ministry of pastoral care. It is not only a way of evangelising the sufferer, but also a way of building up the congregation as a truly healing community (Autton 1963:134).

In conclusion to the above narratives, the focus on the “resident alien” could help in this study to show that the ambivalence and contingency of Church members to the Sacrament of Confession can be reduced by the fact that our destiny is not permanent. When we realise our pride, we are prompted to see someone greater than us, who created us and needs us to be closer to him – that is God, our Foundational Reality. The attitude and the contingency of people towards the Sacrament of Confession can change their actions when they have a deep reflection on the confessions of St Augustine and when they avoid having their defence

mechanisms in the face of the reality of life. The discussion above has developed a therapeutic model for the Sacrament of Confession in the ministry of pastoral care in the sense that human beings should realise that they are not “resident aliens” on Earth.

This study will now focus on the dynamic processes of the Sacrament of confession in the African context, especially the Shona people in the Masvingo Diocese as the context of the study. The next section is therefore on confession in the African Shona socio-cultural context.

3.9 CONFESSION IN THE AFRICAN SHONA SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

A critical reflection on the dynamic developments in the African culture and the effect of that on church members and religious practices are explored. The African Shona socio-cultural context is very important for this study because it illuminates how local people in the Diocese of Masvingo in Zimbabwe understand the concept of confession. The Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe emphasised the importance of culture in preparing a document for Rome on a new way of evangelising people. They emphasised that without understanding local culture, evangelisation becomes difficult to implement in its local nature. According to the Synod of Bishops Lineamenta (ZCBC 2011a:14), culture is the most important sector that calls for a new approach of evangelisation. These days, people are in profound secularism, which has led to a loss in their capacity to listen and understand the words of the gospel as a living and life-giving message (ZCBC 2011b:14). Confession existed in the African Shona socio-cultural context before it was realised as a sacrament. In Shona culture, for example, a pregnant woman would have complications in giving birth until she confessed her sins of adultery or witchcraft (Zvarevashe 2009).

Zvarevashe argues from a Shona traditional background of confession. Although people claim that confession is foreign and is threatened with extinction because of the influence and popularisation of counselling services, it has a solid foundation in the Shona tradition and culture. According to the Shona-Karanga (the Shona who live in the Masvingo province are referred to as “Karanga”) tradition, the confession of sins was practised before the first Christians came to the country (Zvarevashe 2009:26). The Shona- Karanga people are the ones who were formerly called “*MaVhitori*” because they lived in the former Fort Victoria province of Rhodesia during the colonial era. In actual fact, the Karanga people are the

Shonas who lived in the Masvingo province, where they experienced most of their influence on the Christian religion. When the missionaries came to Masvingo province, “*ngoma*” (drums), “*hosho*” (rattles), “*mbira*” (xylophones) and other local musical instruments were introduced by the local Shonas (Ponde 2006:2). The Catholic Church in the province initiated inculturation (that is, incorporating the traditional and Shona local cultural values into the Catholic Christian religion). This move promoted the dynamism and development of Christianity in the local Catholic Church. Questions were being posed of whether there was any phenomenon equivalent or similar to the Sacrament of Confession in the Shona people’s culture? Zvarevashe (2009:26) confirms that such a phenomenon was present in the African-Shona culture before the advent of Christianity. People used to confess to their local communities by paying for restitution according to the Shona customs. The acceptance of a token of restitution in the form of a cock, a hen, a goat or a sheep would re-cement the once broken family ties. The spiritual mediums of the families would sanction the forms of restitutions as compensation to the wounded parties.

The Shona people also consulted their “*vadzimu*” (ancestors) for guidance (Gelfand, Mavi, Drummond & Ndemera 1985). It is difficult in the Shona customs to separate religion from psychotherapy and other social science disciplines. The Shona people are led by the philosophy that “*munhu, munhu, navanhu muntu umuntu ngabantu*” (a person is not an island but lives with others in a community). Even their traditional religion is grounded in relationships as part of their belief system. They believe in the living dead, which means that there is a continuum relationship between the living and the dead (Gelfand et al 1985). There is no gap between the living and the dead of the Shona because they are closely linked to each other. Their existential life is interpreted by their lifestyle which is based on an extended family system. In this extended family system, every member of the clan is a relative in one way or another. The relationships go beyond the nucleus family to other surrounding families like uncles, aunts, grandmothers, in-laws, grandfathers, grandchildren, et cetera. This gives us a picture of how the Shona would view confession as something that is meant to amend their relationships with one another and with the Supreme Being (*Musikavanhu*). According to Gelfand et al (1985), sick people and sinners in the village would be brought to the “*n’angas*” for healing and exorcism. This is done by the family members who would bring their sick member to the “*n’angas*” or to the spirit mediums. According to articles published in the *Catholic Church News* (Makamure 2007, McGarry 2009, Wood 2010, Zvaiwa 2009), in the Shona culture, people would not tell strangers about their shortcomings but would go to the

“*tetes*” (aunts), “*sekurus*” (uncles) and other trusted relatives to confide in them. According to Zvarevashe (2009:26), the Shona people used to confess their sins publicly in the presence of their elders. However, the public was restricted to a council of elders of the family from which one was born. Members of the extended family would sit in their council and settle family matters that could extend to clan or tribal disputes (Nyandoro 2010).

On a family level, a woman would be unable to deliver her baby before confessing her social sins. The midwife and the elderly women surrounding her would encourage or even force her to confess her sins, especially sins of witchcraft and adultery. The elders would remind her of the seriousness of her situation by saying this proverb: “*Mukadzi ari pahata haaiti gunyengu rechitota kubhururuka chakabereka chikomba kumusana*” (The wife in labour has no choice but to confess her sins so that birth becomes easier). She would then only concentrate on giving birth and would not be weighed down by her sins (Zvarevashe 2009:26). In some cases, a woman who was a witch could not conceive until she confessed her witchcraft.

Similarly, as soon as a husband who committed adultery entered his house, a child or baby would start crying continuously and would refuse suckling from its mother until its father confessed his sins. The elders would say: “*Vakuru vaiti kurapira mwana akadaro kureurura*” (To treat such a child was to confess sins) (Zvarevashe 2009:26). The father of the child would have no option but to confess if he was found to be guilty. He would confess to the wife in the presence of their aunt so that the child could stop crying and gain sound health.

On a social level, when elderly men wanted to go hunting in the forest or fishing, they had to confess their sins lest they might be killed in the forest by wild animals. Likewise, women who went to collect fruit or mushrooms in the forest had to confess their sins before they went (Zvarevashe 2009:27). If the women were adamant and refused to confess their sins before going to the jungle, they would get lost or would be eaten by wild animals.

Shona people used to confess their sins before engaging on a long journey or when migrating. Above all, people would confess their sins at the deathbed and when crossing a flooded river. The Shona people knew that they had to confess their serious sins publicly in the presence of their relatives. This is supported by the Shona proverb “*Kubira rwizi ruzere hureururura zvitadzo zvako zvose/rwizi ruzere runobirwa neareurura*” (The flooded river is crossed by one who had confessed all his/her sins) (Zvarevashe 2009:26).

In the Shona culture, before one died, one had to confess one's serious sins in order to die well and be received by his or her own "midzimu" (ancestors) in the spiritual world. By confessing one's sins, one would be accepted in the realm of the ancestors. The aspect of restitution in the Shona culture was greatly appreciated. When someone bit his or her mother for no apparent reason, he or she had to make restitution in the form of a tame animal. This had to be done before the mother died. If she died before her son or daughter settled the matter, he or she had to wear sackcloth to show the local community that he or she had offended the mother. This is what the Shona-Karanga people normally call restitution (*kuripa kana Kutanda botso*). One would wear sackcloth as a sign of repentance in order to appease the mother even if she was dead (Zvarevashe 2009:6).

It is in the healing practices of the traditional healers and in the charismatic and prophetic Churches that the signs of life have been clearly preserved. The Sacrament of Confession embodies healing efficacy (Audette 2003:83). The penitent and the pastor/therapist have to observe the following two aspects to implement the healing process.

(1) *Identification, an efficacious speech*

The capacity to identify or name the illness that the patient suffers from is one of the integral parts of prophetic and traditional therapy. The terminology is adapted to the patient's hypothetical world. The African prophet employs two diagnostic methods. On the one hand, he or she can let the patient identify the sickness. If the healer finds that the patient's account is in conformity with the cosmology accepted by the community, he or she accepts the patient's basic diagnosis. On the other hand, the healer need not wait for the patient's account but can define the sickness in sufficiently broad symbolic terms that are customary in the community. He or she can also use divination as a way of identifying and naming the demon (Hemmerick 1993:112).

Identifying the offending agency (the violation of some taboo/an unacceptable individual action and the possession of the patient by evil spirits) tends to be set in a sequence of associated ideas and this in turn stimulates confession, restitution and the general purification.

The specific identification of the illness, the acceptance of the patient's own diagnosis or that of his or her family, and the prescription of treatment make the patient feel for the first time that he or she has really been understood. The healer agrees to share in the patient's search for health by sharing his or her hypothetical world or, where necessary, modifying it (Hemmerick 1993:112).

(2) *Suggestion, a sympathising speech*

Another integral part of prophetic or traditional therapy is the use of suggestion. The healer encourages the patient to think positively and invites him or her to undertake concrete positive actions. We have here a therapy of action that originates in the healer. The healer uses various kinds of suggestions (Gelfand et al 1985):

- *Direct suggestion:* This is a way of reassuring the patient who has lost hope in any cure or who behaves irresponsibly or unproductively. The Shona prophet/prophetess in Zimbabwe assures the patient of the healing powers that God possesses and that he exercises through the healer. The patient is told: "Have no fear. All will be well through the mediation of my servant, the healer. I will answer your prayers." The direct suggestion is made through an affirmation in the form of a direct divine commandment that must be, and generally is, accepted by the patient. Direct suggestion in the form of a reprimand is used to create a dependent relationship before therapy enters a deeper phase, that of the ritual (Mouton 1970:62).
- *Ritual suggestion:* The use of rites as suggestive therapy takes many forms. One example is divination or prophecy. The healer may fall into a trance that is stimulated by the singing, prayers and lamentations of the participants. While in a trance, the healer gives the patient an account of what the divine power or the world of the spirits is telling him about the patient's illness. This is the voice of the Holy Spirit, the religious prophet claims, and not just his own voice. Usually conveyed in a foreign tongue, the message is translated by an interpreter. The message includes a diagnosis and the proposed treatment (Mouton 1970:62). Ritual suggestion may call for ritual ceremonies. Gelfand et al (1985) give the example of a married couple seeking help after the wife has had a series of false

pregnancies. The prophet predicts that the spirits of the families, the wife's and the husband's, are responsible for the situation. There are personal and interpersonal conflicts which the healer does not disclose. The sacrificial rites, therefore, are a means of suggestion whereby the patient's aggression and frustrations are expressed and her misfortune, her sickness, is transferred symbolically to the animal that is presented for sacrifice, or shared by the participants and is thereby eliminated or reduced (Hemmerick 1993:114).

- *Symbolic suggestion:* The healing is consolidated by symbols representing health, the protective and stimulating force. Hence, the use of the imposition of hands, prolonged prayers and anointing with oil as the disciples were enjoined to do in the first centuries of the Christian era. Other suggestive symbols that contribute to therapy include reading prayers of praise and taking certain objects to the patient (such as the wooden figure of a pregnant woman to a barren patient) (Mouton 1970:63). Symbolic suggestion sometimes takes the form of ritual. The patient may be taken to a river to symbolically experience the exorcism of the spirits responsible for the illness – the water becoming a symbol of the purification of the patient (Mouton 1970:63). Among the Tonga in Zimbabwe, the river and the canoe provide the symbolism for a truth that is verbalised during family conflicts. Within the setting of the family, marriage is compared to a canoe floating on the river and navigated between the two banks, which symbolises the fragility of the institution of marriage and the continuity of the two joined lines of descent (that of the wife and that of the husband). “The canoe”, they say, “grows old and decays, but the two banks will remain.”
- *Suggestion by testimony:* The account of what God performs through his servants has a central place in prophetic activities. At every cultural ceremony, the Shona give testimonies about how they have been healed through customary prayers to the spirit mediums, exorcism and purification rites. These testimonies reinforce traditional faith, augment hope and encourage newcomers to trust the healing power of the “*n'angas*” and spirit mediums. Testimonies have a similar importance in many prophetic churches (Mouton 1970:63). The aforementioned argument of a sick person in an African context gives us a clue that there is a belief that people get sick because they sin against God and their neighbour. Hence, those who are sick need to be taken to those who are instituted by the

community to heal the sick and to absolve sins, like the prophets and the “*n’angas*”.

It is argued further that confession is a call to accept and be transformed, especially when it is viewed from the context of an African Independent Church. Confession is one of the most important current therapy techniques in African communities. In the African context, confession may be made in the presence of a friend or a healer, and it can also be public. Once the patient has shared his or her feelings of guilt and disquiet, confession is usually accompanied by a sense of relief. It is obviously accompanied by an emotional unburdening (Mouton 1970:64). To each patient who makes confession in public, the congregation responds with an attitude of forgiveness, acceptance and a symbolic act of inclusion in the community (perhaps by a ritual ceremony), acts of reparation and pardon. Expiation may take the form of a prayer, a public bath, libation offered to the ancestors and abstinence from sexual activities or from eating a favourite meal for a certain limited period. The patient is also asked to carry certain objects or to read a special prayer as a reminder of his or her healing (Mouton 1970:64).

Confession is accompanied by the emotional catharsis which helps the patient to experience the benefits of release from guilt and of pardon, acceptance, reincorporation in the group and an individual sense of security. The context in which African therapy takes place, for example the speech acts with reconciliation as the objective, is the patient’s own living environment (Du Marriage 1993). The patient’s grief, the freedom to offer a diagnosis of the sickness, the reconciliation of the patient with the spirit world as well as the world of things and that of human beings are all therapeutic factors that are supported by discourses and symbols of life. The reality of health and healing (that is, the capacity to live fully) is expressed from the beginning in terms of a manifestly relevant word of life. Confession can be in terms of symbols that link human experiences with a basic spiritual order (Senghor 1980). The importance of the symbol in the discourse is that it has not simply a cognitive but also an operative value. In other words, the symbol not only represents but actually establishes the unity that it designates. The symbol, the human speech and the divine speech, establishes a coherent entity of power that strengthens and sets in motion the healing process in a given social, cultural and community setting. This is a challenge to African Churches to go on exploring the healing property of the acts and signs of symbolic cultural language. African Churches need to search for the recreative power of the word of God that is

embodied in the ministry of Jesus Christ, which permits the patient to find reconciliation with nature and people. African Churches also have to recover health practices through immersion in the waters (Senghor 1980; Du Marriage 1993).

To respond to the call of the gospel, which is at once universal and particular, we must exist culturally. There is no contradiction between the particularity and the universality of the gospel; they influence our culture, our ways of thinking, of being involved and withdrawing, even our forms of art. People have spoken of the ambivalence of the Christian relationship to society. The Christian is called to bring his/her critical judgement to bear on his/her own culture as well as being called to accept this culture. (Mampolo 1982:80)

After looking at the literature of African people and the Church context, it can be said that the Sacrament of Confession was never a new concept in the African context. It existed even before the advent of missionaries, but it was refined by Christian moral values. In the next paragraph, the seal of the Sacrament of Confession and how it relates to the aspect of confidentiality in psychological counselling are discussed.

3.10 SEAL OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION AND THE ASPECT OF CONFIDENTIALITY IN PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING

What is meant by the seal of confession is that the priest who conducts confession and the penitent are protected by Church law and ethical norms. Ethical norms that involve privacy and confidentiality are related to the ethical guidelines of counselling.

According to Medina (1974:258), priests who conduct the Sacrament of Confession are protected by the Church and civil law. Medina observes that there are privileged communication laws that protect the confidential statements of parishioners to their clergy against intrusion by the courts. Medina (1974:258) argues that common and statutory laws that protect religious confession should not be construed to protect communications made by parishioners during counselling, unless the clergy have demonstrated minimal standards of competency in counselling. Critical insights in this regard by Wigmore (in Medina 1974), a professor of pastoral theology and law, are presented below.

Priests are taught deep respect for the information that they receive from their parishioners. Catholic priests are under threat of excommunication if they reveal information that has been obtained from the confessional (Medina 1974:252). Although Jewish and Protestant clergy do not perform the sacramental equivalent of a confession, they hold the religious communications of their parishioners in high confidence. The ethical standards and religious doctrines of the churches protect the parishioners from clergy gossip. In addition, these confessional or religious communications receive special standing in court settings because of privileged communication laws. "Privileged communication" is a legal term which refers to the rights of citizens, under certain circumstances, to prevent their priests from testifying about them in court (Medina 1974:252).

Besides the Sacrament of Confession, many members of the clergy now perform a broader service of counselling and therapy for marriage and family problems and for individual mental health problems. Such communication may not be protected by existing privileged communication laws. However, clients and some clergy may not be aware of this limitation. Medina (1974:257) considers the application of the clergy-communicant laws in counselling and makes suggestions for legislative changes.

3.10.1 Privileged communication for clergy

According to the legal tradition passed down by English and American common law, the courts should have access to every person's evidence. All people have a responsibility to testify because the proper administration of justice benefits all. If the courts do not have access to all information, the likelihood increases that the guilty will go free and that the innocent will be punished. Privileged communication laws run counter to the common law tradition because they withhold evidence from the courts (Gordon 1980:493).

Other privileged relationships are based on statutory law. The state legislators often evaluate the privileged communication laws according to the criteria of the late legal scholar, Professor Wigmore. According to Wigmore, each privileged relationship should meet four criteria before it can be considered acceptable. These criteria are (in Gordon 1980:493):

- (1) The communication must originate in the belief that it will not be disclosed.

- (2) The inviolability of the confidence must be essential to achieve the purpose of the relationship.
- (3) The expected injury to the relationship through fear of later disclosure in court must be greater than the expected benefit to justice in obtaining the testimony.
- (4) The relationship is one that should be fostered to meet important societal goals.

The following court case serves as an example of how these criteria function in reality. As part of his penance, the penitent or confessor had agreed to take the property to the priest to return to the owner. The case was decided by the New York Court of General Sessions, which consisted of the then Mayor DeWitt Clinton, the recorder and two aldermen. The court held that the priest could not be compelled to reveal what had been confessed to him during penance. Four years later, however, a New York court denied the privilege to a Protestant clergyman because his denomination did not have the Sacrament of Confession and its seal. This prompted the New York legislature to pass the first clergy–communicant statute (Medina 1974: 258-269). The reason why this case study is discussed here is because the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church is universally applied and it has to follow a prescribed procedure as taught by the Church fathers universally. It is also underscored in the Church law how priests should conduct the Sacrament of Confession. According to a recent survey on the law, every American state has a clergy–communicant statute. The privilege is sometimes called the priest–penitent privilege, although the privilege is not limited to priests but extends to any clergy regardless of the denomination (Medina 1974: 258-269). Here, other denominations are mentioned as a way of widening the horizon of the Sacrament of Confession as a private and confidential practice.

3.10.2 The Sacrament of Confession as a private and confidential practice

Many Christians probably favour privacy and confidentiality. Klink (1993) argues in favour of private and confidential confession; although he does not insist that Christians confess before every Communion, he insists that no one should forbid him to make his private confession. He would also not yield if all the treasures of the world should be given instead, for he knows what strength and comfort he had received from it. No one knows what comfort the Sacrament of Confession gives, except he or she who must often wrestle with and fight the devil: “Long ago, I would have been conquered and throttled by the devil if this sacrament has not kept me” (Klink 1993:119).

The confession presents positive and negative aspects of the sacrament. Stumpf (1996) argues that the Sacrament of Confession is a human right only, not commanded by scripture but ordained by the Church (Stumpf 1996:220). The reference to private confession is that enumeration of all sins is not necessary, nor should one search for and invent other sins and turn confession into torture. Private confession is not “*ex opere operato*”, which means that no compulsion or internal need should motivate the Sacrament of Confession (Stumpf 1996:220).

However, some people argue that confession ought to be retained in the Church. If someone has knowledge of no sin at all (which is unlikely), he or she should mention none in particular but receive forgiveness upon the general confession which one makes to God in the presence of the priest. The faithful retainment of the Sacrament of Confession (especially on account of absolution) is, as the word of God and by divine authority, the power of forgiveness that is pronounced upon individuals. Therefore, it would be wicked to remove the Sacrament of Confession and absolution from the Church. However, some people do not understand what the remission of sins or the power of forgiveness of sins entail if they despise private absolution (Klink 1993:220).

Indeed, the Sacrament of Confession is sacred and was ordained by Christ himself. The Sacrament of Confession or Penitence follows the Sacrament of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which is the source and summit of our faithful lives. The Church fathers believed and taught that these rites are commanded by God and are the promise of grace, which is the heart of the New Testament (Klink 1993:122).

The Sacrament of Confession is recognised as a valuable tool for salvation and should not be omitted; yet no one should be forced to use it. The Church fathers defended this sacrament in the light of the original biblical emphasis on repentance and the proclamation of God’s gracious forgiveness in the absolution by the priest (De Mello 1994:119). Confidentiality in the Sacrament of Confession as taught in the Church law is discussed in the next section.

3.10.3 Confidentiality as a necessary element of the Sacrament of Confession

Confidentiality is an essential element of the Sacrament of Confession. The penitent has a fundamental right to remain anonymous if he or she so wishes. This right is enshrined in the Code of Canon law. According to *The Code of Canon Law* (Vatican 2006:964, 1, 2 & 3) the proper place for hearing sacramental confession is in a Church or oratory. As far as the confessional is concerned, norms are to be issued by the Bishops' Conference, with the "*proviso*" (provision) that confessionals that are fitted with a fixed grille between the penitent and the confessor always be made available in an open place so that the faithful who so wish may freely use them. Except for a just reason, confessions are not to be heard elsewhere than in a confessional. The short grille is a screen that separates the confessor and the penitent. This serves to safeguard discretion and to guarantee the right of all the faithful to confess their sins without necessarily having to reveal their personal identity (Vatican 2006).

According to Pope John Paul II (2002:9a), the proper place to hear sacramental confessions is a Church or oratory, though it remains clear that pastoral reasons can justify celebrating the sacrament in other places. The penitent or confessor must be given the choice to remain anonymous. This is to be ensured by seeing to it that our Churches are fitted with confessionals that are constructed in such a way that penitents have the option of remaining anonymous. Therefore, the confessor who is the priest has no right to inquire about the penitent's name. He may only ask questions that are pertinent to confession itself and these exclude the name of the penitent. However, this does not rule out a face-to-face encounter (Ogoe 2010:28). Human experience has shown that different people react differently to the sense of shame. Normally, every penitent has to struggle against the feeling of shame. The struggle will be more or less intense. Naturally, the penitent feels vulnerable and insecure. In view of this, the atmosphere in which they confess should assure them of safety and discretion. This is why there is wisdom in the Church's prescription that confessionals be fitted with a fixed grille that separates the confessor and the penitent (Ogoe 2010:28).

Some faithful refrain from the Sacrament of Confession because they cannot stand the face-to-face encounter with the priest. They avoid the sacrament altogether. In the course of hearing confessions, it is a common sight to see people moving to and from so close to the confessor and penitent that both of them feel uncomfortable. However, it is the penitent who

suffers most when he or she experiences being overheard. There are a number of people who have not been to confession for a long time. When asked why, they frankly answer: “Father, so long as the arrangement is to meet the priest face to face, you will never find me there.” Others prefer that they do their confessions to the priests who are not resident at their parish because they are shy or they think that their priest will know more about the dark side of their lives. There are many more people who feel that they cannot go to confession where they are easily identified. According to Ogoe (2010:28), the youth are the most affected and are deterred by a face-to-face encounter that denies them the option of remaining anonymous. The human factor cannot be overlooked if people want to be sensitive and realistic. One does not need to go through confessionals with fixed grilles to secure the privacy and confidentiality of penitents. By doing this, the priests will encourage more people to approach the Sacrament of Confession in the Church. For example, good confessionals should be available in our seminaries, oratories, Churches and halls (Ogoe 2010:28).

Apart from helping our brothers and sisters to remain anonymous during confession, the confessor is also protected from possible repercussions. When we talk of morality, no one wishes it, but anything can happen between the confessor and the penitent. To prevent improper conduct on the part of either the penitent or the confessor, the confessional grille makes the encounter more discrete. Even if the penitent asks for a face-to-face confession, when there is an alternative to a confessional, the confessor can lawfully insist on anonymous confession with a penitent behind the fixed grille. The Vatican newspaper once contained the comment: “As a matter of urgency the confessionals must come back if we desire to revitalise sacramental confession” (*L’Osservatore Romano* **AAS** 90 1998: 711).

Appropriate vestments for the priest are alb or surplice, and stole in the violet colour or any colour of the day or season. When confessions are heard at regularly appointed times, it is helpful to provide devotional aids for those who are waiting in the nave (queue). If penitents are uncomfortable with this form of confession, they should be encouraged to use their own words. On a lighter note, the following paragraphs contain a discussion on confidentiality in pastoral ministry outside the Sacrament of Confession. Such keeping of confidentiality can motivate people to come for confession to the priests because they know that their privacy will not be compromised.

Noyce (1988) discusses the confidentiality of ministers outside the Sacrament of Confession. He starts by asking a question about confidentiality: "What ethical norms regarding confidentiality are applied by ministers in their professional practice?" In this study, conventional ethical assumptions about confidentiality in ministry, taken from the works of Noyce (1988) are compared with the experiences, attitudes and expectations of ordered and lay members in the Church. Most people borrow their ethical norms from the counselling context. Most subjects think of confidentiality in terms of the beneficial therapeutic effects of keeping secrets, but they also articulate alternative theological grounds for maintaining confidences. Different expectations about how information is to be handled also reveal deeper theological and ecclesiological conflicts over the appropriateness of debriefing with members of the congregation. Differences between rural and urban congregations were revealed in public prayer as an occasion for the breaking a sense of confidence (Noyce 1988:91). Noyce deals with the subject of confidentiality as a concern in order to establish a professional standard for ministers: "We have not argued for a highly differentiated role for the clergy", Noyce writes (1988:91), "warranting special privileges because of professional status, and special moral responsibilities not incumbent on other citizens." However, there is a special responsibility in the counselling role. When something is learned in true pastoral conversation, what might ordinarily be shared with others is not shared. Thus, Noyce (1988) wants to reinforce the importance of keeping a sense of confidence. He equates pastoral counselling in the Protestant tradition with confession in the Catholic tradition. He allows for exceptions, for example in cases where the safety of others is at risk, but he justifies those exceptions on the grounds of a professional's obligations to society at large.

For Noyce, the counselling relationship is the overwhelming framework for thinking about issues of confidentiality. When the conversation occurs in the minister's study and the parishioner is seeking counsel, the assumption by both the minister and the parishioner is that the information is not to be divulged. However, there are significant theological and legal differences between confession and pastoral counselling. In addition, moral duties to protect confidential information are sometimes in conflict with other moral duties to protect the vulnerable. Also, certain assumptions that are embedded in the professional role can be in conflict with theological convictions about the nature of ministry and the nature and role of the Church. According to research conducted by Noyce (1988) and Audette (2003), the issue of confession was raised in both urban and rural contexts. Although it was raised by both clergy and laity, it was raised only by Anglicans. Anglicans share with Roman Catholics the

tradition of penance as a sacrament – although within Anglicanism, it is an uneven practice. While Roman Catholic Canon Law treats information shared in the confessional as inviolate, some Anglicans use the ethical standards of counselling as applying to confession (that is, the confidentiality of the information is conditional on the probability of harm arising from secrecy) (Lind 2006:1).

However, one Anglican priest describes a situation where maintaining the seal of the confessional amounted to an act of heroism:

When we were doing clinical pastoral education in the Correctional Centre, one of our groups, who was an ordained clergy person, by chance heard a confession of someone who had committed murder. The clergy person heard this confession soon after the guy came into the Correctional Centre, and then later on the guy changed his story. Someone who knew my friend had heard the confession tried very hard to make him talk about it, and he wouldn't. They threatened him; it went to court eventually, and he was prepared to go to jail. He would rather (have gone to jail) than tell, but the judge let him off the hook and said that he didn't have to (tell). But he was very brave. I'm not sure I would have been that brave. I don't know what I would have done. But that was a living example that I have seen of somebody who was prepared to go to jail rather than to reveal the confidence, even though it was in a totally serious context and it really mattered. (Lind 2006:2).

Interestingly, the claim in the story (that the judge declined to force disclosure of a particular situation of confidence) is supported by legal precedence (Lind 2006:1). “When you are ministering with people, it's probably to try to think like Jesus. And so ethically I am not a judge but I am a person who takes in what is being given and then keeping it and not passing it on around the world” (Lind 2006:1). A woman, in some circles of life, talked of the sacredness of the conversation and needing to respect that sacredness in the act of confidentiality: “I think that's kind of a crucial thing in pastoral care because people can sense when they are being kind of honoured for who they are regardless of how they are like being accepted as they are. There is a lot of subtle stuff in there. Then people confide and

when they tell you something that they haven't told anyone else, there is a sacredness to it that can be kind of devalued in the manner in which it is received" (Noyce 1988:118).

In both these examples, the ministers tried to model a level of fundamental acceptance of confidentiality in their pastoral ministry. They sought not to render a final judgement, as in a court of law, but rather to mediate the presence of God. They tried to mark the space of confidential communication as one where God had trod and to honour the dignity of the person who shared the information. These assumptions have clear theological and ecclesial implications. When people confess intimate truths with a qualified and designated representative of the Church, God is present and the moment and the space generate duties to God and to the participants (Noyce 1988:118).

3.11 WHEN TO DISCLOSE?

If confession within the context of a sacramental act represents the most inviolate communication, then counselling represents the next level of seriousness. In these circumstances, people need rules of some kind to help them distinguish what information may be shared and what information is private and what is public. All of the subjects seem to have rules of some kind, although they differ in significant ways. Some subjects borrowed rules from previous occupations or associations. One person borrowed the rules of the psychiatric hospital where he or she used to work as a nurse. Another borrowed the rules of the police force where he or she used to work. Still another, from time to time, borrowed the rules of the various 12-step groups (like Alcoholic Anonymous) to which he or she belonged (Noyce 1988:119). Since most people think of confidentiality within the therapeutic context, the rules of counselling are frequently used. In this circumstance, information is not to be disclosed unless there is a risk of harm to the client or others. Another Church minister who was employed part-time as a counsellor defined confidentiality as "what people say to me remains between them and me. If they want to tell somebody else that's their business, but I don't have that right, they've told it to me in confidence" (Noyce 1988:119).

3.11.1 Conflicting duties: Risk to self or others

Another example of the use of counselling rules to adjudicate conflicting obligations regarding confidential information is given by a woman in the Church. Here the

circumstances involve a pastoral visit to a parishioner's home, a specific injunction not to disclose health-related information and an abiding concern that the person may be at risk (Noyce 1988:120). The psychiatrist realised that the law was going to be changed and he would have to report the person and so he referred the person to the pastor. He sat in on the counselling of the couple with the psychologist and then he made the pastor the prime therapist (Noyce 1988:120).

3.11.2 Conflicting expectations

If the Sacrament of Confession and formal counselling represent the circumstances with the most stringent rules, it must be said that most pastoral communication takes place outside these parameters. While rules are still borrowed, there are a wider variety of differing expectations on how this information is to be handled. One example of inappropriate sharing is to have people prayed for in worship when the only reason for doing so is that they had come to the minister for marriage counselling. This example of public prayer as an occasion for the breaking a confidence arose more often among the Church subjects (Noyce 1988:121).

3.11.3 With whom does the minister share?

As indicated earlier, most interview subjects dealt with confidentiality within a therapeutic context. Within that context, it was considered normal for the minister to consult confidentially with other professionals or with people to whom they were responsible within the Church system. Outside of that context, there is less agreement. For example, is it permissible for ministers to debrief with their spouses? Where people agreed it was permissible, the assumption was that even those conversations were confidential. However, not everyone assumed that debriefing with spouses was acceptable (Noyce 1988:121). Most of Noyce's interview subjects borrowed their ethical norms from the counselling context. Catholics and Anglicans talked of the Sacrament of Confession or penance, whereas United Church people did not. However, even Anglicans describing confidential communication in the context of a formal confession were divided on whether and under what circumstances that confidentiality could be isolated (Audette 2003:129).

As in Audette's (2003) research on Congregationalists, most subjects thought of confidentiality in terms of the therapeutic effects of keeping secrets. Unlike Audette's study, both Anglican and United Church members articulated alternative theological grounds for maintaining confidences, for example the sacredness of sharing or confessing intimate truths which elicit duties to God and to the participants (Audette 2003:128).

When confidentiality was discussed in terms of counselling, the rules in force tended to revolve around judgements about potential harm. All the subjects seemed to have rules of some kind, although they differed from one another in significant ways. Some subjects borrowed rules from previous occupations or associations (as stated above). Most ministers agreed that they would violate the confidentiality of a counselling session in order to report suspected child abuse. One person identified a conflict situation between pastoral effectiveness and the reporting requirements of the law. Another person described a moral duty to defy the law in order to protect confidentiality when it meant protecting a refugee from deportation (Audette 2003:129).

Outside of a formal counselling session, expectations are diverge as to what information might be shared and when. The example of public prayer as an occasion for breaking confidence arose among urban and rural members in the Church. This suggests differences between predominantly urban and rural congregations on how information should be shared. In addition, both laypeople and clergy are divided on whether information that is shared with a minister is public unless told otherwise, or the reverse. Most often laypeople expected ministers to be responding at all times with discretion and sensitivity. Ministers would do well to assume this expectation among their parishioners (Audette 2003:129). Different expectations about how information is to be handled reveal deeper theological and ecclesiological conflict. If the congregation is the primary agent of ministry, then the priest or pastor will play a role as an enabler of that function and holding back information can hinder that role. If the priest or minister is the primary agent of ministry, a presumption in favour of withholding personal information will be a more common expectation.

These differences appear again over the question of appropriate persons with whom to debrief. If one is working strictly from within the professional model, then a minister would only debrief with someone who has similar education and qualifications. However, if you come from a perspective that emphasises the "priesthood of all believers", other members of

the congregation would qualify as appropriate (Audette 2003:121). If confidentiality is only considered in a one-on-one context, whether that is the Sacrament of Confession or counselling, the professional therapeutic model will tend to have a significant influence because of its high profile and range of influence in Western and African cultures. However, it also needs to be considered in the larger contexts of group decision making. In an ecclesial environment where a community is dedicated to providing spiritual and pastoral care both to its own members and to society at large, treating personal information as analogous to private property and safeguarding its possession can conflict with the overall mission and goals of the worshipping community (Audette 2003:112). For Catholics, the Sacrament of Confession is a sacred sign. Anglicans also respect the Sacrament of Confession, but Protestants do not. This was a key issue in the legal case *Regina vs Gruenke*. Here, a confession that had been made to a counsellor from the Victorious Faith Centre was held not to be protected by law, in part because confession was not required by the denomination (Hemmerick 1993:112).

After a protracted discussion on the confidentiality of pastors as professionals in the pastoral field, the next step is to glance at sample prayers of confession that can help members in the Church to have a heart for the Sacrament of Confession. These sample prayers of confession are outlined below.

3.12 SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION: A CALL FOR RESTORATION IN PASTORAL CARE

The following testimony of a priest presented by Stumpf (1996:106) can give us more insight into the Sacrament of Confession in the pastoral context:

In my first year of ministry after I attended a worship conference, I was inspired to use a formal private confession and absolution in my parish. It was suggested that it be introduced during Holy Week. As a young priest, I was eager to try it. My congregation was typical of many congregations in the Church. Every few years, their young priest was called to another Church. They filled the vacancy with another newly ordained graduate priest who eagerly came with the newest and latest ideas. The congregation calmly heard my announcement about the Sacrament of Confession, being

available in the Church basement, Wednesday evening, seven to eight o'clock.

Holy Wednesday arrived, and Stumpf went down into the Church basement. The hour passed peacefully and very quietly. The Church mouse in the corner cabinet was not disturbed in the least. At the stroke of eight o'clock, he climbed the stairs a little disappointed and a little relieved that no one had come. Nothing was mentioned by either pastor or congregation. The seal of the confessional was preserved in the face of the question "Well, Pastor, did anyone show up?" (Stumpf 1996:107).

About two or three weeks later, Stumpf visited a member who was in the hospital suffering from mysterious pains. They were mysterious because all the tests showed nothing was wrong. She had spent two weeks at an out-of-state university hospital only to be told that the tests showed no cause for her suffering. She had returned home. The doctors could do nothing but provide some medication. His visits with her began with the usual questions about her health, Bible devotions and prayers. After a number of visits, she began to talk more about her other problems. Finally, the "big one" came out and through mutual conversation and consolation of the Word; she sought the forgiveness that comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ. About two days later, her pains left her and she got up to bake some cookies. It was some time later when it hit Stumpf that informal private confession and absolution had taken place (Stumpf 1996:107).

Stumpf presented this narrative not as a complete and "last-word-on-the-subject" study on private confession and absolution. The four disciplines of theology (exegetical, systematic, historical and practical) should be taken into consideration. The idea is to take a brief look at the subject of the Sacrament of Confession (Stumpf 1996:218). Why bring up this subject of the Sacrament of Confession in the first place? Stumpf testifies that there was still the young priest in him who was eager to look at something challenging and edifying. As the years went by, there was the wiser priest who could see people and congregations desiring a closer contact with God and the power of the gospel but wary of anything different. Every time he taught other sacraments and dealt with the Sacrament of Confession, he kept tripping over the obvious reference to an existing use of private confession and absolution. To be sure, the Sacrament of Confession was identified in counselling situations or sick calls as stated above. Yet the Church did not speak about private confession and absolution, but only in an

informal context. There was a need for the parishioners to experience individual absolution in dealing with the grave and venial sins in their lives (Stumpf 1993:219).

3.13 SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION IN PASTORAL/PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

According to Fritz (1945:224), who argues from a pastoral theological view, the Sacrament of Confession can be private or general. However, there is no essential difference between private and general confession. Yet private confession offers a certain advantage, which should not be overlooked nor reduced. A Christian may be especially troubled or fear that he or she needs spiritual advice. Such a Christian must positively know that God absolves him or her from his or her sins. His or her priest, whom God has given him for that purpose, shall hear his or her confession privately, advise him or her from the scripture, and (if he or she is penitent) absolve him or her (2 Samuel 12:13). For this purpose, private confession must be retained. While a priest has no right to demand that any of his members must come to confession, he must nevertheless insist that those who desire to make use of the Sacrament of Confession be permitted to do so, and he should instruct his congregation (catechumen classes) on its proper use and urge them to make use of it when their needs demand it (Spitz 2009:224).

The history of the Catholic and Lutheran Churches began with a strong practice and encouragement of private confession usage. Through the influence of pietism, rationalism and reformed theologies (especially in America), the formal use died away in other churches. Other considerations contributed to its demise, such as larger churches and time concerns. Private confession in some churches is still available, but is found more informally in pastoral counselling or death-bed ministry (Spitz 2009:225). However, private confession is what constitutes the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church. One would argue that the Sacrament of Confession is a common practice of the Christian Church. It is in the Sacrament of Confession that everything depends on personal absolution. In order for this to be certain, one must call his or her sins by name. One can only do this when one had previously named one's own sins. Absolution does not require an expression of needs so much as a confession of sin. One can distance oneself from personal needs by unburdening oneself on others, but absolution requires the person to make a complete confession of sin. The Sacrament of Confession is not only a self-expression, but a liberation from that which destroys one's life – not along the lines of a self-transformation, but through the forgiving means that God has

given. These offer grace for the foundation, strengthening and certainty of new life (Fry 1981:137).

Why must people confess to another human being, like a priest? Here is a threefold answer:

A Christian reckons himself or herself to be among the “weak”, who need the assurance that God is not a phantom and that one does not simply forgive oneself in the end. Christians receive this certainty through a fellow Christian and in particular through an ordained priest. Without the presence of a flesh-and-blood priest, everything might be easily lost in pure reflection. It is quite treacherous if people find it easier to confess their sins before the Holy One than before a person who is no different from us (Fry 1981:137).

All secret sins must come to light, if not now then on the last day. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Better now than later! As long as our sin remains hidden, it gnaws away at us and poisons us. Sin creates detritus in the soul. The serpent must stick its head out of its hole in order for it to be clubbed. When a priest hears our sins, its danger can finally be taken away (Fry 1981:137).

The root of all sin is pride. People want to live for themselves. One becomes a law unto oneself. One may covet and one may hate, for he or she alone is the judge. In pride, one wishes to be like God. Confession to a priest who is a human being like us breaks this arrogance as nothing else can. The old, prideful Adam dies a disgraceful death in great agony. Since this humiliation is so painful, we would rather bypass it and think that it is enough to confess to God. But in our degradation, we find our portion in the disgrace of Christ. Confession of sin before another person is an act of discipleship to the cross. By confession, we gain freedom from the pride of the flesh or reason (Klink 1993:227).

Complete self-surrender to the grace, help and judgment of God occur in the Sacrament of Confession. Everything is surrendered to God and we retain nothing for ourselves. Thus, we become free of ourselves. What separates us from obedience and from certainty is our thanklessness, our lack of readiness to forgive and the things we would cling to as uniquely our own domain; everything is surrendered to Christ and forgiven by him. In absolution, God receives us once again in order to reign over our whole lives and to set us completely free. Confession is a conversion and a call to discipleship. We have nothing left, not even our sins;

they are laid on Christ. He steps toward us and his joy and righteousness become our own (Klink 1993:227).

Genuine community is not established before confession takes place. The whole community is contained in those two people who stand next to one another in confession. If anyone remains alone in his or her evil, he or she is completely alone despite camaraderie and friendship. If he or she has confessed, however, he or she will nevermore be alone. He or she is borne by Christ, on whom he or she has laid his or her sin, and by the community which belongs to Christ and in which Christ is present with us. In the community of Christ, no one needs to be alone (Klink 1993:227).

The Sacrament of Confession is grace, not law. It is not a work that we do in order to become perfect Christians; it is a grace that leads to certitude, conversion, fellowship and joy. The Sacrament of Confession is divine sorrow which leads to divine joy. Confession as a pious work is the devil's invention and leads to spiritual death. Where people lament that there is no life in the Church, we might ask how that is connected to disregard for confession. In any event, new life in Christ, new obedience and service, and new joy in the gospel all stem from the Sacrament of Confession (Guthrie 1985:4).

Only those who make confession should hear confessions. In a monastery, the abbot must confess to a brother before he hears the confessions of others. Only those who have been humbled in the confessional are able to hear confessions without pride. Otherwise it is too easy to turn a ministry based on the love of Christ into a form of domination over the souls of others (Klink 1993:228). The confessor must learn to say candidly: "I am the chief of sinners. My sin is inexcusable." He walks with Christ in his daily rounds. He owes others a friendly admonition toward confession. He will keep those who come to confession in his intercessions. He will help to the end that confession is not seen as a once-for-all matter, but as that which accompanies another on the way. He will render confession its rightful objectivity (Guthrie 1985:4).

In other places, the Sacrament of Confession is announced or a notice is put on the noticeboard about it at the Church during service hours. For example, there are courses of events: announcements, an appointment at a set time, quiet in and around the confessional room, prayer, silence, opportunity for confession, to keep any pastoral conversation, short

absolution (in either the form of a prayer or of a declaration) and concluding prayer of thanksgiving (Klink 1993:229).

Is there a need for more than general confession? In Strommen's (1983) study, many Christians were asked to rank the different functions of ministry. Although the study seemed more concerned with social and community relations, there were a few statements that dealt with general confession or forgiveness, for example, counselling on matters of wrongdoing with the intent of conveying the assurance of God's forgiveness (Strommen 1983:207–256). The results also showed a high desire for ministerial care in the area of the priesthood. The study concluded that one is almost left with the impression, though it is no more than implicit in the data, that laypeople are looking for the kind of interaction with their priests that will allow intimate depth, honesty and the reality of private counsel (as in a priest's office or confessionals) to confer the Sacrament of Confession. Although the study was not intended to focus on the need by the laity for private confession, it became obvious in the research findings (Klink 1993:229). Most of the worship altar books of the Church address the valuable assistance in the matter of the Sacrament of Confession. The hymnal has an order for individual confession and absolution in the confessionals or in the pew. Individual confession with its comforting absolution stands in its own right as a function of pastoral care and the exercise of the divinely ordained office of the Church in the strict sense.

Regular times are posted when a priest is available in a designated place to hear individual confessions. Counselling and spiritual direction sessions should frequently lead to individual confession and absolution. In such situations, the priest should provide an appropriate transition if necessary. The confidentiality of confession, commonly known as the seal of confession, must under no circumstances be broken by the priest (Saunders 2000). Confession may be made in the Church, in the confessional, on the pew or outside the Church. The priest may kneel with the penitent or may sit on a chair placed on the opposite side of the rail, thus sitting at right angles to the kneeling penitent. Care should be taken to ensure that no one overhears or disturbs the penitent (Saunders 2000).

If there is no proper confessional, as is the case in most areas, the priest should always make sure that he sits where he is seen by the faithful (GCBC 2006). In the first place, the confessional is an important religious symbol and like every symbol, it communicates a message to the beholder. In a secularised and materialistic society, where the external signs

of the sacred and supernatural realities tend to disappear, it is particularly important that the community can recognise the priest (man of God and dispenser of his mysteries) by his attire, which is an unequivocal sign of his dedication and his identity as a public minister (Congregation for the clergy 1994).

3.14 IMPORTANCE OF THE CONFESSIONALS

According to Ogoe (2010), the world of today is losing touch with the supernatural and the sacred. The presence of the confessional, even when not in use, is important and helpful. Priests can make the mistake of denying the faithful the opportunity to reinforce their sense of the supernatural by understanding the subconscious power of symbols (Smolarski 1985:17). The confessionals serve as a constant reminder to believers whenever they enter the Church that penance and reconciliation are a necessary part of their faith journey towards holiness. It is an external sign of God's readiness to forgive. The confessionals remind the sinner that there is hope for them when they kneel before the priest of God to confess their sins. According to Ogoe (2010:25), the confessionals can serve as effective tools for catechesis on the Sacrament of Confession. Furthermore, the absence of confessionals in some Churches is a cause for concern. Given that sacred signs and symbols play a major role in our worship, we need to make every effort to ensure that confessionals have a place in the sacred spaces of our Churches (Ogoe 2010:25).

In the absence of confessionals, a few problems may arise. For example, people may not realise the sacredness of the Sacrament of Confession when no specific place is reserved for confession. Another problem has to do with the need for anonymity and confidentiality. People need privacy and confidentiality (as discussed above) in order to do their confession properly. In places where there is no exact location for confession, the penitents have to go through the unnecessary inconvenience of seeking to locate the confessor. A clear testimony was given by one who confided with the priest about confession: "Father, here there is no specific place for confession." It depends on where the priest finds it convenient. Each time we have to go around finding out where the priest is seated for confession. Such a situation of always trying to locate the priest for confession can be frustrating and discouraging. Sometimes penitents have to remain standing for a considerable period of time if confession takes place as they wait for their turn (Ogoe 2010:25).

Due to a lack of reserved places for confession, sometimes in the course of hearing confessions, other distracting activities may take precedence. These may include the sweeping and cleaning of the Church, societal meetings and choir practice with loud instruments. The presence of the priest hearing confessions fails to move them. As a result, the place becomes noisy and dusty. The confessor and the penitent together have to beg for space and silence to enable the two to hear themselves. When a counselling session leads to individual confession, the confession will most frequently take place in the priest's office (Pope Benedict XVI 2007:22).

In such a situation, one cannot fail to realise that the dignity, respect and attention worthy of the Sacrament of Confession are compromised. Furthermore, it confirms the weakening of the sense of the sacred. Such a situation will obviously deter people from approaching the Sacrament of Confession, because the whole experience lacks beauty and decorum or important elements that foster faith.

In our Churches, we need to set aside specifically designated places for confession that is decent, orderly, serene, welcoming, pleasant, lively, where both the confessor and the penitent can peacefully celebrate the mercy of the Lord. Pope Benedict XVI (2007:22) confirms that it is important that the confessionals in our Churches be clearly visible expressions of the importance of the Sacrament of Confession. Pastors have to be vigilant with regard to the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The CBCG (2006) supports the idea that the Sacrament of Confession (or Reconciliation) is celebrated at a place where it conveys the importance of the signs of welcome and forgiveness.

3.15 SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION: STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The first step of using private confession must be for the priest to use private confession himself as discussed above. We not only become models who through our actions state our conviction, but we can speak from experience the graciousness of private confession in our lives (Klink 1993:231).

Secondly, education must take place prior to attending the confession. We do not have the advantage that our forefathers had of having private confession in place. We must almost start from scratch. But even our forefathers had to educate the people on the correct use of

private confession. With regard to the enumeration of sins in confession, we teach men and women in such a way as not to ensnare their conscience. It is, of course, a good practice to accustom the unlearned to enumerate certain things so that they might be instructed more easily. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CC 1994), as found in the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation, confession was one of the chief parts to be taught. Nowadays the education of our people may be done from the pulpit by a series of sermons on this topic and through bible studies. Certainly in adult and junior confirmation classes, due attention should be given to the confirmands on the salutary use of private confession. More should be done than just emphasising that “Our Church did not drop the Sacrament of Confession; it is available to anyone at any time.” This kind of vague reference is not helpful (Ogoe 2010; Klink 1993:231).

Thirdly, when the priest is ready to use private confession in his own life and the people are educated in these matters, a time and place should be made available for private confession. Ogoe (2010) recommends that the confessional boxes should be revived and the priest should have a chair outside the Church so that penitents can be invited to kneel at the rail for confession. Some priests prefer to sit with the penitent in one of the confessionals, which might enhance the “consolation of the brethren” concept. The order that is found in the hymnal could be very useful in giving our members an order of confession to get them started. Perhaps a half hour or an hour on a Saturday should be made available. The time and place should be regularly announced. The priest must be willing to commit himself to the time and place on a permanent basis. “Permanent basis” here means regardless of whether or not anyone shows up (Klink 1993:231).

It would be misleading to ask for permission to do something that we have already committed ourselves to. A wise pastor would be sensitive to people’s fears and concerns. The aim of private confession is to offer a way – not the only way – to bring absolution to troubled souls. Our ministry is not to alienate people with the intention to come for confession. Rather, the priest will instruct his people that private confession is an informal way of “counselling” (Klink 1993:231).

A more normal approach to private confession is only presenting this benefit to people in a special setting and time. It should be clearly stated from the beginning and throughout the education period that no one is required and no one will be coerced to make private

confession. Private confession is for the relief of troubled souls. The priest is fulfilling his call to the ministry by being available to those who need the ministry of absolution. The priest should not request permission for confession, because to request permission is to imply that private confession is never a necessity. To request permission is to give the congregation an opportunity to say “No!” to a scriptural ministry and a confessional subscription. We will cause problems rather than provide help (Stumpf 1993:231).

Why do we use a more formal private confession when we have functioned efficiently without it? We have used private confession in times of counselling, hospital calls, crisis calls, death-bed visitations, et cetera. Priests who have experienced these opportunities of bringing the healing and the saving power of the gospel to troubled sinners would agree that the benefit of confession and absolution is without dispute (Stumpf 1993:231). To confirm the Sacrament of Confession, we should subscribe to the use of private confession. Historically, private confession was a formal time and place for this ministry to be administered. The primary task of ministry was the care of souls (Stumpf 1993:231). Private confession had a very high priority in this task of healing souls. Certainly in the Catholic Church and in other church denominations, the church will not lose its pastoral confessional role because private confession is not formally used. General confessions and Holy Masses are regularly employed during services in the Church and general absolution is given. General confession is not lesser than private confession. Yet private confession, in addition to general confession, offers a ministry for special individual soul care which should not be ignored (Stumpf 1993:232). Private confession, if it is offered, must be presented as an opportunity and not as a requirement. The effectiveness of private confession should not be counted in terms of the numbers of people served (Stumpf 1993:232).

In educating the congregation about the benefits of private confession, no force must be used. Perhaps the first hurdle to overcome by God’s grace is our own fear of private confession. If we can rely on it as a means of grace, as absolution is, we may come to know its benefits for ourselves: “The Gospel is a means of grace not only in the sense that it tells of a readiness on the part of God to forgive, but in the sense that whenever we hear the Gospel, we hear God pronouncing absolution upon us, forgiving our sins. Furthermore, the Gospel is such a means of grace in every form in which it reaches men and women, whether it be preached or printed or expressed as a formal absolution. From this vantage point, we may be able to encourage our members to make use of its benefits for themselves” (Stumpf 1993:232).

Private confession and absolution are not a radical or liberal idea. It is scriptural, confessional and conservative. In the Church, too, men and women have sought to abolish (along with the abuse of the confession) the proper use of confession and absolution. Evidence of this attempt is the dictum of the leftists among the Pietists (confessional, Satan's throne, bottomless pit). These were the Church members who went to extremes with the Church doctrines, to the extent that they were giving a wrong view of the teaching of the Church (Stumpf 1993:232).

The Sacrament of Confession is an added opportunity to present the gospel for the healing of souls. As we administer other sacraments on an individual basis, the Sacrament of Confession and the absolution offered in a formal setting would benefit the needs of Church members. An emphasis on mutual conversation and the consolation of the brethren speaks lovingly of the gospel's intent to bring grace to bear in the lives of God's saints. Through evangelical encouragement, souls could be persuaded to seek the grace offered in the Sacrament of Confession (Capps 2005:85).

As in all things, may the Holy Spirit guide the ministry to do the will of Christ, our Lord, the Head of the Church (Stumpf 1993:232). When Capps (2005) had to give a testimony on the Sacrament of Confession, he confirmed that it had occurred to him (as he was sure it had occurred to others) that the public confession in our Churches today has become rather bland. Either we confess in very general terms that we have sinned against God in thought, word and deed, and haven't treated our neighbour as we would like to be treated – or we confess that we haven't managed to live up to our real potential and made as much use of our God-given gifts as we might have done. Needless to say, we have come a very long way from Jonathan Edward's "Sinners in the hands of an angry God". Over the years, many people have missed the chance to join others in a public confession that really means business, but we have not known where to turn for help (Capps 2005:85).

3.16 MINISTRY OF PASTORAL CARE

The Sacrament of Confession, as discussed so far, has to be viewed in relation to the ministry of pastoral care. Concepts of Christian ministry are being re-evaluated as definitions of the Church's evolving task. Murphy (1980:233) describes the exploration as "not getting away from doctrine, but seeking new insights into ancient formulations, and, hopefully,

discovering new modes of expressing the truth which guides our ministry” (Murphy 1980:233). A vital part of the ministry to the total human being is that of ministry to the sick and those who are unconscious of their sin. The ministry of pastoral care in pastoral theology is a function that was only recognised and developed by clergy during the 20th century. This ministry is the responsibility of all faith groups, but is described here primarily as it is currently carried out by researchers in the field.

Traditional understandings of the role and functions of the office of the minister-pastor, pastoral ministry and parish ministry refer to a geographic area of the community: the parish, or pastorate. Ministry to the “sick in soul” and the unconscious, however, is a ministry within a psychological area rather than a geographic one (Murphy 1980:234). Preaching the Word and administering the sacraments are the traditional descriptions of the tasks of ministry for purposes of ordination. The ordained clergy were, and still are, “set aside” for the express purpose of performing these functions. Such a concept of the total function of “ministry” was developed centuries ago, based on an understanding of human behaviour that was prevalent then but is now out of date. Church leaders then could not foresee the advances in the understanding of human behaviour, Gestalt psychology, developmental theories of behaviour and psychoanalytic concepts of unconscious motivation (Lewis 1971:241).

Ministry to the unconscious is a function that is based on a current understanding of human behaviour. Yet it fulfils a very traditional evangelical and missionary goal of the Church: to reach the unreached. Its aim is to extend ministry to the total person, and to bring the unconscious into the fellowship of the Church (Murphy 1980:234). The traditional theory of ministry is similar to a 19th-century theory of education that was called “mental discipline”, which hypothesised that people will learn if they simply have an adequate opportunity to learn and that they are free to choose and direct their actions, through reason, according to their understanding of the world. Restated to apply to the traditional theory of ministry, this would mean that if an adequate message of the Word is preached and the sacraments are properly administered, people will learn about God and will choose consciously – through reason – to have faith in God, to love others and to direct their lives accordingly (Murphy 1980:234).

Mental discipline theory and traditional definitions of ministry ignore how people actually receive messages. It is assumed that people will understand if clear messages are sent.

Current studies on human communication that developed from electronic communication theory indicate that this is a false assumption. People do **not** necessarily understand – even if an adequate, clear message is sent. In fact, people frequently distort the messages that they receive. Gestalt psychology, through research, established principles whereby human beings' perceptions and understandings are predictably distorted without them being aware of it. These principles include the relationship between the foreground and background and the relationship of a symbol to its context. For example, if two lines of equal length are drawn parallel to one another on a sheet of paper and tails are added to the ends of one line and arrow heads to the ends of the other line, the two lines will appear to be of different lengths. Thus, perceptions (including understandings of the Word and sacraments) may be distorted by the context in which they are presented (Lewis 1971:243).

Mental discipline theory and traditional definitions of ministry also ignore the unconscious motivations that affect people's lives and decision-making abilities. 20th century understanding of human behaviour contends that people's decisions are based partly on unconscious, irrational, emotional and personalised meanings and motivations. Pastoral psychotherapists (who work with the repressed, conflicted and unconscious) established a highly structured, non-multiple relationship and an "analytic situation" (Greenson 1967:239).

The relationship between the client and the pastoral psychotherapist is in many respects parallel to the relationship between the priest and the penitent in the sacramental rite of confession. What a penitent confesses to a priest is private and confidential. Similarly, a pastoral psychotherapist maintains confidentiality; does not go outside the two-party relationship; does not socialise with the client; and does not talk to or telephone the client's employer, spouse or pastor. The relationship is and must be exclusive. There are no pastoral relationships committees and no intermediaries such as bishops or presbyteries between the two parties, no "other" with whom the therapist or client can or must communicate or negotiate. What happens in therapy is designed to take place within the covenanted "I-You" relationship only (Greenson 1967:239).

A penitent's relationship to a priest and a client's relationship to a pastoral psychotherapist are walled off from the remainder of the person's life in order to facilitate the person being spontaneous, talking openly and frankly, and allowing the forgotten unconscious to emerge. In pastoral psychotherapy, the client is asked explicitly to carry out the basic rule of free

association, which is to say whatever comes to mind regardless of how irrelevant, irrational, meaningless, embarrassing or insignificant it might be (Rader 1980:24).

The priest in confession and the pastoral psychotherapist are relatively anonymous, which facilitates people's ability for soul-searching and to remember and talk about events that they prefer on some level to forget (especially events about which they feel guilty or insulted). A pastoral psychotherapist limits self-disclosure, does not state certain personal opinions and judgments, nor provides direction and guidance to facilitate clients shifting authority from other people to themselves in taking responsibility for their own decisions and developing self-identity, autonomy and emotional independence (Greenson 1967:240).

A client's relationship with a pastoral psychotherapist, like that of a penitent with a priest, is "bracketed" from the remainder of the Church's activities. Both pastoral therapist and priest are there to listen and accept; they are not responsible for the behaviour of the confessing person and have no obligation to the Church or society to do anything about what they hear outside the two-party arrangement. Thus, they fulfil the biblical admonition: "Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that ye may be healed" (James 5:16).

A bracketed relationship is necessary for work with the repressed, conflicted and unconscious impulses because some of these impulses are potentially disruptive to the Church and society (such as impulses to swear at the pastor, have sex with Jesus, pollute the sacraments, bomb the Church building, destroy the cross, burn the bible, be angry at God and do forbidden things in general). According to Nouwen (1980), even in prayer parishioners tend to be selective of what they tell God. They "protect" God from hearing certain things. They suppress the emerging unconscious impulses, in contrast to saying to God whatever comes to mind (Nouwen 1980:24).

A non-multiple relationship is necessary, because a client's unconscious impulses are not only in conflict with his or her own conscious intentions but are also expressed in interpersonal conflict issues with the pastoral psychotherapist. Clients unconsciously transfer their patterns of relating to their parents when they were children to their relationship with the pastoral psychotherapist. Transference (Freud 1856–1939) is one factor that makes pastoral psychotherapy qualitatively different from other types of pastoral care and counselling, which use techniques of confrontation, education, advice, guidance and support. For example, a man

client's thought of throwing a flower pot through a woman pastoral-psychologist's office window emerged from repression, and he feared she would refuse to see him and send him to another therapist. When he expressed a wish to throw something as a child, his mother on several occasions sent him to her sister's house "until he could behave himself". He transferred this expectation of expulsion from his mother to the woman therapist (Nouwen 1980:241). In pastoral psychotherapy, clients are expected not to talk to friends, family or pastors about their therapy. Although the medical model of confidentiality means that the doctor maintains confidentiality. In psychotherapy confidentiality is a two-way street and clients are also expected not to discuss their therapy. Technically, they are not to "split the transference". Thus, their feelings about the therapy and the therapist are contained within the two-party system (Clinebell 1966:39). In the sacrament of confession there is more confidentiality as the confessor and the penitent do not share personal details and identification.

3.17 JESUS CHRIST, THE LIVING WORD AND MODEL FOR PASTORAL COUNSELLING AND CONFESSION

The creative word of God came into the world in Jesus Christ (John 1:1). This creative word is good news, the message which defends the poor and the sinful and delivers them from the grip of satanic forces. It announces the presence of the rule of God and itself becomes a visible sign of the kingdom. As discourse, Jesus Christ becomes the fundamental active word of God. What God is saying can never be separated from Jesus; the power of this word is manifested in his person. His person and his discourse become the representation of God (Bakole 1978:213).

The discourse of Jesus Christ is as creative as that of God. His acts of deliverance for the benefit of men and women (salvation, healing, forgiveness of sins, restoration to wholeness, deliverance from demonic powers, et cetera) are the fruit of his words and deeds. By his word, he heals the sick, raises the dead and casts out evil spirits. In the healing of a deaf-mute (Mark 7:31–35) and of a blind man (Mark 8:22–25), reference is made not only to Christ's word but also to such traditional gestures as the use of saliva and touching the diseased organs with the hands or fingers. By his words and his deeds, Jesus Christ humanises personal relations and summons the human race to repentance (Bakole 1978:213). Jesus, in his identity, is oriented towards life and not towards death. This is why he is the one who

brings salvation and why he has the audacity to define himself in terms of everything that symbolises life: bread of life, light of the world, door to life, good shepherd, living word, resurrection and life, vine, truth and life. Jesus does not simply announce the message of life; therefore, he himself is both word and life (Bakole 1978:213). The fundamental unity of word and deed is realised in him. In him, the word in all its dynamic energy is present and the deed speaks of the grandeur of God as the Creator of the new life (Bakole 1978:213).

To recap the key areas of the discussion in this chapter on a theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession: In an endeavour to discover a theoretical framework, a background of the practice of the Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Church was given and supported by scriptural texts. It was emphasised that the Sacrament of Confession is a necessary tool to reconcile humanity with God. However, it was realised that the Sacrament of Confession is not taken seriously by some parishioners due to contingency as they lose the sense of the sacred and the sense of sin. The weakening sense of sin jeopardises the Sacrament of Confession's value. Upon further reflection on the parishioners' religious practice, it was shown that the Sacrament of Confession brings repentance (which is a total change of heart and mind). It was realised that psychological counselling and psychotherapy have healing effects on the human mind, but they cannot heal the soul. However, the healing effect of psychological counselling can also be realised in the Sacrament of Confession. The faithful have to be sorrowful for their sins and confess to the lawfully ordained minister (that is, the priest). The priest exercises his healing ministry by using the Sacrament of Confession and by being involved in pastoral counselling. The pastoral field in which the priest operates provides a spiritual framework and a theological design to the Sacrament of Confession. When parishioners confess their sins, there is regeneration or re-starting of a transformed life with others and with God. Notwithstanding the relationship between psychotherapy and confession, psychotherapy as a behavioural science cooperates with the Sacrament of Confession. The confessional role of a priest should ensure a degree of quality to those who are entrusted to his care.

The contribution of pastoral counselling and psychotherapy in pastoral work is on the basis of mutual interaction. In the same vein, the Sacrament of Confession and psychoanalysis complement each other. Just as personal sin affects the individual, it affects the community. Like a patient in psychoanalysis, the penitent in confession should empty his or her heart to the priest (who should not be judgmental). The Sacrament of Confession versus defence

mechanisms was reviewed. It was shown that the desire to defend oneself despite clear sin is pride (*superbia*). The narratives of confession and communal basis of pastoral care were discussed in order to determine how confession has an impact on individuals and communities. Christians are “resident aliens” who should realise that they are on a pilgrimage to the homeland. The concept of original sin was argued as a psychological reality that is present in the unconscious and that is made conscious when one sees its consequences. The therapeutic effect of the Sacrament of Confession is realised when penitents confess their sinful state to realise the presence of God. Parishioners are independent to make their choices, but there is a problem of making ultimate choices in view of a number of choices that are offered by the world to an individual. It is through the parishioners’ freedom of choice that they can position themselves at comfortable zones that attract them.

However, the gift of God’s grace in parishioners means an increase of freedom, which gives them hope for victory over sin. A good example of hope is Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, which means that parishioners are believers of rising after falling. Parishioners have to be committed to their spiritual contemplation in order to have the intention to action. Another effect of the Sacrament of Confession is the healing of memories of traumatic experiences. Furthermore, confession can be discussed in an African Shona socio-cultural context in terms of where and how local people understand confession in the Masvingo Diocese. When we think of the ethics of the Sacrament of Confession, we have to consider the seal of confession (when the priest is not allowed to say anything about confession outside the confessional box). In the same vein, psychological counsellors have to observe privacy and confidentiality. In some instances, there is privileged communication for clergy so that they can hear confessions freely without fear of being intercepted or disturbed by legal affairs. With this privileged communication, the clergy are assured of security and protection by the law of the state and they are not obliged to disclose anything that is discussed in the confession box. This ensures that the Sacrament of Confession remains a confidential practice of the Church that is also realised by the state. What all of this means is that the clergy should not do conflicting duties that are a risk to themselves and to the parishioners. Priests are expected to be exemplary in executing their duties of confession in pastoral theology. In order to keep the confessional secrecy, the erection of the confessionals in our Churches should be revered and encouraged. In order for confession to remain strong in the Church, the Church hierarchy should work on strategies to educate the parishioners and how to implement the educational strategies for both the priests and the parishioners. Finally, the

Church should look at Christ as the model of pastoral counselling and confession in the ministry of pastoral care.

3.18 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the literature on pastoral care and psychological counselling/psychotherapy and culture was explored and reviewed to provide a theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession. Psychological perspectives were discussed in relationship to the Sacrament of Confession. Psychotherapy and the Sacrament of Confession were compared and discussed. The contextual African cultural perspectives on confession were explored. Insights about practical theology and pastoral therapy shaped the theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession. The arguments about the Sacrament of Confession and pastoral counselling as therapies that can be used in the Sacrament of Confession as part of the Church's pastoral ministry were reviewed.

In the next chapter, the empirical research design of this study in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe is explained.

CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The complexity of reflecting on the therapeutic praxis of the Sacrament of Confession necessitated qualitative research with a life narrative research methodology within a pastoral practical theology framework. The empirical study was based on the life narrative research methodology that was developed at the Radboud University in Nijmegen (Hermans 2012a:1). This methodology is based on the assertion that human beings are motivated storytellers who give new meaning to narratives of the self (Hermans 2012a:1; Van de Brand et al 2013:3). The theoretical gap between the Sacrament of Confession and its therapeutic value in the field of pastoral care in the Masvingo Diocese was addressed.

4.2 QUALITATIVE LIFE NARRATIVE APPROACH

In chapter 3, a practical theological framework for the Sacrament of Confession was discussed. The focus of this chapter is a theoretical framework for the Sacrament of Confession.

The study now turns to how parishioners experience and understand the practices in reality. The perceived preference for psychological counselling and psychotherapy, instead of the Sacrament of Confession, as reflected in the experiences of some members of the Catholic Church in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe necessitated a qualitative research methodology. Life narratives reflect the subjective views of the participants in research studies (Hermans 2012a:2). They emerge as a root metaphor for the self. According to Hermans (2012:1), self-reflexivity implies a distinction between “I” and “me.” The “I” is the self as the knower that constantly organises and interprets experience in a purely subjective way; the “me” is the embodied self as I know it. The distinction between “I” and “me” and the social self is translated into a narrative framework. The “I” is the author of the self-narrative and the “me” is the actor in the story (Hermans & Hermans 2001:2). Narratives are created to meet the demands of social roles and historical-cultural settings. In the process of writing narratives, autobiographical reasoning and narrative processing merge. Autobiographical reasoning refers to the process of making meaning out of the narrative

account of life events. Narrative processing is the storied account of past events that range from brief anecdotes to fully developed autobiographies (Hermans 2012a:2).

Motivation in life narratives and themes of autonomy (agency) and relationship (communion) are critical elements. “Different ‘I’ positions and repositioning can be manifested. The ‘I’ has the possibility to move, as in space, from one position to the other in accordance with changes in a situation and time. The ‘I’ has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a distinct voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established” (Hermans 2012b:2). We should give credit to Ricoeur’s (1991:20) philosophy on life narratives, which were afterwards presented by Hermans (2012c:5) on theological research into lived spirituality in life narratives.

The Sacrament of Confession is an individual experience that can be preconscious, automatic, concrete, holistic and intimately linked to emotions. The participants in this study’s life narratives presented a meaning system of people that was descriptive of self-life (self-world) beliefs and prescriptive (motivational) beliefs which referred to their actions, emotions and life goals. Descriptive beliefs are about the nature of the person (for example, one can say “I am a believer”)’ about the nature of the world (for example, one can say “God has created the world”); and about the relationship between the self and the world, (for example, one can say “With God’s help, I can change the world”). Prescriptive (or motivational) beliefs are broad generalisations that are used to obtain what one desires and to avoid what one fears. The exercise of autonomy to discard fears was respected in this study. Since the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession includes some elements of psychology, philosophy and practical theology, psychological, philosophical and practical theological models were used to explore the parishioners’ subjective experiences and perceptions. The figure below shows the psychological model of life narratives.

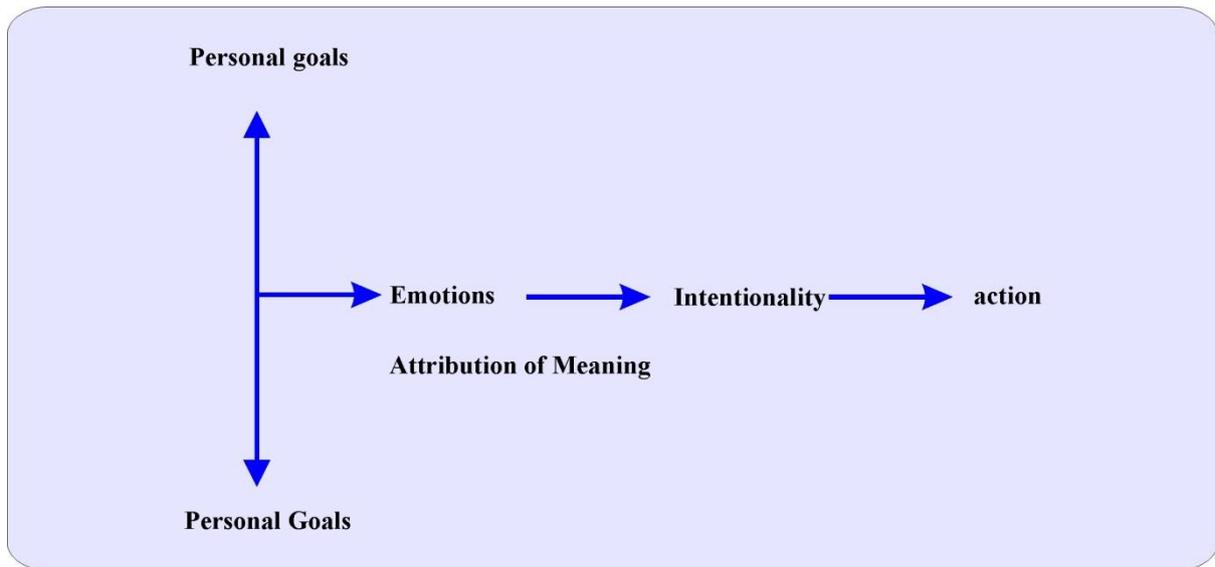


Figure 4 : The psychological model of life narratives (Frijda 2007)

According to Hermans (2012:2), life narratives motivate our feelings, meanings and actions. Qualitative research methods on life narratives was used to explore pastors and some parishioners' perceptions, choices and actions in the context of pastoral counselling, with specific reference to the practice of the Sacrament of Confession.

The life narrative approach was applied because it follows the ideas of a contextual approach, with an emphasis on doing theology (Kotze & Kotze 2001:5). This methodology involved the research participants as an integral part of the research. Qualitative narrative methods were used to gain an understanding and insight into the life worlds of the participants (Mouton 2001:150; Hofstee 2006). Semi-structured interview questions were used which were based on practical issues pertaining to the Sacrament of Confession. It emphasised the doing of practical theology, which reaches beyond a mere practice of theology. This refers to a shift from "the general to the local ... to true participation among all participants of practical theology" (Mouton 2001:150). According to Hermans (2012c:3), human beings function and interact in social groups to reflect on themselves more closely. In support of Cooley (1902), who introduced the concept of the "looking-glass self", Hermans (2012c:3) refers to individuals who see themselves in the way that others see them. This idea of perceiving oneself as others do is extended by Epstein (1973) and Mead (1934), who affirm the idea by developing the concept of the "generalised other". Life narratives highlight and motivate our contingencies, feelings, meanings and actions. Instead of having interviews alone, participants could also be engaged in informal conversations where they could tell stories in

relation to the Sacrament of Confession. For this reason, we also applied the aspect of a spiritual life story or biography to explore the meaning that people gave to the practice of the Sacrament of Confession (Van de Brand et al 2013). Figure 5 below illustrates the research map that we followed in our search for the participants' attitudes towards the Sacrament of Confession.

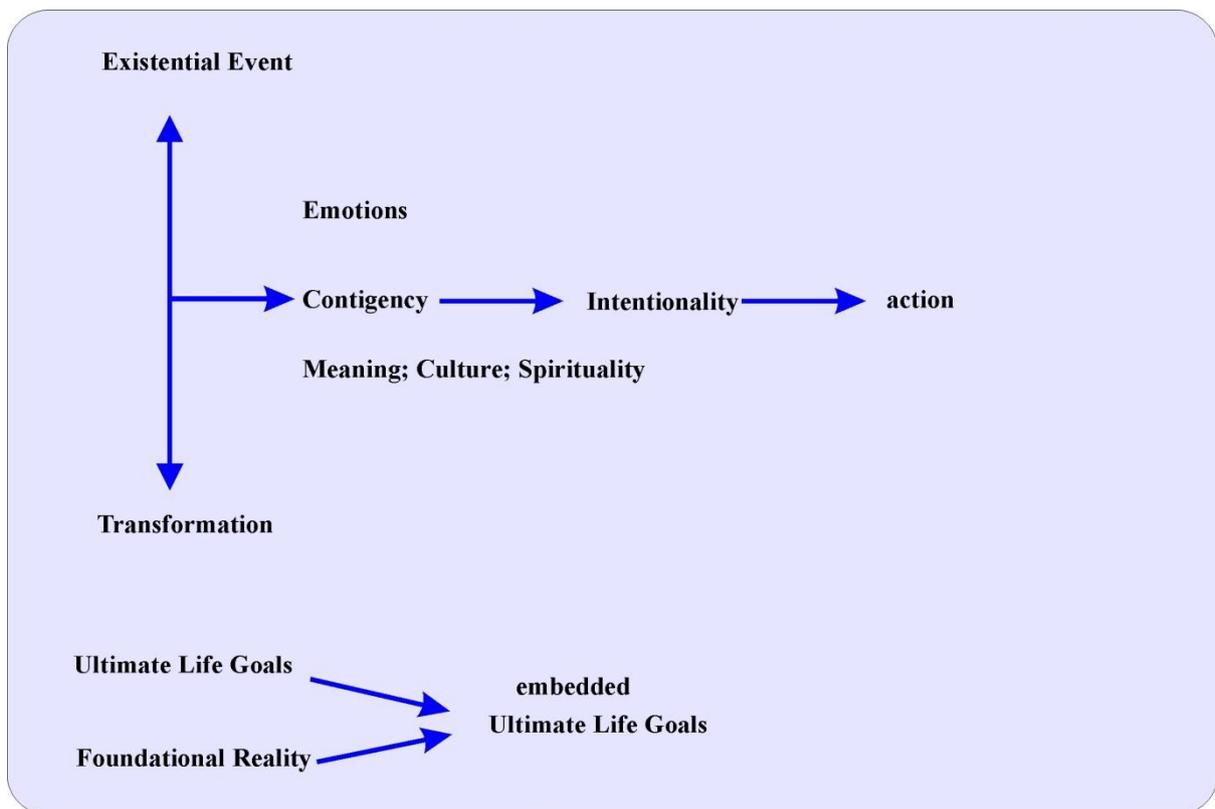


Figure 5 : The spiritual life story(Van de Brand et al 2013)

According to Hermans (2012:5), the spiritual life narrative model consists of the following key indicators: an existential event, ultimate life goals, foundational realities, meaning, intentionality, emotions, contingency, action and transformation. Ultimate life goals indicate people's ultimate values and their deepest motivation. This is derived from Tillich's (1963) theory on personal life goals, which can be placed into a personal goals hierarchy. We can distinguish between instrumental and ultimate goals. The instrumental goals can be fulfilled, but the ultimate goals are abstract and universal. With respect to the Sacrament of Confession, life stories can help us to know whether or not people consider their goals in life as their ultimate life goals.

The foundational reality can be transcendent or immanent. Transcendence refers to God and immanence refers to nature. Life stories can demonstrate whether participants perceived the Sacrament of Confession as transcendent or immanent.

According to Hermans (2012c:3) emotions are condensed narratives. He got this from Lazarus' (1999:193–255) framework, which consists of aspects such as anger, envy, jealousy, anxiety, guilt, shame, relief, hope, sorrow, concern, revulsion, happiness, pride, love, gratitude, and compassion and amazement. These were important in exploring the participants' subjective experiences of the Sacrament of Confession as a religious spiritual exercise. Life stories could illustrate their choices, intentions and emotions about the Sacrament of Confession as a therapeutic practice.

A contingency is something that is not necessary but happens in life. It can be situational, existential or religious. Life stories could also show people's attitude towards the Sacrament of Confession (Hermans 2012c:5).

Intentionality is how people actualise their ultimate goals. This is manifested in people's actions. When telling their stories, the participants related their intentions or decisions about the Sacrament of Confession or psychological counselling and its meaning in their lives. Action is the execution of an intention as intended by a person.

Transformation is the process of change or becoming. A person is not a static being. Because of his or her emotions and ultimate goals, a person always aspires to become better than before. This state of becoming changes the person's previous form or shape into a new developed state of being that he or she aspired to. This process of change is what Hermans (2012c:5) calls transformation. As a spiritual being, a person is changed into a new form of a desired life due to his or her actions of trying to achieve desired ultimate goals. Hence, the process is called spiritual transformation. The objective of this study was to explore some or all of these elements in the life narratives of the respondents.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews in order to obtain the research sample's life narratives. The life narrative methodology involved listening to the previously unheard voices and gathering the experiences of people who were involved in the practice of the Sacrament of Confession. It was a people-centred methodology (Mulwa 2006:1). The conceptualisation or mode of this methodology was more inductive than deductive. This means that in the methodology, particular instances of life stories or life narratives had to be considered which would lead to a general perception on the members of the Church who practised the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese (Morton S. 1996:466). In other words, there was no imposition of any pre-set theory or explanation; what were important were the narratives of the people who were interviewed. The approach focused on the participants and their world-views. As pointed out by Mouton (2005:151), the sampling procedure or selection of cases in qualitative research is that of non-probability selection. All the respondents from the five deaneries of the Masvingo Diocese had experienced the Sacrament of Confession as a practised religious activity in the Church and this presented an ideal opportunity for the life narrative methodology (Hermans 2012a:1).

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CC 2005:97), confession as a religious exercise heals the souls of sinners when they come before a priest to confess their sins. The life narrative methodology excluded "the seal of confession", which is the confidentiality between the confessor (the priest who conducts the Sacrament of Confession) and the penitent (the parishioner who comes to do confession). We did not record the names of the penitents and confessors. The practice of the Sacrament of Confession and the emotions, meanings and attitudes of the parishioners were also explored through the researcher's participative observation.

According to Mouton (2005:151), semi-structured interviews are essential because they enable the interviewer to probe the respondents so that they can give adequate and expanded answers. During the interviews, the trained interviewers could exhibit some flexibility and repeated or rephrased the questions so that the respondents could understand what was meant by particular questions (Chikoko & Mhloyi 2003:12). The narrative methodology was appropriate to study the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession, because it measured the participants' ultimate meaning and spiritual development in the Sacrament of Confession.

The Masvingo Diocese, which formed the context of the study, comprises the Masvingo, Gutu, Lowveld, Eastern and Southern Church districts or deaneries of Masvingo. The following group of were chosen for the interviews in each deanery: one priest; one male and one female youth member; one man from the St Joseph Association; one woman from the St Anne Association; and one religious brother or sister. It was presupposed that the mentioned groups of people who belonged to different Church associations would offer a broader scope of experience of the Sacrament of Confession. The total number of participants in the study was 30. The five trained interviewers conducted interviews in their respective deaneries.

The following semi-structured interview framework, which was based on Hermans' (2012a:1) interview guide, was used.

4.4. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR LIFE NARRATIVES

4.4.1 Directions for the interviewer

The researcher held a meeting with the five trained interviewers to strategise the operations for the interviews on 15 March 2013 in Masvingo town. After going over the research instrument and clarifying the necessary areas of the research, the trained interviewers carried out the interviews. They were equipped with the necessary research material, like a tape recorder and stationery. The five trained interviewers returned to their respective places to embark on the interviews as scheduled by the researcher. They scheduled meetings with different interviewees in their respective deaneries. They had to contact the interviewees at the appointed time and inform them about the procedures of the interview. The interviewers had to communicate if there were any changes or emergency cases, for example being delayed. They also had to ensure that they were on time and that they took the following along:

- (1) the topic list
- (2) resources, like a voice recorder, a pencil, two pens, a rubber, a ruler, a cell phone, plain paper sheets and an extra battery for the e recorder
- (3) pages on which the lifelines would be drawn
- (4) the list of questions that the participants would complete

- (5) the addresses of the interviewees

4.4.2 Validity and trustworthiness

The interviewers had to keep in mind that the goal of the interview was to gather data for a scientific study on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese. They had to follow the questions as indicated and had to ask all the questions as detailed and directed in the interview guide. It was also important that the interviewers used follow-up questions if they saw that the respondents were not answering the questions satisfactorily.

4.4.3 Introduction

The format of the introduction was as follows:

1. (I am I live.... I work.... I attend Holy Mass... .
2. The interviewers had to explain the purpose of the interview and mention the research title “The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession: A life narrative study in the Masvingo Diocese of Masvingo in Zimbabwe”. The trained interviewers had to brief the interviewees as follows:

This research forms part of a doctoral study at the University of South Africa, aimed at individual experiences on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession and the influence of psychological counselling and psychotherapy. Different aspects like culture and other relevant subjects will also be researched. This is one of 30 interviews that will be done within a period of three months. All interviews and interviewees’ information will be treated with confidentiality and privacy. The interviewees will remain anonymous. The interview will be structured around the discussions on the interviewee’s past, present and future experience of the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling. A transcript and/or analysis will be made available of the interview should the interviewee wants to receive it.

4.4.4 Interview process

The interviewers had to ask the interviewees' consent to record the discussions, both in writing and as voice recordings. Each interview was targeted to last for an hour. The trained interviewers would set out the required resources and continue with the interview as outlined.

(1) *Demographic information*

The interviewers had to obtain background/demographic information about the interviewees, like their sex, age, profession, level of education and relationships. (See Appendix C for the interview instrument.)

(2) *Lifeline (past and possible future)*

As they were probing for meaning, emotions, goals and contingency, the interviewers had to explain the lifeline that the parishioners had to complete about their past and possible future experiences of the Sacrament of Confession. The interviewer had to read the following text to the interviewee:

The Sacrament of Confession lifeline is drawn in the shape of a rectangle. The bottom and top horizontal lines are connected by two thick lines and a dotted line. The area to the left of the second thick line is used to indicate the past and the area to its right is used for the future. The dotted line symbolises one's life expectancy. The middle horizontal line is the neutral middle. The area above the line is used to indicate a high point (escalating in relation to the height above the line) and the area below the line is used to indicate a low point (escalating in relation to the depth below the line). The beginning of the middle line is the time when you started to do confession in the Catholic Church. The intersection of the second vertical line and the horizontal line is the time of this interview.

An example of the lifeline is given in the diagram below.

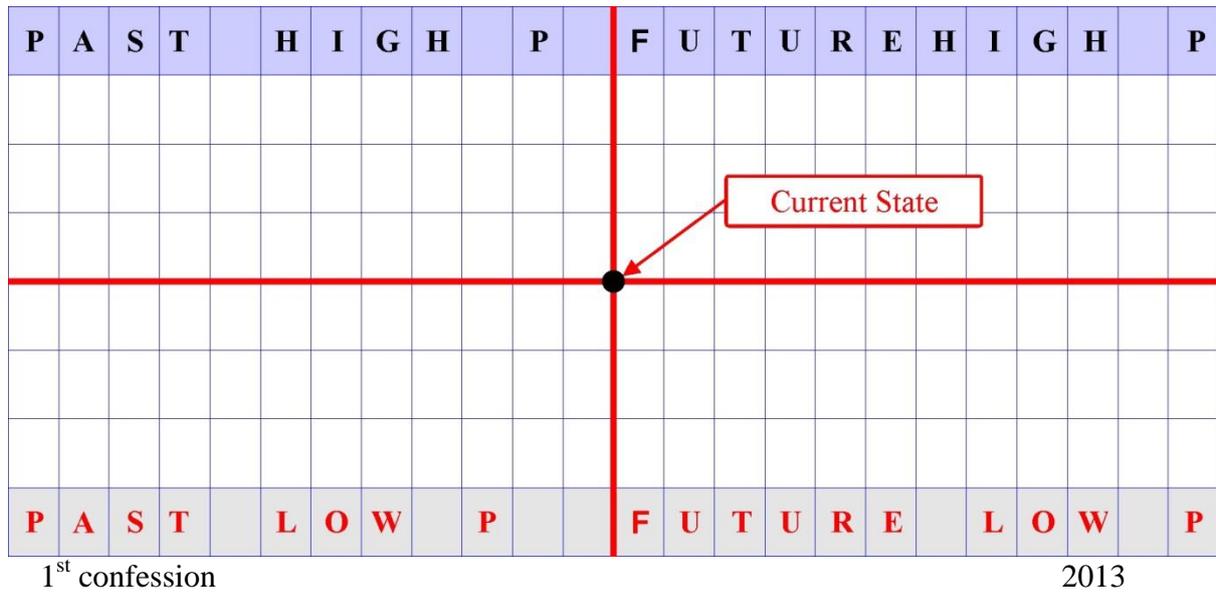


Figure 6 : The lifeline diagram of the Sacrament of Confession

The interviewee was required, without giving it too much thought, to plot his or her own Sacrament of Confession lifeline from the first day of confession to the day of the interview and into the near future. On the lifeline, the interviewee had to plot two events of confession in the past and one event in the future. The interviewee also had to plot on the lifeline the critical incidents or prominent high and low points in his or her life as a confirmer of the Sacrament of Confession and as a member of a particular Catholic Parish in the Masvingo Diocese. The rest of the interview was based on the three events of the interviewee's experience of the Sacrament of Confession.

The interviewee had to name two events of his or her confession in the past and one in the future, and had to respond to questions 1 to 11 of the questionnaire in terms of what he or she had filled in on the diagram. The interviewers asked the same questions for event one, for event two and then for event three.

(3) *Efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession*

The rest of the questionnaire consisted of probing questions on the Sacrament of Confession in terms of meaning and ultimate life goals. The interviewer had to probe the interviewee for his or her views on meaning, ultimate goals, contingency and God as the ultimate reality. The

interviewer also had to probe for his or her views on the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession and its relationship with psychological counselling and psychotherapy.

As the interviewers asked the interviewees questions, they were able to infer that there were people who claimed that the Sacrament of Confession has a healing effect. The interviewers assessed how the interviewees understood it. The interviewers probed further to find out how the interviewees would feel if they were ailing and where they would prefer to go for healing. The interviewers explored whether the participants would connect the Sacrament of Confession with the forgiving and saving hand of God or if they would prefer psychological counselling and psychotherapy as reflected by the interviewees. The interviewers probed them about the claim that “confession was out and psychological counselling in,” which means that there are people who no longer need the Sacrament of Confession because they prefer psychological counselling and psychotherapy. The interviewers had to assess how the interviewees interpreted this claim.

The interviewers asked the interviewees how their culture related to or influenced the practice of the Sacrament of Confession. The interviewees had to explain what they thought it was about the Sacrament of Confession that culture was against. What was it in culture that the Sacrament of Confession was not addressing? The interviewees were invited to give their suggestions on ways of improving cultural dynamics in the Sacrament of Confession.

(4) Life goals and foundational reality

The interviewers probed the interviewees about their expectations in life, their life/ultimate goals and their image of God in decision making. The interviewers asked the interviewees about expected future events in their lives and their desires, choices and emotions. They also probed them about the greatest goal/s that they had pursued or were pursuing in life. The interviewers assessed whether there was another goal that was equally important in their lives. The interviewers also assessed whether the goals that the interviewees mentioned could be replaced by other goals and checked whether the goals were always important. If the goals were important, the interviewees were asked to elaborate on why the goals were important to them. The interviewees had to think about their life choices/pursuits and how they decided on them, and whether they lived by a certain rule of life or an intention or a certain vocation.

(5) *Pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession as a theological therapeutic practice*

The interviewers probed the interviewees on spiritual transformation, especially on what words/images/metaphors they used to describe the healing hand of God. The interviewers asked them when they had first been aware of the healing hand of God and when it had emerged. The interviewees were asked how they would respond when they saw that they were not in a state of grace. Given that the interviewees could choose between the Sacrament of Confession, psychological counselling and psychotherapy, the interviewers had to find out which of these disciplines the interviewees would choose to transform their life. They checked with the interviewees whether or not their spiritual life could be transformed because of awareness of their choices. The interviewees could tell the interviewers what kind of change had taken place in their lives after participating in the Sacrament of Confession and how it impacted their everyday lives.

(6) *Therapeutic value of the Sacrament of Confession*

The interviewers explained to the interviewees that the word “explicit” means to acknowledge the existence of God. The word “implicit” means belief in powers other than God, for example spiritual deities or traditional healers. However, the interviewers did deal with the word “implicit” because it would suggest that there were some Church members who did not believe in God even though the practice of the Sacrament of Confession suggested that those who took part in it believed in God explicitly. As human beings, we can have different experiences of change in our lives. In moments of change, we can come to know ourselves through interaction. We come to an awareness of who we are. At the same time, we learn how to grow and develop in God’s environment.

The interviewers asked the interviewees to look back on their lives to see whether there were life events which they could view as moments that had been influenced by God as the Higher Power and whether there had been moments of change and growth for the interviewees. The interviewers introduced the interviewees to different experiences of change and growth. Some experiences described the interviewees’ feelings and other experiences did not describe any experience. The interviewees indicated which experiences were appropriate in their lives. The following sentences were presented to the interviewees to ascertain how they related to God:

- (1) I became aware that my existence in time and place was given to me by God.
- (2) The awareness grew in me that I needed to be renewed through the Sacrament of Confession to win God's mercy.
- (3) The more I walked my spiritual path, the more I felt God's leading hand.
- (4) The more the love of God was fulfilled in me through the Sacrament of Confession, the more love radiated through me and others.
- (5) The desire grew in me to lose myself completely in God, although I did not know what that meant.

The interviewers further asked the interviewees whether there was one experience where they recognised themselves as sinners. If so, the interviewer continued to probe the interviewees to find out in what ways they understood God in the moment of change. The interviewers continued to probe the interviewees to reveal their experiences of God.

(7) *Support and expectations from communities of faith: The Sacrament of Confession as a practical therapeutic model in the Church*

The interviewers asked the interviewees to say something more about their expectations of communities of faith in relating to and developing interaction/a relationship with God. The interviewees had to choose how they perceived their relationship with an ultimate being to be through the Sacrament of Confession and how it should look like. The interviewees could have a certain image that helped them to describe God. The interviewees were asked to suggest how their relationship with God/the ultimate reality could develop through the Sacrament of Confession. This could help the interviewers to assess whether it was static or dynamic. The interviewees were also asked about the kind of support (if any) they thought was needed from the clergy and faith communities to grow and develop their spirituality through the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession.

If any kind of support was needed from the hierarchy of the Church, the interviewees were expected to mention it. They were also encouraged to give practical examples of activities in their life like prayer, retreats and all night prayers. The interviewees were allowed to indicate whether they thought the Sacrament of Confession could offer any therapeutic meaning in people's lives. They were required to explain how the Sacrament of Confession could change Church people's way of life. They were also required to suggest whether psychological

counselling and psychotherapy had the potential to replace the Sacrament of Confession in Churches in the cities or rural areas. The aspect of culture could not be left out as an influential factor in the parishioners' attitudes towards the Sacrament of Confession. The interviewees were required to relate how culture and the Sacrament of Confession were linked.

The interviewers asked the interviewees to think about faith communities and how they could support individuals in making confessions for spiritual healing. If there was any kind of support from faith communities, the interviewees were asked to elaborate on life choices to practise the Sacrament of Confession. Finally, the interviewers asked the interviewees if they had any other expectations that could enhance faith communities in the practice of the Sacrament of Confession.

4.4.5 Closing of the interview

The interviewers notified the interviewees that the interview had ended. To wrap up, the interviewers asked the interviewees whether there was anything of interest that they thought the interviewers did not ask and how the interviewees experienced the interview. They also asked whether the interviewees would like to receive a transcript of the interview and its analysis.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The life narratives were reconstructed and coded according to themes of the pastoral role of confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. Each interviewer analysed his or her data separately, using the first-cycle codes and the second-cycle codes, which were synthesised into themes with the other interviewers. Similarities were grouped together and differences also. Once the similarities and differences were explored, the final process was to present the theories that resulted.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the qualitative empirical research design was explained in detail. The life narrative methodology of Hermans (2012a) was applied. The empirical research

methodology was also explained. The what, how, who, when and where questions of the research were addressed. The research questions are addressed in this chapter. The research was carried out in the five parishes of the five deaneries in the Masvingo Diocese, namely: St Peter's Cathedral and St Paul's Cathedral in the Masvingo deanery; Mukaro Mission in the Gutu deanery, the Silveira Mission in the Eastern deanery, Holy Trinity in the Lowveld deanery and St Joseph's Parish in Southern Deanery. The method that was used to collect the data was semi-structured interviews.

Furthermore, in this chapter the empirical research methodology was outlined based on the life narratives of the respondents. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. The research was carried out in five deaneries in the Masvingo Diocese. Trained interviewers carried out the interviews in their respective deaneries. The research findings are presented and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: LIFE NARRATIVES ON THE PASTORAL ROLE OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION IN THE MASVINGO DIOCESE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the life narrative methodology and semi-structured interviews with priests and Church members in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe were discussed. In this chapter, the empirical data and the analysis of the life narratives of the respondents are presented. The data was analysed and interpreted to discover new insights on the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Catholic Diocese in Zimbabwe. The findings on the main question of the research, namely the relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychotherapy, are presented. The qualitative data that was collected from the interviewees was coded according to concepts, themes and theories. Categories were developed from the questions of the interview instrument. The concepts were raised by the interviewees as they were narrating their different life stories on the Sacrament of Confession. The theories developed from the responses that were grouped into concepts and themes.

This chapter is an exposition of the life narratives of the interviewees on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese. The life stories revealed how some priests and parishioners perceived the Sacrament of Confession in their spiritual lives. The responses included the aspects of psychological counselling, psychotherapy and culture as variables that were related to the interviewees' perceptions about the Sacrament of Confession in their lives. These life narratives unveiled key themes that reflected the insights of the interviewees about the Sacrament of Confession. The findings on the 30 interviewees' perceptions, emotions, experiences and understanding about the Sacrament of Confession were captured by means of the interview instrument. The interviews were conducted in different locations and at different occasions. Their perceptions, experiences and insights were captured in the form of narratives, which were reconstructed through the life narrative methodology to produce the qualitative set of data for analysis.

As the starting point, the demographic information of the interviewees are given. The following tables show the biographical data of the priests and laypeople who were interviewed.

Table 2 : Biographical data of priests

NUMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN MASVINGO DIOCESE	QUALIFICATION	INTERVIEW NUMBER
1	1969	44	9	DIP PHIL TH	1
2	1973	40	8	HRS PHIL TH	4
3	1971	42	15	PHD PHIL TH	7
4	1983	30	3	DIP PHIL TH	14
5	1980	33	2	LIC PHIL TH	19
6	1982	31	4	LIC PHIL TH	25

Six priests were interviewed, which amounted to 20% of the total sample interviewed. They ranged from 30 to 44 years of age, depicting the dynamic age of priesthood. The inference can be drawn that most of the priests in the Masvingo Diocese were between 30 to 44 years of age. The quantitative experience of the priests in shepherding the people of God ranged from two to 15 years. The qualifications of the priests ranged from a diploma to a doctorate level in Philosophy and Theology.

Table 3 : Laypeople/Parishioners (male)

NUMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN MASVINGO DIOCESE	QUALIFICATION	STATUS	INTERVIEW NUMBER
1	1975	38	7	O LEVEL	SINGLE	8
2	1970	43	15	BED	MARRIED	13
3	1970	43	11	BED	MARRIED	15
4	1970	43	23	BED	MARRIED	18
5	1960	53	46	BED	MARRIED	21
6	1989	24	24	MBA	SINGLE	23
7	1976	37	8	HND	MARRIED	28
8	1982	31	5	BSC ACC	SINGLE	30

27% of the sample was male laypeople. Their ages ranged from 24 to 53 years of age. The majority of the males who were interviewed were married and had better jobs because of the level of their academic qualifications. Those who were single were still furthering their education.

Table 4 : Laypeople/Parishioners (female)

NUMBER	YEAR OF BIRTH	AGE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN MASVINGO DIOCESE	QUALIFICATION	STATUS	INTERVIEW NUMBER
1	1943	70	40	DIP ED	MARRIED	2
2	1965	48	48	BED	MARRIED	3
3	1985	28	1	A LEVEL	SINGLE	5
4	1978	35	35	BA	SINGLE	6
5	1981	32	19	O LEVEL	SINGLE	9
6	1948	65	15	BED	WIDOW	10
7	1953	60	17	BED	MARRIED	11
8	1975	38	13	DIP ED	MARRIED	12
9	1962	51	35	POSTGRAD ED	MARRIED	16
10	1965	48	14	MED	MARRIED	17
11	1965	48	21	MED PSY	MARRIED	20
12	1963	50	15	BSC NURS	MARRIED	22
13	1941	72	44	BED	WIDOW	24
14	1960	53	53	BA	MARRIED	26
15	1974	39	10	BED	MARRIED	27
16	1972	41	13	BA HONS	MARRIED	29

53% of the interviewed population was female laypeople. Their age ranged from 28 to 72 years. The females' experiences in the Diocese of Masvingo ranged from one to 53 years. Most of the females who were interviewed were married and had stable families. Their level of education was high. Most of them were teachers, probably because of the three training colleges for teachers, three universities and one polytechnic college in the Masvingo province. The females' age range and years of religious experience in the Masvingo Diocese were higher than the males' age range and religious experience in the Masvingo Diocese. The females were the highest number of people who were interviewed because of their availability and patience.

5.2 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING

After obtaining the demographic information, the interview instrument was used to collect data on the Sacrament of Confession lifeline (past and possible future events) of the interviewees reflecting on concepts such as “meaning”, “emotions”, “usefulness”, “goals” and “contingency” in their spiritual lives (see Appendix C for the interview instrument). The word “interviewees” is used to refer to the respondents or participants in the study. The names of the interviewees were not recorded for ethical reasons, but they are identified in numerical form from interviewee 1 to interviewee 30. Numbers 1, 4, 7, 14, 19 and 25 represent the priests who were interviewed (see Appendix A for the interviews with priests). The remaining numbers represent the laypeople who were interviewed (see Appendix B for the interviews with the laypeople). The following table shows the numbers representing the interviewees:

Table 5 : All interviewees (priests and laity)

PRIESTS						LAITY					
1	4	7	14	19	25	2	3	5	6	8	9
						10	11	12	13	15	16
						17	18	20	21	22	23
						24	26	27	28	29	30

The interviewees’ critical incidents or prominent high and low points of their lives as confessors or confirmers of the Sacrament of Confession from the past, present and possible future reflected their participation as priests and laypeople in the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo. Their narratives on the Sacrament of Confession were analysed by means of the coding system of Saldana (2009) and it was done in two cycles. The explanation of the coding system is given in the following section.

5.3 CODING SYSTEM

According to Saldana (2009:3), a code is used in qualitative inquiry. It is most often “a word or a phrase” that captures the essence of the data from a text. A code highlights, adapts and renames qualitative data for clarity or flexibility’s sake. Such data can consist of interview transcripts, as in our case (see Appendices A and B for the coded interviews with the priests and laypeople). There are different types of codes for qualitative data, like *in vivo*, initial, focused, pattern, axial, theoretical and many other codes. *In vivo* coding, initial coding, axial and theoretical coding are the ones that are used in this study (Charmaz 2006; Corbin & Strauss 2008; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1998). *In vivo* coding, according to Stringer (1999:91), is the language that the interviewees use in their everyday lives rather than the terms that academic researchers use. According to Charmaz (2006:46), initial coding opens all the possible theoretical directions indicated by the data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998:124), axial coding is the strategic re-assembling and splitting of data. According to Charmaz (2006:63), theoretical coding specifies the possible relationships between categories to build theories.

Among the abovementioned codes, some formed the first-cycle coding process and others the second-cycle coding process, as is shown below.

5.3.1 First-cycle coding

According to Saldana (2009:43), the first-cycle coding methods are the processes that happen during the initial coding of data. In this study, the first-cycle coding process was the recording of the interview transcripts of the interviewees. The transcripts were numbered and ordered accordingly in data coding columns which had three sections, namely: (1) the far left side with fixed numbers, (2) the main or middle section for the numbered interview questions and their responses, and (3) the far right side for comments and remarks (see Appendices A and B for the coded interviews with the priests and laypeople). Unfortunately, the far left side for numbering was submerged in the appendix but the numbers indicate where the text was first coded and where it ended (for example 4:527–533 means interviewee 4 whose text is from lines 527 to 533). For illustration purposes, the interview questions are indicated as follows: 14. R. “Tell me more about why you feel the need to partake of the Sacrament of Confession frequently or infrequently?” (14 is the question number, “R” stands for the

researcher and “I” stands for the interviewee). The interviewee’s response appears as follows: I (55). “The faithful seem not to have that boldness to go and ask the priest to listen to one’s confession ...” The quote is the direct words of the interviewee (the direct words are *in vivo* codes, which will be explained later) that were grouped together and summarised from a particular interviewee and placed in the far right side of the coding sheet in capital letters as follows: 4(527–533) “The parishioners lack courage to approach the priests for Confession. Confession should be timetabled.” The words in capital letters were the data of interviewee 4 that was synthesised to make a comprehensive and coherent statement in the far right side of the coding sheet on which the direct quote was maintained. This pattern was followed for all 30 interviewees. In some cases, there was a mixture of terms in upper case and others in lower case to the far right side (see Appendix A for the coded interviews). This was done deliberately to distinguish between the levels of summarised coded data of particular individuals. For convenience’s sake, the coded data in the first cycle were placed in Appendix A of the study in order to decongest the mainstream analytical text.

The data was then grouped and summarised further to place it in Appendix B for further exploration. We did this for the purpose of comparing the data from priests and the data from the laypeople. Hence, the data was gathered in the first coding system, namely initial and *in vivo* codes. We began the regrouping of data according to the responses to the interview questions. The idea was to order the different data sets and to identify categories that emerged from the interviews. We already mentioned the coding system. Saldana (2009:81) argues that initial coding is “... the breaking down of qualitative data into discrete parts, which we closely examined and compared to get similarities and differences.” Dey (1999:69 & 70), however, cautions that concepts and categories in qualitative inquiry do not always have sharp boundaries. Appendices A and B with interviews with the priests and laypeople show how the data was regrouped and summarised from the interview transcripts. The initial coding system gave us analytic leads for further exploration of the data that directed us in mapping our way in the analysis of the qualitative data. Furthermore, in the initial coding, we used *in vivo* coding as reflected by Saldana (2009:81): “initial coding can employ *in vivo* coding” in the first cycle. *In vivo* coding, according to Saldana (2009:74), is known as “Literal Coding or *Verbatim* Coding”; this refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language of the qualitative data as used by the interviewees. In other words, *in vivo* coding prioritises and honours the interviewee’s voice. In our study, the coding in the first cycle was done on two levels. The first level highlighted the direct words that were used by an

interviewee and this was indicated with a yellow highlighter. The second level focused on the remarks column of the interview transcripts. The initial and *in vivo* codes were relevant for the first-cycle coding of the data because it was when the actual information from the interviewees was obtained, especially the interview transcripts which were then systematically ordered and matched. The aforementioned (two) codes that were used in the first cycle showed correlations and/or differences between the data sets. The data from the interview transcripts were further analysed to check similar and different concepts, which were then grouped together to form categories. The categories that were constructed had analytical memos which were used to clarify concepts for further regrouping and coding. This is in line with Glaser (1978:56), who asserts that analytic memos should be used to explain and justify the given data. The direct quotes from different individuals were maintained in order to honour the original voices of the interviewees even in the second-cycle coding. The analysed coded data are presented according to categories in the next section.

5.3.2 Second-cycle coding

According to Saldana (2009:45), second-cycle coding methods require analytic skills such as "... classifying, prioritising, integrating, synthesising, abstracting, conceptualising and theory building". In this study, we had already taken ownership of the data in the first cycle, where we used initial and *in vivo* coding. As we were translating the data into the second cycle, the codes that were used were axial coding and theoretical coding in order to develop a coherent synthesis of the data corpus. The data corpus is the collected data that has to be analysed to come up with the desired results. Hermans (2012b:4) emphasises the use of axial coding, especially in extracting information from life stories. In this cycle, some codes will be merged because they are conceptually similar, while others will be dropped if they appear marginal or redundant. Therefore, the primary goal in the second-cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual and theoretical organisation from the first-cycle codes (Saldana 2009:149). The codes that were used in this cycle of the study are explained and defined in the following paragraphs.

(1) *The axial coding*

Axial coding involves assembling the data into a comprehensive meaning. It extends the analytic work from open coding and probably from other codes. Since initial and *in vivo*

coding was used in the first cycle, there was a coherent link with axial coding. The data corpus that was split during the initial coding (see Appendices A and B) was strategically re-assembled in axial coding. Saldana (2009:159) argues that the “axis” of axial coding is a category like the axis of a wooden wheel with extended spokes discerned from the first-cycle coding. Axial coding is the method that Hermans (2012b:4) preferred to use in qualitative research. Charmaz (2006:60) explains the properties and dimensions of categories which help the researcher to focus on the direction of research. Axial codes relate categories to subcategories, and specify the properties and dimensions of a category. Saldana (2009:159) defines properties as characteristics/attributes and dimensions as the location of property along a continuum or range of a category that refers to components as conditions, causes and consequences of a process – actions that let the researcher know if, when and why something happens. Axial coding was appropriate for the qualitative study to order, clarify and analyse the multiple interview transcripts. Coded data was used and the number of initial codes that were developed was reduced while they were sorted and re-labelled into conceptual categories. Axial coding is the transitional cycle between the initial coding and theoretical coding process.

(2) *The theoretical coding*

According to Saldana (2009:163), theoretical coding functions like an umbrella that covers all codes and categories formulated in grounded theory analysis. Glaser (1978:145) concurs that theoretical coding is the culminating step in achieving grounded theory. In other words, theoretical coding gives the central or core category for condensing and integrating all analysis to highlight the primary theme of the research in a few words. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that theoretical coding explains variation as well as the main point of the data corpus. It is in theoretical coding that all categories and subcategories are systematically linked with the central or core category. The central category provides relevant explanations of the phenomenon. Concepts, categories and theories are further explained below.

5.4 CONCEPTS, CATEGORIES AND THEORIES

Concepts are ideas, like in this study which concerns the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. Categories are classes or groups of things (in this case, of ideas with common interests) that are made up of different concepts that are

synthetically coded and integrated. According to Northcutt and McCoy (2004:242), participants do most of the researcher's work by raising concepts and categories in the interview that will eventually build up the research work. Theories are primary themes that are created out of concepts and categories to form meaningful core categories. Concepts, categories and theories were raised by the interviewees' responses and were analysed through initial, *in vivo*, axial and theoretical coding along with experiential knowledge of the researcher.

To have an overview of what transpired in this section of the study, the interview data that passed through the first-cycle and second-cycle coding (from Appendices A and B) was obtained through initial and *in vivo* codes. Constructs or concepts were extracted from the interview transcripts. The grouped data were then synthesised with the intention of coming up with themes or categories in the axial and theoretical coding of the second-cycle coding process.

Bear in mind that the terms in bold letters were itemised and indicated in superscript numbers as eye-catching terms that needed further coding in order to come up with categories. The itemised concepts in bold were further analysed in superscript text as analytical memos, preparing them for axial and theoretical coding respectively. Glaser (1978:56) argues that analytic memos should explain and justify clarity with reference to the data. The paragraphs below demonstrate the aforementioned processes of discovering categories that come to the fore from concepts. Tables were used to "showcase" the concepts and to analyse them for further conceptual and theoretical presentation. In simple terms, the following sequence was used in grouping concepts, categories and theories: Name of category – data corpus from initial codes with bold concepts; table with concepts in analytical memo writing in superscript text; axial code – central/core category or theoretical code. Other central or core categories were obtained in axial coding as it unfolded.

5.4.1 Category 1: Meaning and value of the Sacrament of Confession

The following is the data corpus from the initial codes:

1 (66–85) "Confession is a ¹**confidential sacrament** which ²**reconciles humanity with God** and ³**transforms one's spiritual life.**" (The superscript number refers to the analytic memo of concepts explained in tables below)

4 (514–523) “Confession ⁴ **heals** and reconciles one with God.”

14 (229–247) “Confession is a way of ⁴ **accepting** one’s sins.”

19 (638–668) “Confession is ⁵ **a gift from God** by which the ⁶ **penitents scrutinise their actions.**”

23:358–408 “Confession is a ⁷ **voluntary self-accusation** of a penitent in order ⁸ **to come back to God**. God is the author of everything and ⁹ **loves sinners who repent**. Confession was founded by Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.”

Through the analysis and coding of interviewees 1, 4, 14, 19 and 23, the following concepts were captured and examined.

Table 6 : Concepts of meaning and value of the Sacrament of Confession

“CONFIDENTIAL SACRAMENT” The Sacrament of Confession is private and confidential. It is the sacrament of trust.

“RECONCILES HUMANITY WITH GOD” There is a vertical relationship between humanity and God.

“TRANSFORMS ONE’S SPIRITUAL LIFE” The Sacrament of Confession facilitates human spiritual transformation.

“A GIFT FROM GOD” The Sacrament of Confession is considered a gift from God for his people to have a second chance to turn to him.

“SCRUTINISE THEIR ACTIONS” It is a way of critical thinking or self-assessment.

“VOLUNTARY SELF-ACCUSATION” Parishioners are not forced to go for confession but exercise their free will.

“LOVES SINNERS” It is emphasised in the Church that God is not a punishing father but loves sinners who repent.

Axial Code 1: MVC – Meaning and value of the Sacrament of Confession

From the above table, concepts emerged that helped to generate the following category through the analytic memo and the axial code: The meaning and value of the Sacrament of Confession.

The meaning of the Sacrament of Confession refers to a **private and confidential healing sacrament**. It is celebrated on the basis that the parishioner possesses a degree of **trust to confess sins** to the priest. Confession enhances **reconciliation** in the Church and it was established by Jesus Christ. The **Value** of the Sacrament of Confession is that it **transforms**

parishioners' spiritual life and enhances their **good relationships** with each other and their God. In the Sacrament of Confession, parishioners enjoy the **love** of God and get **spiritually edified** if they voluntarily accuse themselves and realise that they are sinners who are ready to come back to their God.

The properties of the Sacrament of Confession are:

- It transforms people's relationships in a positive way.
- It is private and confidential.
- It gives spiritual nourishment.
- It is a healing sacrament.
- It is the sacrament of change, love and reconciliation.

The dimensions of the Sacrament of Confession are:

- **Trust:** Parishioners who trust their priests and accept that they are sinners go for the Sacrament of Confession and value it. They enhance the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession because they know that their sins are forgiven and the confessional privacy is kept and valued.
- **Mistrust:** There are parishioners who distort the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession and do not value its confidentiality and privacy because they do not trust the priest. Due to lack of trust, people in the Church (like adolescents) may perceive that going for confession is a torture instead of a way of attaining grace, so they avoid it and find no meaning and value in all its processes.

One can concur with St Augustine (398 AD) that a pernicious form of "*superbia*" (pride) is the desire to defend oneself in clear sin. Some parishioners know that the Sacrament of Confession unites them with each other and God, but they deliberately distort its **meaning** and undermine its **value**. This results in them tending to avoid it and remaining in sin.

The following concept is crucial and forms a core theory of this study.

Theoretical Code 1: Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the act of love and forgiveness towards someone who has offended you in some way (CC 1992:358; Ogoe 2010:25). This act of love or charity comes with the realisation that God has forgiven our sins and therefore we have to forgive others their sins. Reconciliation brings peace to the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven. The act of forgiveness is celebrated in the Sacrament of Confession, which brings healing in relationships and transformation for the penitent, and creates unity and love among believers and other human beings. The diagram below illustrates this theory.

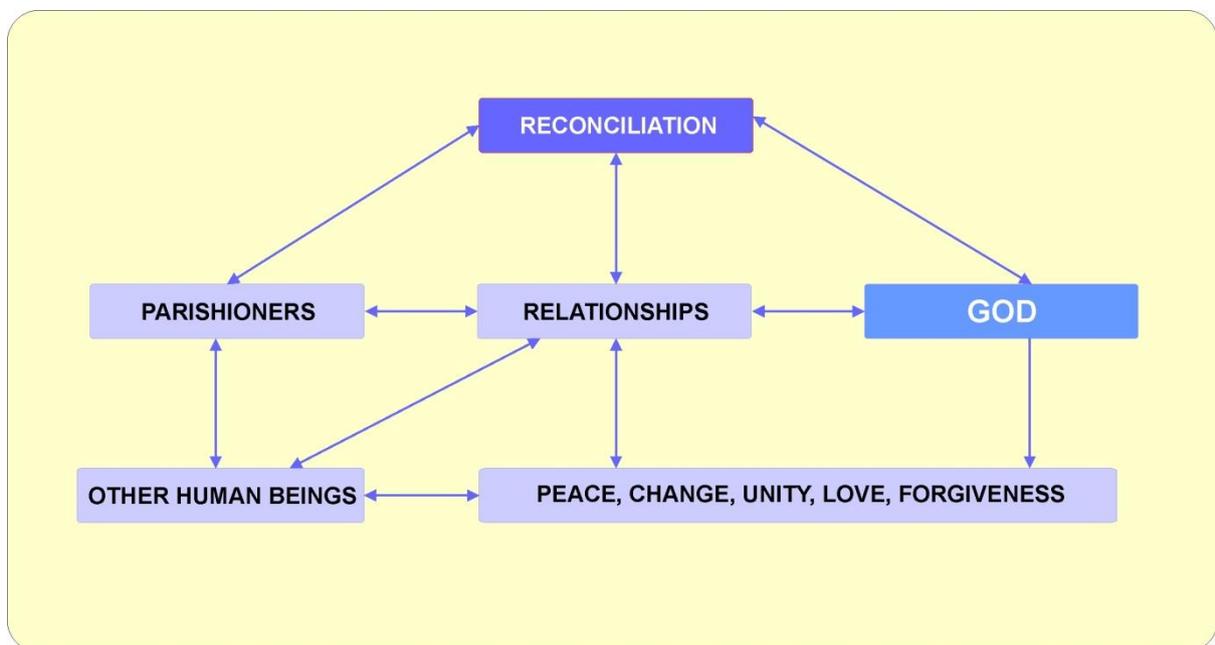


Figure 7 : Reconciliation

The explanation of the diagram above is that through reconciliation, God forgives humanity. Realising the forgiveness of God, humanity lives in peace, unity and love with one another. When humanity experiences the love and forgiveness of God, they in turn forgive one another and become spiritually transformed as Christians/parishioners. As parishioners, they further the love of God and forgiveness through confessing their sins (Musekura 2010; Stumpf 1993:232). Confession of sins promotes healthy relationships with God and with one another. The gap in the Sacrament of Confession that has to be considered is reconciliation, which has an African meaning with cultural elements like folklore or folk song (the traditional or cultural stories and songs that depict village life), other song and dance. Ponde (2006:3) refers to African music with an African taste which the missionaries were hesitant to

accept because of Shona rituals and ancestor worship. In song and dance, people can confess to the community and to offended individuals. In turn, the community and the offended individuals can accept the confession in the same song and dance and admitting their brothers and sisters back into the family circle. After this, the concerned parties can go to the priest for absolution. It is generally agreed that communalisation and contextualisation are no longer optional in the theory and practice of effective practical theology, pastoral care and counselling (Van Arkel 2005:122). We cannot exclude the Sacrament of Confession from communal and contextual systems approaches. It operates well in the community of believers and in the context of the Church. Hence, it relates and functions together with pastoral counselling and pastoral care. Parishioners can adopt such elements in their small Christian communities and in parishes. Private confession to the priest may follow after reconciling with the community and particular individuals in folk song and dance as a way of completing the process of reconciliation. The Shona people consult their “*vadzimu*” (ancestors) for guidance (Gelfand et al 1985). It is difficult in the Shona culture to separate religion from psychotherapy and other social science disciplines. They are led by the philosophy that “*munhu, munhu, navanhu muntu umuntu ngabantu*” (a person is not an island but lives with others in a community).

5.4.2 Category 2: Emotions

The following data corpus emerged from the initial codes:

1:116–152 “Genuine confession ¹**removes shame and builds a healthy relationship with God and humanity.**”

2:29–43 “Parishioners have a ²**desire** to confess but are ³**afraid** to do so. However, after confession, they ⁴**feel relieved.**”

3:702–729 “Some parishioners **feel relieved** after confession because of the ⁵**renewed** relationship with God and absolution from sin.”

5:103–149 “Confession gives ⁶**spiritual growth** and ⁷**inner freedom** but parishioners are ⁸**shy and afraid** to confess, hence participation has decreased.”

16:149–193 “Some parishioners ⁹**feel ashamed** to expose their sins to priests; yet, through confession, one ¹⁰**is forgiven** one’s sins.”

16:197–242 “At times, the penitent ¹¹**becomes emotional** during confession and ¹²**loses direction.**”

22:102–143 “Though it is important, going for confession is ¹²**subjective**. Gender plays no role in confession, but many parishioners **prefer** Holy Communion more to confession. Some parishioners are ¹³**not familiar** with psychological counselling and its relevance is **not realised**. Psychological counselling cannot take the place of confession. After confession, the penitent **grows** spiritually and ¹⁴**starts** a new life, thus ¹⁵**showing change** of behaviour. Much is not done to ¹⁶**encourage** confession.”

25:50–82 “In confession, a penitent ¹⁷**gets satisfaction** from absolution by a priest who is also ¹⁷**striving** for perfection.”

29:50–100 “Confession leads to virtuous life, self-satisfaction, ¹⁸**forgiveness** of sins and ¹⁹**heals** the soul. Before confession, the penitents ²⁰**feel remorse** but after a good confession, they ²¹**feel relaxed**.”

14:353–401 A ²²**positive behaviour develops** after confession and one ²³**enjoys freedom** of the heart.”

The following concepts were captured in the data of interviewees 1, 2, 3, 5, 14, 16, 22, 25 and 29:

Table 7 : Concepts of emotions

“UNFAMILIARITY” Something that is not familiar is not available to the common folk. Something that is not often seen or readily available.

“POSITIVE and NEGATIVE FEELINGS” Positive feelings may prompt one to view the sacrament of confession in a positive way. For example, getting satisfaction can motivate one to continue going for confession. Positive feelings bring inner freedom to individuals. Examples of negative feelings are: being afraid, shy, ashamed, sorry and remorseful are negative feelings that may hinder one to do proper confession.

Axial Code 2: ESC – Emotions experienced during the Sacrament of Confession

The empirical data confirmed that there are positive and negative emotions that accompany the Sacrament of Confession. Hermans (2012c:2) refers to emotions or feelings that are motivated by life stories.

Theoretical Code 2: Emotions play an essential role in the Sacrament of Confession

The concepts of positive and negative emotions from the interviewees match Lazarus' (1999:140) list of emotional narratives of good and negative emotions, like anger, envy and jealousy, fear, guilt, shame, relief, hope, sorrow, concern, disgust, happiness, pride, love, gratitude, compassion, wonder and awe. Such emotions of individuals could determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Sacrament of Confession, as the interviewees concurred (Hermans 2012c:2).

The following definitions of emotions (according to Lazarus 1999) have reference:

"Characteristics or attributes of anger are an act of demeaning offence against oneself or the other. When one is angry, it can be difficult to make a genuine confession.

Desire means wanting someone's property which one already possesses or does not possess. It is resenting a third party or gives a threat to another's affection or favour. One is likely to make some defence mechanisms to justify his or her desire and shun confessing the sins that accompany it.

Lazarus (1999:140) states the following about emotional narratives theory:

- Anxiety is when one experiences uncertainty, a threat, fright or fear. Anxiety can make one seek assistance with hastiness, but it can also be the opposite. Anxiety can lead someone to go for confession or it can make someone refrain from confessing.
- Fear or fright is a feeling of an immediate or concrete and overwhelming physical danger. Fear is very devastating and can even compromise the value of the Sacrament of Confession. One cannot go to confession if one is afraid of the priest, is known as a sinner, or is afraid of confronting oneself and being truthful.
- Guilt is a feeling of having transgressed a moral imperative. Shame and guilt are feelings of having failed to live up to one's personal ideals. Shame and guilt are feelings in the same category that may lead to avoidance of the Sacrament of Confession. However, helped by feelings of remorse, one may be prompted to go for confession.

- There are favourable conditions like pride and love. We have taken pride as favourable because it is not always negative; it can be a feeling of one's affirmation. However, pride can lead to love of one-self and selfishness. This can also lead to self-contentment without realising the need for others. In a situation like this, one may not see the need to go for confession.
- A person makes reasonable progress towards the realisation of a goal through love for others and being objective in life. One can be helped with emotions of love for others to confess sins.
- Pride is a feeling of enhancement of one's personal identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement. In this case, one can have self-esteem and may see the need to do confession.
- One can either identify with oneself or with a group. Love is a feeling of desiring or participating in affection that is reciprocated or not reciprocated. Other feelings that may follow are grace, obligation, achievement and vocation. These are positive feelings that may promote one to confess one's sin. Through motivation, a person continues to love as a vocation and may find meaning in confessing his or her sin.
- There are unfavourable conditions like relief, hope and sadness. In the first instance, people may think some of these feelings are positive, for example relief is considered as a distressing goal – an incongruent condition that has changed for better or has gone away.
- Hope is a mixed feeling of fearing for the worst or hoping for the better, so it is not always positive.

More than half of the interviewees confirmed that there are mixed feelings that come with confession. This correlates with Lazarus' (1999) theory of emotional narratives that individuals have positive and negative emotions. Some find joy in confessing their sins, but others are resentful after confession because of the way that they are treated in the confessional box. Some feel good and relieved after confession. Such mixed feelings of parishioners may lead to compromising the Sacrament of Confession.

5.4.3 Category 3: Efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession

The following data corpus focuses on the practice of the Sacrament of Confession.

2:52–100 “Confession shows God’s revelation, it ¹**gives peace**, joy and ²**transforms** one’s life. Confession ³**prepares one for Holy Communion** and as such ⁴**leads to righteousness.**”

4:641–671 “Confession ⁵**improves** the penitent’s ⁶**good relationship with God and humanity.**”

5:53–97 “Confession ⁷**gives value** to the relationship between God and human beings.”

8:695–718 “Confession ⁸**has spiritual and healing elements and motivates** one to live positively.”

25:151–188 “Confession ⁹draws one nearer to God; it leads to perfection and reconciles one with God. Confession ¹⁰radiates love, mercy and a close relationship with God to the penitent. It ¹¹heals the mind and soul.”

In this category (“the practice of the Sacrament of Confession”), the data gained from interviewees 2, 4, 5, 8 and 25 highlighted the following concepts.

Table 8 : Concepts of usefulness/efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession

“TRANSFORMS” The Sacrament of Confession has the power to change one from previous bad ways to a new positive life.

“PREPARES ONE FOR HOLY COMMUNION” It was once mentioned that confession prepares parishioners for Communion.

“HAS THE SPIRITUAL AND HEALING ELEMENTS AND MOTIVATES” Therapeutic and spiritual uplifting. The elements mentioned above give value to one’s life.

Axial Code 3: EFC – Efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession in the Church

The efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession is analysed in relation to its function in local parish practices. Other concepts were already mentioned in the first category. However, the empirical data confirmed that the Sacrament of Confession soothes and cures the unsettled soul. In addition to this, it prepares parishioners to receive Holy Communion in the state of grace. It was not mentioned in the previous concepts that the Sacrament of Confession acts as

a preparatory process for receiving Holy Communion. Yet, Holy Communion is the sacrament that realises the presence of Christ in the daily lives of parishioners (CC 1992:550). It is fitting that the Sacrament of Confession prepares parishioners to confess their sins before meeting Christ in Holy Communion. Therefore, the efficacy of the sacrament of Confession is to heal the souls of parishioners and to prepare them to receive Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

The following characteristics or attributes of the efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession:

- Parishioners often receive the Sacrament of Confession before celebrating Holy Communion.
- The Church encourages parishioners to receive the Sacrament of Confession in order to remain in the state of grace.
- Priests are encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Confession to absolve the sins of parishioners.
- The Church engages in the Sacrament of Confession to change wayward behaviour of parishioners and unite them with others.

Dimensions of the efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession are:

- *Conversion*: The efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession fosters continuous conversion.
- *Absolution from sin*: In the Sacrament of Confession, parishioners receive absolution from the priest in the confessional in order to realise the efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession.
- *Engagement*: The efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession is only realised in the engagement of a parishioner's willingness to confess sins to a priest.

Noyce (1988:118) state that priests seek not to render a final judgement in the confessionals, as in a court of law, but rather to mediate the presence of God. The efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession mediates the presence of God's mercy and love.

Below is the theoretical core category of the Sacrament of Confession in terms of its efficacy.

Theoretical Code 3: The Sacrament of Confession, through absolution, prepares parishioners for Holy Communion

Absolution is given by a priest to a penitent as he acts as a bridge between God and the penitent for the forgiveness of sins. This process prepares parishioners to receive Holy Communion without sin (CC 1992:355; Stumpf 1996:106; Smith 1995:132).

Priests absolve the sin of penitents (those who come for confession) when they avail themselves for confession. Absolution is mainly done during the Sacrament of Confession to the one who confesses. In some parishes, parishioners may get general absolution from their priests for it is their wish to be cleansed and to receive Holy Communion. However, general absolution may discourage parishioners to go for confession, thinking that they can always get it as it is done at once to all parishioners who are present. Other parishioners resent receiving absolution from their priests because they justify themselves by saying that priests are sinners like them (St Augustine 398 AD: VI). It is the teaching of the Church that the priests are the main celebrants of all sacraments because they are ordained ministers. If they sin, they are encouraged to go to other priests for confession and absolution from their sins in order to receive Christ in the Holy Communion and to live righteous lives. Here the theory of preparing oneself for the Communion with Christ is confirmed. St Augustine (398 AD: XXIX 72) asserted: “If you find yourself changeable, transcend yourself and search for God as the Foundational Reality.” In the treatise “On the Teacher”, he said: “God is to be looked for and adored in the secret rooms of the human personality, which is called the ‘inner person’. There he wills to have his temple” (St Augustine 398 AD: XXIX 158).

The **efficacy** of the Sacrament of Confession is realised in the communion with God through absolution by the priest in the celebration of confession in the confessional and Holy Communion in the Church. The next category is the goals and choices of parishioners.

5.4.4 Category 4: Goals and choices

The transcripts of the interviews revealed many concepts. Below are some of the concepts that came from the interviews summarised as goals and choices (data corpus from initial codes):

10:149–174 “The penitent ¹wishes to live in a peaceful and perfect relationship with God, who is ever-ready to forgive.”

16:300–340 “Trust in God makes one prosper and experience love that heals through confession. ²Self-criticism and confession improve personal relationship with God and others.”

17:465–521 ³“Endurance leads to perfection and a Christian should ⁴accept whatever outcomes of life joyfully.”

19:728–749 “Confession heals the souls of penitents and restores their good relationship with God and neighbours. ⁵Introspection is essential for a positive life. Any approach to solve problems may be used.”

21:862–918 ⁶“All decisions are guided by God. Prayer and sharing help to solve problems.”

24:697–744 ⁷“Before making decisions, parishioners should ⁸ask for God’s guidance.”

27:498–518 ⁹“Lifelines of some Christians ¹⁰are full of ups and downs, but there is ¹¹spiritual transformation in the confessional practice.”

29:197–219 ¹²“Decent shelter and a good lifestyle give satisfaction to human beings as some of the ¹³basic needs. God is the author of life, the healer of souls and the forgiving father.”

Interviewees 10, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 27 and 29 were randomly selected and came up with the concepts in the following table:

Table 9 : Concepts of goals and choices

“WISHES TO LIVE IN PEACEFUL AND PERFECT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, WHO IS EVER-READY TO FORGIVE” God gives a chance of growing.

“ENDURANCE” It is a virtue of hope to the foreseeable or unforeseeable future, to accept pain with the hope of having better things in the future.

“ACCEPTANCE OF WHATEVER OUTCOMES OF LIFE JOYFULLY” Having the spirit of accommodation and being content.

“INTROSPECTION IS ESSENTIAL FOR A POSITIVE LIFE. ANY APPROACH TO SOLVE PROBLEMS MAY BE USED.” Full of life strategies and not accepting to give up in any given situation. A human being is rational. He or she uses the mind for critical thinking or self-examining.

“ALL DECISIONS ARE GUIDED BY GOD” We are only God’s creatures, who solely depend on him.

“LIFE IS FULL OF UPS AND DOWNS” Life is not always smooth, but full of challenges.

“SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE CONFESSIONAL PRACTICE” Getting renewed and revived.

“BASIC NEEDS” Life, food and health are some of the needs human beings enjoy as their rights. Human beings want to be happy and enjoy their fundamental rights, like having decent shelter and other fundamentals.

Axial Code 4: GC – Goals and choices

To live a meaningful life, people make **goals** and **choices** so that they can find purpose in all their activities (Hermans 2012c:2; Scherer-Rath 2007; Ricoeur 1991). Goals are deliberate ends human beings want to achieve in the exercise of their choices and freedom. People choose to go for confession or to go for psychological counselling as they feel they are led by their personal goals and choices. In order to achieve goals, one has to be principled or disciplined. Principles can be achieved by having constructive criticism and self-endurance or resilience in life. Life is a gift from God, bestowed on all his creatures. What people want in life is to be happy. Happiness is experienced through attainment of basic needs like shelter, food, health and life. Some people think that in order to achieve their goals, they should have self-criticism or self-introspection which leads to self-management. Others think that it is through the realisation of a higher reality – God – that all human plans may come to fruition. Through God’s guidance, goals and choices become meaningful. Exercising one’s choice is a sign of being autonomous or free. If one is autonomous, it means that one can act without any external force but using free will to get freedom and to attain the desired goals. It is an informed choice to go for the Sacrament of Confession. The goal of going to confession should be to get reconciled with humanity and God. Note the following:

- There are people who can make choices and have proper goals to achieve in their lives.
- There are people who do not even know how to set goals and make choices in their lives.
- There are people who trust in their power and think that it is part of their wisdom to make goals and choices.

The dimensions of goals and choices are:

- *Freedom*: If one has no freedom, it becomes difficult to make proper decisions with desired goals.
- *Food*: Destitute and poor people find it difficult to make ends meet and to focus on life goals.
- *Shelter*: We all need shelter to lead a normal life in order to make life goals and choices.

In order to make reasonable goals or choices in life, the core category (which is the guiding principle) must be understood.

Theoretical Code 4: The meaning of life is determined by God

God is the ultimate or the Supreme Being who causes all things. Human beings make plans because God allows it. Goals and choices are therefore determined by the will of God. Hence, the empirical data affirms St Augustine's narratives on his contemplation of intentionality, meaning and spiritual action. According to St Augustine (398 AD: 158), a believer in God does not live in a vacuum where there is no intentionality, contemplation of the meaning of life and action that is led by spiritual contemplation. The believer, conscious of being a stranger on Earth, embraces a life of contemplation and action led by God. St Augustine considered it a great thing to contemplate first the whole creation (corporeal and spiritual, visible and invisible, this world and the world to come) and then to contemplate the Creator and learn from God himself (St Augustine 398 AD: XIX 19). Therefore, it can be said that the meaning of life is determined by God.

5.4.5 Category 5: God

6:272–294 “God is the ¹source of everything.”

12:470–523 “God, as the ²father, is the ³author of everything and ⁴has a heart for his people. He is ⁵ready to forgive and welcomes the penitent after he or she has sinned.”

13:753–808 “God is ⁶all powerful, a responsible father ⁷ full of empathy and sympathy to his children.”

Interviewees 6, 12 and 13 offered similar experiences about “God as the responsible being for all events”.

Table 10: Concepts of God

“SOURCE OF EVERYTHING” God is the Creator and the uncaused cause or the source of all existing beings.

“FATHER” Many people compare God to a father figure who is in control of his household. Some now compare God to a mother figure.

“AUTHOR OF EVERYTHING” The author owns his or her work and has no other copy from someone else; God owns his creation.

“HAS A HEART FOR HIS PEOPLE” The heart is the centre of love and feelings. God feels for his creatures.

“READY TO FORGIVE AND WELCOMES” God takes initiative in forgiving those who sin against him

“ALL POWERFUL, A RESPONSIBLE FATHER” Power, sovereignty and principalities are all under God. He is a powerful father.

“FULL OF EMPATHY AND SYMPATHY” Feeling for others is a virtue, and to be in their situation and being sympathetic all belong to God.

God is the Creator of all things. He is the uncaused cause; there is nothing that supersedes God.

Characteristics and attributes of God are:

- God is the unmoved mover and author of all things.
- God is all powerful.
- God is ever-forgiving
- God is ever-loving

Dimensions of God are:

- *Love*: God creates and loves His creatures.
- *Forgiveness*: God forgives human beings their sins.
- *Perfection*: God hates evil and is perfect.

Axial Code 5: GA – God, the Source of all things

God created all things in love. Christian practices address the needs that are basic to human existence as such, and they do so in ways that reflect God’s purposes for humankind. When people participate in Christian practices such as the Sacrament of Confession, they are taking part in God’s work of creation and they grow into a deeper knowledge of God’s redemptive acts (Swinton & Mowat 2007:22; Dykstra & Bass 2002). We glorify God in his creation and we are part of creation. However, contingency in life and human beings offer us a measure or no control over them. The next category is about contingency.

5.4.6 Category 6: Contingency

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

1:156–195 “Parishioners are ¹**occupied with material goods** and forget spiritual self-examination which values confession.”

2:151–190 ²“**Spirituality is highly challenged** by modern technology.”

2586–97 “The ³**Church’s core business is not affected by transient things**, nor disrupted by an **unforeseeable possible future**; hence confession is absolutely necessary.”

19695–699 ⁴“Despite **unforeseen events and threats** from different angles of life, confession remains valid in the Church.”

In the category of contingency, the data sets of interviewees 1, 2, 19 and 25 highlighted the following:

Table 11 : Concepts of contingency

“**CHURCH’S CORE BUSINESS IS NOT AFFECTED BY TRANSIENT THINGS, NOR DISRUPTED BY THE UNFORESEEABLE POSSIBLE FUTURE**” Contingency.

“**DESPITE UNFORESEEN EVENTS AND THREATS FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES OF LIFE, CONFESSION REMAINS VALID IN THE CHURCH**” The Church endures in time of trials.

Axial Code 6: C – Contingency

Contingency emerged from the memo writing and analysis of this data corpus. There are many things that happen in the life of Church members that are not planned for. They can be called unforeseeable future events or **contingencies**. Going to church is an event that is normally planned, but daily threats like illness, death and parishioners who default on their membership are not usually planned. The temptations of the world can also lure Church members to forget about the business of the Church. Things like this do happen and pass away, yet they can shake the smooth running of the Church. Material goods (which include luxury cars, computers, phones and other modern technologies) are development in the world but, in one way or another, they have affected the morality of Church members to compromise for the things of the world instead of focusing on spiritual transformation. This can also be called contingency. Normal interaction patterns of Church members together with their priests can be affected by contingency. Both priests and Church members are aware of the things of this world, that they pass, but they may find it difficult to part with them; they become subjective in dealing with the affairs of the Church and forget who stands where and who does what at a particular time because of contingency.

The characteristics and attributes of contingency are:

- Parishioners may become attached to material goods through contingency and forget the importance of prayer life.
- People's conscience may become "dead" so that they cannot distinguish between what is right and what is evil because of contingency.
- A lack of moral guiding principles can make the Sacrament of Confession suffer.
- The youth may not find models to follow in the Church and become absorbed by what titillates their emotions through competition in contingency.

The dimensions of contingency are:

- *Sin*: Worldly people can perceive luxury and being licentious as normal, yet the Church regards it as sin.

- *Prayer*: Parishioners gravitate towards prayer because it builds their spiritual life and self-esteem (Swinton & Mowat 2007:22; Dykstra & Bass 2002).
- *Confession*: The Church emphasises confession in order to continuously remind parishioners of the presence of God and the respect that a person of God deserves among others.

According to Hermans (2012c:3), contingency can be situational or existential/religious. Life stories in this study have shown people's attitudes towards the Sacrament of Confession and how contingency has affected them.

Theoretical Code 5: The intervention of contingency

The theoretical theme in this category is the intervention of contingency. Life stories have shown that contingency is not planned for (Hermans 2012c:3; Van de Brand et al 2013:28–36). It is a situation that can occur in religious life or daily existential life. Human suffering like hunger, sickness, death and other natural disasters are examples of contingencies that adversely affect human beings and they have no control over it. The only option that human beings are left with is to appeal to God's mercy through the practice of prayer, which includes the Sacrament of Confession. A recurrent theme in the interviews was prayer as a solution to the problem of sin and suffering (CC 2005:1241). This appeal for divine intervention includes the Sacrament of Confession as a religious practice that makes an impact and offers church members therapeutic value in pastoral care as a solution to the problem of sin and human suffering. In addition to a prayer life, the aspects of sharing and identifying with the needy feature as human interventions in contingency. Hence, sharing problems with others and identifying with the needy demonstrate evidence of human concern to deal with problems of suffering.

In this context where contingency has to be monitored, the practical theologian can make use of psychological counselling to come up with a therapeutic model that caters for both human and spiritual aspects that provide answers to contingency (Pope Benedict XVI 2007:231; Klink 1993). **The Sacrament of Confession can engage in a helping relation with psychological counselling as a therapeutic model.** This therapeutic model is **holistic** in the sense that it offers **reconciliation with God and humanity, healing of the human soul**

through absolution and healing of mental and socio-emotional problems by offering psychological counselling in spiritual direction that can be offered during the Sacrament of Confession. Finally, it **enhances a change of life and attitude**. This model has its basis in the interdisciplinary helping model of Pruyser (1976) and Van Arkel (2005) (discussed in chapter 2) that includes medical, pastoral, psychological and pastoral elements. However, the difference with this new model is that the two disciplines of psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession are merged without compromising the value of the Sacrament of Confession to form one therapeutic model that is holistic namely **the Counselling Therapeutic Model**. This model can be conducted by priests in the process of implementing the Sacrament of Confession with a therapeutic value that follows four phases, namely: (1) spiritual direction that has psychological counselling in it, (2) reconciliation with God and neighbour that has cultural value, (3) private confession that is followed by prayer and absolution, and (4) implementation of change in existential life.

The new elements that were missing in the interdisciplinary helping model are reconciliation, culture and absolution. This new model does not affirm what Nouwen (1980:242) presented as his personal experience as a parish minister and therapist; it empowers the priest as the minister and therapist. If they were present, they were unpronounced. Another new aspect is that the profession of a counsellor and that of a pastor are merged into one. In order to show the difference between the new model and the old one, the words of Pruyser and Van Arkel's interdisciplinary helping model can be echoed as follows: Every helping profession may define an actual problem from a particular angle. Each profession is limited and specific in addressing only a part of reality." According to Pruyser (1976:16), no profession has the whole truth and no interpretation is more real than another. There is a common area, but a great deal of differentiation within it (Van Arkel 2005:128; Pruyser 1976:16).

The distinctive characteristic of a pastoral counsellor is that he or she can use different disciplines to help parishioners. By doing this, the gap in the Sacrament of Confession (that it only answers spiritual problems without attending to human social and mental needs) can be filled. In the same way, the gap in psychological counselling (that it addresses only human needs that are of a psychological and social nature without bringing any spiritual benefit to the troubled person) can also be filled. The Sacrament of Confession has therapeutic value in pastoral care, especially when contingency takes precedence in human life. Contingency has been identified as being adverse to the Sacrament of Confession where its therapeutic value

can be demonstrated by making Church members realise the limitedness of their human effort and the need for God's intervention when contingency is an obstacle to their routine life. An appeal to prayer and the Sacrament of Confession soothe the soul that is tormented by sin and suffering. Human relationships that are enhanced through sharing social problems do not end with people who are without expertise, but point to the need for psychological counselling with experts. The aforementioned theory has shown the need for psychological counselling to complement human intervention. The term "contingency" refers to events that come and go, but that can create some immoral imperatives to parishioners and can easily manipulate people to sink in the morass of sin and become indifferent to repentance. However, from the positive side, contingency is also about unforeseeable future events that can be caused by God and yet we have no control over them. People only have to adjust their lives to cope with contingency. We may continue to wonder why we have contingency in life. The next category is spiritual practices.

5.4.7 Category 7: Spiritual practices

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

3: 440–466 "¹**Confession** and ²**marriage** are events controlled by God; hence, they both give parishioners joy and a sense of responsibility."

6:298–352 "Confession, ³**Mass** and marriage give meaning to the spiritual growth of a ⁴**Christian** reaching maturity in faith."

13:724–731 "The use of confessions, marriage and ⁵**deaths** are important stages for some parishioners, and there are different levels of excitement and fear in some events."

15:973–1035 "Confession is a process till **death** and it transforms one's spiritual life to keep the Christian values of respect and love for people and God."

19:752–7:789 "When done effectively, confession has an impact in one's life for it gives spiritual healing."

24:815–857 "⁶**Prayer** is the answer to the problem of ⁷**suffering**."

Interviewee 3, 6, 13, 15, 19 and 24 raised concepts about the events that transform individuals' spiritual life. These are as follows:

Table 12 : Concepts of spiritual events

1 **“CONFESSION”** This is one of the healing sacraments in the Catholic Church which is most valued for the unity, peace and reconciliation of humanity.

2 **“MARRIAGE”** This is a sacrament of love between a wife and a husband. They live together in matrimony for the whole of their lives.

3 **“MASS”** It the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist when the presence of Christ is celebrated and Holy Communion is received.

4 **“CHRISTIAN”** This is a generic term for a person who is a believer of Christ who practises faith. In our context, he or she is a parishioner.

5 **“DEATH”** All creatures cannot live forever on Earth; they have to die. Death is a cessation of life.

6 **“PRAYER”** The interaction between God and a believer is prayer. It is the act of faith of a believer in God.

7 **“SUFFERING”** It is an experience of pain in the human body or soul that is caused by human frailty and limitedness.

Axial Code 7: SP – Spiritual practices

From our analytical memo writing spiritual events became our axial code. In the first place, a Christian celebrates life in Jesus Christ as his or her Saviour. This celebration of life is witnessed in specific spiritual practices that transform individuals’ spiritual life, like prayer, Holy Mass, confession and holy matrimony. However, a Christian can experience suffering in the process of praising God (Capps 2005:85; CC 2005). Suffering is not caused by sin but is a contingency (as discussed above). Suffering can even lead to death. Death is our expected end on Earth; we are aware of it and we believe that we shall eventually stop breathing and be buried on Earth. We believe that our souls will join the Creator and this is our destiny. However, a Christian has to continue praying to God amid suffering and temptations. It is through praying that a Christian experiences deliverance from evil forces.

The characteristics and attributes of spiritual practices are:

- Spiritual practices are inspiring and fill parishioners with hope.
- People endure because of their experiences in spiritual practices.
- Spiritual practices evoke the presence of God and the Holy Spirit.
- In spiritual practices, parishioners reciprocate the love of God in supplication and prayer.

The dimensions of spiritual practices are:

- *Prayer*: Parishioners find joy in praying to God during different religious activities.
- *Sacrament of Confession*: For Catholics, the Sacrament of Confession is celebrated as a unifying and pacifying element. However, there are other sacraments like marriage and Holy Mass that feature as spiritual practices.
- *Endurance*: For a Christian, problems come and go, but the words of Christ the Saviour remain. Hence, Christians are encouraged to endure even in times of difficulty.

Smith (1995:129) asked:

Should the Christian be like everyone else, totally involved in the affairs of this world, totally immersed in its passions and pursuits? Should the aims of the Christian include the search for enjoyment of life, for possessions, for high position and status in society? Or should the Christian strive for something even higher, having some distance and detachment from these other aims and desires without denying their relative value?

Another core category that derives from this study is discussed below.

Theoretical Code 6: Sacramental life stages

This theory of Sacramental life stages was formulated because in the analytical memo writing of spiritual practices during this study, many interviewees referred to sacraments other than the Sacrament of Confession. Parishioners in the Catholic Church make use of various sacraments that form the centre of their worship experience (CC 2005; CC 1994; Capps 2005:83; Ogoe 2010:19). There are more sacraments than the Sacrament of Confession. For example, there are sacraments of initiation, service and healing. Baptism, confirmation and Holy Communion are the three sacraments of initiation. This means that when a child is born in a Catholic Christian family, he or she is baptised in the early days of life. When the child is an adolescent, he or she goes for catechism classes to learn the doctrines of the Church. Thereafter, the child is confirmed as a sign that he or she is mature to follow the precepts of the Church and teaches them to others by way of a spiritual life. He or

she accompanies his or her parents to Holy Mass and other Church functions. Marriage/matrimony and ordination are the sacraments of service in the Church. This means that the child in the Catholic family is taught the importance of getting married or becoming a religious priest, brother or sister as ways of serving God through other people. The Sacraments of Confession and Anointing the Sick fall into the category of healing. That means that when one gets sick in body, instead of only going to hospital, one can receive bodily treatment in the Church. When the same person falls in sin, he or she can seek recourse and be cleansed and forgiven by God through the Sacrament of Confession. The life stages of a Catholic Christian are summarised here as part of the sacramental life. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CC 2005) states that a sacramental life is one which reveals the presence of Christ and the mystery of our salvation. In a sacramental life, the Holy Spirit dispenses the mystery of human salvation (CC 2005:1112).

Participation can be seen as one of the sacraments or sacramental life stages because all Catholic worship is centred on a sacramental life.

5.4.8 Category 8: Frequency of the Sacrament of Confession

The following concepts reflect the frequency of parishioners partaking of the Sacrament of Confession. The data corpus from the initial codes is:

1:116–152 “Confession is free to all parishioners, but shame of being associated with sin makes them to prefer ¹**frequenting Holy Communion more than confession.**”

2:104–147 “Confession ²**should be timetabled** to make priests available and they ³**should give more attention to confession.**”

3:524–579 “Priests should give proper instruction on confession. However, ⁴**familiarities** with the same priests ⁴**compromises its frequency.**”

4:641–671 “Priests ⁵**should be dedicated** in ⁶**servicing God** through his people in ⁷**celebrating masses on Sundays.**⁸ A day other than Sundays should be ⁹**set apart for confession** because Sunday is a ¹⁰**busy day** for priests. Some priests ¹¹**do not avail themselves** for confession and parishioners **lack courage to approach** the priest for confession.”

6:356–408 “Few parishioners go for confession, hence the ¹²**need for proper instruction.** Confession is **valued**; priests ¹³**give time for confession** but only ¹⁴**few mature parishioners frequent it.**”

14:251–290 “Time for confession is ¹⁵**not specific at parishes**. It ¹⁶**depends on the parish priest**, the way he wants to conduct confessions, but ¹⁷**one can visit confession any time**, especially on ¹⁸**important religious events**.”

7:27–49 “Confession enables parishioners to re-establish a good relationship with God and neighbours. Confession should be on a timetable ¹⁹**every Sunday before Mass**, ²⁰**every mass**; hence, they need to ²¹**constantly confess**.”

18:40–49 “In the ²²**early stages of Christian life**, one does ²³**confession with zeal**. However, during ²⁴**adolescence**, the ²⁵**frequency of going for confession decreases**.”

23:358–408 “Confession was founded by Jesus Christ on ²⁶**Easter Sunday**. Parishioners should go for confession ²⁷**at least once per month**.”

In the category of frequency of participating in the Sacrament of Confession, interviewees 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 18 and 23’s data was analysed and the following concepts were captured.

Table 13 : Concepts of the frequency of the Sacrament of Confession

“FREQUENTING HOLY COMMUNION MORE THAN CONFESSION” More parishioners receive Holy Communion; fewer parishioners go for confession,

“SHOULD BE TIMETABLED AND VALUED AND/OR DEDICATED SHOULD GIVE MORE ATTENTION TO CONFESSION” It was found that a number of priests give no attention to confession.

“FAMILIARITY WITH THE SAME PRIESTS COMPROMISES ITS FREQUENCY” Familiarity breeds contempt.

“CELEBRATING MASS ON SUNDAYS” Holy Mass is central to other sacraments because it realises Christ’s presence in the celebration.

“A DAY OTHER THAN SUNDAYS” Usually priests celebrate about three Masses every Sunday and have no time for confessions.

“DO NOT AVAIL THEMSELVES, LACK COURAGE TO APPROACH” Parishioners respect priests and shun correcting them.

“NEED FOR PROPER INSTRUCTION” Both priests and parishioners need proper teaching on confession.

“ONE CAN VISIT CONFESSION ANY TIME” Some priests give parishioners time for confession. Others do not mind

“IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS EVENTS” Events like Christmas, Lent, Good Friday and Easter are most valued

in the Church.

“EARLY STAGES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE” Soon after their catechesis and baptism, Christians are very committed to Church rules.

“CONFESSION WITH ZEAL” Novices in the Church are very excited and have the interest to confess very often.

“ADOLESCENCE” This is a stormy age for many youths and they find it difficult to keep the rules of the Church. They are easily tempted.

“FREQUENCY OF GOING FOR CONFESSION DECREASES” Many adolescents do not go for confession.

“EASTER SUNDAY” This is an important day for Christians, when Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

“AT LEAST ONCE PER MONTH” It is expected that under normal circumstances, parishioners can confess once every month.

Axial Code 8: FC – Frequent confession

From the analytical conceptual data corpus, it was clear that the Sacrament of Confession was not constantly frequented in parishes. The evidence was that the Sacrament of Holy Communion and other sacraments were frequented better than the Sacrament of Confession. The most frequented sacrament was the Holy Communion (Mandava 2011:1). The reasons that were given were that priests concentrate more on celebrating Holy Mass than hearing confessions. It also came to the fore that in most cases, priests do not avail themselves for the Sacrament of Confession, making it rarely visited. Parishioners who want to constantly confess find it difficult to approach priests whom they want to do their confessions. Eventually, only mature Christians approach priests for confessions. Others opt for big events like Easter, Christmas and Church congresses, when confession is offered because of the presence of many priests.

The characteristics and attributes of the frequency of confession are:

- Confession has no constant pattern in parishes that parishioners can easily follow. In most cases, there is no timetable to follow.
- The frequency depends on the zeal of the priest in making himself available in the confessional.
- Adolescents or the youth in general do not frequently go for confession.

- Parishioners prefer that priests from other parishes hear their confession, rather than the priests of their parishes.
- Generally, there is a decrease in the frequency of going for the Sacrament of Confession.

The dimensions of frequency of the Sacrament of Confession are:

- *Timetable*: Parishioners feel that if the Sacrament of Confession is put on pastoral timetables in parishes, they can frequent it because they will know that the priests will be available.
- *Commitment*: Commitment is called for on both the priests and the parishioners' side to frequent the Sacrament of Confession.
- *Proper teaching*: Parishioners need proper teaching on the importance of the Sacrament of Confession and what it offers in their prayer life.
- *Confessional boxes*: Parishioners feel protected when they go and confess in privacy where there are no spectators.

Roberts (1950:130) explains that as the physician of souls, the Church has the responsibility to see that those who “cannot quiet their consciences ... and are troubled with any weighty matter” that cannot be relieved through confession should be educated and given the opportunity to make a private confession when the need arises. The central category of this section is discussed below.

Theoretical Code 7: Proper instruction

From the analytical memo writing, it was found that the central category of this section of the study was proper instruction.

Proper instruction on the need for the Sacrament of Confession is emphasised for both parties – priests and parishioners (CC 1992; CC 1996; CC 2005:360). That the parishioners are not frequenting the Sacrament of Confession could be attributed to sheer ignorance and lack of spiritual commitment (Mandava 2011:1& 2; Ogoe 2010:25). What emerged from the empirical data was that even priests need more orientation on the sacrament so that they can

convey the knowledge of the sacrament to the parishioners. Thus, proper instruction is needed for parishioners and priests to make the Sacrament of Confession more knowledgeable, frequented and viable in the Church.

The next category is on participation in the Sacrament of Confession.

5.4.9 Category 9: Participation in the Sacrament of Confession

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

1:99–110) “¹**Due to the attitudes** of parishioners towards confession, the ²**priest should constantly urge them to confess.**”

2:104–147 “Confession ³**prepares one for Holy Communion** and as such ⁴**leads to righteousness**. Confession ⁵**puts the penitent in grace**. Confession ⁶**restores the soul**. It is a ⁷**powerful tool to appeal to when in problems.**”

3:467–518 “Confession is a ⁸**manifestation of God’s love, reconciles** one with God, ⁹**forgives sins, restores one’s spiritual life** and ¹⁰**leads to change of heart** to perfection, hence the need to visit it regularly.”

5:53–97 “Confession ¹¹**gives value to the relationship between God and human beings.**”

7:27–49 “Confession ¹²**enables** parishioners ¹³**to re-establish a good relationship with God and neighbours**. Human beings are inclined to sin; hence the ¹⁴**need to constantly confess**. ¹⁵**Coming back** to God ¹⁶**heals the soul**. Human life is a mystery which can only be understood by God the creator.”

9:812–863 “Confession ¹⁷**focuses on peace building and reconciliation of humanity**. However, the ¹⁸**youth undermine confession, though they are aware** that they need to confess their sins.”

13:812–863 “¹⁹**Technology and low turnout have compromised the value of confession, but these do not make confession insignificant**. Parishioners need to be ²⁰**constantly reminded** of the value of confession, which ²¹**leads to perfection**, draws one closer to God and is ²²**sacred.**”

14:251–290 “Confession was founded by Christ to ²³**show love for sinners**. ²⁴**Reflection makes one shun sin and realise the value of confession.**”

27:585–639 “Some parishioners do not see the value of confession and spend years without it.”

Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 13, 14 and 27 revealed the following concepts:

Table 14 : Concepts of participation in confession

“PRIESTS SHOULD CONSTANTLY URGE THEM TO CONFESS” This implies that priests make little effort for confessions.

“POWERFUL TOOL TO APPEAL TO WHEN IN PROBLEMS” Parishioners who confess see its value when they have problems.

“FORGIVES SINS, RESTORES ONE’S SPIRITUAL LIFE” Through absolution from sin, the parishioner’s drooping spirit is revived.

“GIVES VALUE TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HUMAN BEINGS” The righteous lives through confession.

“FOCUS ON PEACE BUILDING AND RECONCILIATION OF HUMANITY” Justice, peace and reconciliation are needed.

“YOUTHS UNDERMINE CONFESSION, THOUGH THEY ARE AWARE” Peer pressure and the desire for luxury.

“TECHNOLOGY AND LOW TURNOUT HAVE COMPROMISED THE VALUE OF CONFESSION, BUT THESE DO NOT MAKE CONFESSION INSIGNIFICANT.” The challenges of the computer world need the Church stamp of authority.

“REFLECTION MAKES ONE SHUN SIN AND REALISE THE VALUE OF CONFESSION” Prayer lives.

“SOME PARISHIONERS DO NOT SEE THE VALUE OF CONFESSION AND SPEND YEARS WITHOUT IT”

They are Christian Catholics by name but due to their world view, they fail to understand what their identity is all about.

Axial Code 9: PSC – Participating in the Sacrament of Confession in parishes

Participation in the Sacrament of Confession gives value to the relationships between God and humanity. Parishioners are led to have continuous reflection on the goodness of God so that they shun sin and lead a prayerful life.

The next category is about gender balances and imbalances in the Sacrament of Confession.

5.4.10 Category 10: Gender equality and discrimination

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

9:812–863 “Confession is natural and ¹**accommodates both males and females.**”

21:752–807 “Confession gives satisfaction and ²**has nothing to do with gender**, male and female are alike.”

22:102–143 “Though it is important, going for confession ³**is subjective**. Gender plays no role in confession, but ⁴**many parishioners prefer Holy Communion to confession.**”

23:413–456 “Confession is a preparatory sacrament to receive communion. It leads to forgiveness of sins. After confession, the priest should ⁵**keep confessional secrets**. Parishioners are encouraged to go for confession during Lent, and they should ⁶**feel free to confess to a priest from outside their parish**. At times, going for ⁷**confession is private** and gender does not play any role in confession.”

28:923–970 “The ⁸**number of males and females visiting confession always fluctuates.**”

30:353–390 “At some parishes, ⁹**female parishioners go for confession more regularly than males.**”

Interviewees 9, 21, 22, 23, 28 and 30 came up with the following concepts in the gender category.

Table 15 : Concepts of gender equality

¹ **“ACCOMMODATES BOTH MALES AND FEMALES”** There is no preferential treatment according to gender in confession.

² **“CONFESSION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GENDER”** Social roles and the construction of male and female do not take precedence in confession.

“IS SUBJECTIVE” It deals with the individual’s perception or world view.

“THE NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE PARISHIONERS VISITING CONFESSION ALWAYS FLUCTUATES” Instability.

“FEMALE PARISHIONERS GO FOR CONFESSION MORE REGULARLY THAN MALES” A personal opinion that females are more religious than men: Women appeal more to their hearts or emotions and men appeal more to their heads or to their thinking.

Axial Code 10: GED – Gender equality and discrimination

According to the analytical memo writing, there are more females than males in the parishes, and more females than males go for confession. Another factor is that females have proved to

be more religious than males. Females are more approachable than males and they cooperate in many Church activities. There is no gender balance with regard to the number of males and females who go for confession. However, at first glance, the Sacrament of Confession treats each individual equally, without bringing to the fore any gender imbalance. The concepts below are the contributions from the interviews on gender.

The characteristics and attributes of gender are:

- Gender is the social construction of males and females and their roles in society.
- In the Sacrament of Confession, the priest listens to parishioners who come for confession equally.
- The number of females who go for confession is more than the number of males who go for confession.
- Parishioners are free to confess to any priest whom they choose irrespective of their gender.

The dimensions of gender are:

- *Openness*: Women are more open than men to express themselves in confession. Males are more reserved to confess their sins before a priest.
- *Cooperation*: Women cooperate in most Church activities. Men rationalise before they act, even in Church activities.

The category of gender is discussed further below.

Theoretical Code 8: Gender sensitivity

In our analytic memo writing, the properties and dimensions of gender equality continued to show that males and females are treated equally when it comes to the Sacrament of Confession. However, the issue of gender sensitivity was not pronounced in the Sacrament of Confession, but there were underlying sentiments that the Sacrament of Confession did not provide for gender freedom to choose whom to go to for confession because it is prescribed by the Church that only priests hear confession (Noyce 1998:121; Audette 2003:128). This

issue is still very sensitive in the Catholic Church and there were debates about having women priests to attend to the issues of women but according to the norms of the Church, there is no room for a female priesthood yet. In other circles, the issue has even divided the Church. This is different from psychological counselling, where there are male and female counsellors. In the Sacrament of Confession, there is no room for those who might have female-related issues to choose female confessors. The point here is that there is a general feeling that people are comfortable to share their privacy with the person of their own choice despite gender. The empirical observation was that more female penitents participated in the Sacrament of Confession than males, probably because confessors are males. The presumption is that females may feel attracted to go for confession to a male priest. Males may not feel attracted to go to a male priest for confession for reasons known to them. This is an allusion that points to the fact of equating the Sacrament of Confession with psychological counselling, where there are both male and female counsellors. Hence, there are matters that people are comfortable to share with the same sex, but there are also issues that people feel free to share with the opposite sex. There was a gap in the Sacrament of Confession in that people who do not have access to psychological counselling have nowhere to appeal to because if they go to confession, they might not disclose their troubles due to the limitation of gender. In the same way, the confessor may be limited because of gender to address or offer assistance for issues related to females.

The next category is about the relationships between psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession.

5.4.11 Category 11: The relationship between confession and psychological counselling or psychotherapy:

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

1:156–195 “Psychological counselling or psychotherapy ¹**solves human problems professionally**. It is ²**compatible with confession**, though the latter is ³**superior** due to its ⁴**divine origin**. Parishioners are occupied with material goods and forget ⁵**spiritual self-examination** which values confession.”

7:52–98 “Psychological counselling ⁶**gives solutions to some human problems** and it is a ⁷**handmaid** to confession.”

11:298–352 “Both psychological counselling and confession solve problems, though confession teaches love and forgiveness.”

19:672–676 “Psychological counselling ⁸**addresses human problems**. It ⁹**assists confession in offering direction** to penitents who have ¹⁰**social problems**. ¹¹**Confession forgives sins**, which psychological counselling is incapable of doing.”

23:413–456 “Confession is ¹²**a preparatory sacrament to receive communion**. It leads to forgiveness of sins. Psychological counselling ¹³**deals with social and mental problems to help relieve unnecessary human pressure**. Psychological counselling and confession are compatible. ¹⁴**Confession gives grace** and helps the penitent to live free of sin. Confession is ¹⁵**divine-oriented** and through it, one receives ¹⁶**Jesus’ love and forgiveness**. Psychological counselling is an ¹⁷**alternative** to solve human problems but it is ¹⁸**inferior to confession**, which offers forgiveness of sins.”

26:353–406 “Psychological counselling does not combat confession; instead, it gives ¹⁹**alternatives to life problems**. Through confession, the penitent meets Jesus and ²⁰**attains inner healing and peace**.”

29:104–127 “Psychological counselling deals with human problems only and ²¹**confession goes deeper to involve God and humanity in the healing process**; hence, confession is ²²**divinely instituted by Christ**.”

Interviewees 1, 7, 11, 19, 23, 26 and 29 raised the following concepts:

Table 16 : The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling

“SOLVES HUMAN PROBLEMS PROFESSIONALLY” Psychological counselling is a profession of skilled helpers.

“COMPATIBLE WITH CONFESSION” There is room for accommodating each other and working together without conflict between confession and psychological counselling. Confession is a religious act which denotes a vocation or an intervention of God, while psychological counselling is a profession to impart human skills.

“DIVINE ORIGIN” Confession was instituted as a sacrament by Christ after his resurrection when he commissioned the apostles to forgive sins.

“SPIRITUAL SELF-EXAMINATION” Confession is not just critical thinking but a spiritual journey of conversion or turning to God.

“GIVE SOLUTIONS TO SOME HUMAN PROBLEMS” Psychological counselling offers one skills and strategies to cope with life.

“HANDMAID” The word “handmaid” denotes that some assistance or service is given to a master. Psychological counselling does not oppose, but assists, the Sacrament of Confession by rendering its skills and strategies to make confession more effective,

“ADDRESSES HUMAN PROBLEMS” It was mentioned already that psychological counselling is human and seeks human solutions.

“ASSISTS CONFESSION IN OFFERING DIRECTION” In spiritual direction, a parishioner needs counselling by a priest. This is where the priest can use psychological counselling to give spiritual guidance to the parishioner who has come for both confession and counselling.

“SOCIAL PROBLEMS” Even in the Church. There are social problems that need counselling. The priest can counsel the parishioners first if he has the skills and then lead them to confession so that they reconcile with one another and with God.

“CONFESSION FORGIVES SIN” The priest absolves the sins of a penitent in confession by the powers invested in him by the Church as an ordained minister.

“A PREPARATORY SACRAMENT TO RECEIVE COMMUNION” Besides making people live in harmony and peace, confession prepares parishioners to receive Holy Communion without sin.

“DEALS WITH SOCIAL AND MENTAL PROBLEMS TO HELP RELIEVE UNNECESSARY HUMAN PRESSURE” Psychological counselling is meant to assist people who have different problems of life through the skills of professionals

“CONFESSION GIVES GRACE” Confession is the sacrament that confers blessings to the parishioner who confesses. The destination of confession is divine because it seeks to address the gap that exists between parishioners and God.

“JESUS’ LOVE AND FORGIVENESS” Jesus gave a good sign of confession on the cross when he said “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing”. Jesus sacrificed his life in order to love his enemies.

“INFERIOR TO CONFESSION” The word “inferior” does not give a positive picture, but the implication here is that confession was instituted by Christ and psychological counselling is a human science; they can be compared in such a way that one is divine and the other is human.

“ATTAINS INNER HEALING AND PEACE” Confession is meant to bring healing and peace of mind within the individual parishioner.

“CONFESSION GOES DEEPER TO INVOLVE GOD AND HUMANITY IN THE HEALING PROCESS” Holistic.

“DIVINELY INSTITUTED BY CHRIST” It was mentioned several times that Jesus Christ established the Sacrament of Confession in the Church after his resurrection.

Axial Code 11: CP – The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling

From the analytical memo writing, it was found that the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling are not antagonistic; the two are compatible. However, confession is divinely instituted (as already alluded to in one of the categories). It also facilitates the forgiveness of sins. Psychological counselling assists the Sacrament of Confession in giving spiritual direction to the parishioners. Psychological counselling is a professional discipline that provides counselling to people with different social problems.

The characteristics and attributes of the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling are:

- The Sacrament of Confession gives inner healing of the soul to the penitents.
- Psychological counselling assists with coping strategies for people with problems.
- The Sacrament of Confession confers grace from God to the penitents.
- Psychological counselling assists the Sacrament of Confession in giving spiritual counselling and direction to the parishioners.

The dimensions of the relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling are:

- *Healing*: The two disciplines focus on the healing of human beings.
- *Counselling*: The two disciplines offer healing assistance to human beings which is performed by psychology counsellors and priests respectively. The Sacrament of Confession offers grace to the penitent. Psychological counselling offers emotional and psychological stability to people who need it. It also provides socio-emotional balance and survival strategies to human beings.

Theoretical Code 9: Interdisciplinary helping practices

The **Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling have an interdisciplinary healing relationship** that can be used by Church members (Nouwen 1980:242; Van Arkel 2005:130; Hunter 2005:187). The argument here is as follows: There is a link between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling only in terms of **the link between**

socio-emotional problems and sin. Some socio-emotional problems lead people to sin. For example, unemployment of a breadwinner can cause him or her to steal in order to fend for the family, and a low salary or income can lead or expose someone to a worst condition of corruption in order to make ends meet. Hence, Smith (1995:134) states that there are other limitations that are imposed by internal psychic conflicts, compulsions, fears, passions and prejudices in life.

These conditions call for the **integration of psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession as remedies.** The Sacrament of Confession brings in the divine remedy for sin that is caused by the socio-emotional conditions of a parishioner. However, **psychological counselling offers coping strategies to the same person who has socio-emotional problems.** In fact, while the **Sacrament of Confession brings grace or divine remission to the parishioner who has admitted failures** due to socio-emotional conditions of life, psychological counselling brings psychological and social stability to the same person in problems by empowering him or her with survival skills. **Psychological counselling offers human and natural remedies, while the Sacrament of Confession offers divine remedies in the form of grace and forgiveness** (St Augustine 398 AD: XXIX158; Osmer 2010:30; Hiltner 1962:29–31). Hence we say that Grace builds on nature. This means that human beings, limited as they are, can easily succumb to problems and sin. The Sacrament of Confession offers divine intervention while psychological counselling stabilises the natural and human psychological equilibrium of normalcy. **As psychological counselling chips in with natural coping strategies, the Sacrament of Confession brings forgiveness and healing of the soul of a repentant sinner in order to enhance holistic healing to the same person.** This theory is supported by Hunter (2005:187) who locates the pastoral therapeutic approach in a theology of pastoral care which serves the healing of the human soul (*cura animarum*). This implies a ministry that is directed not merely at human inner life, but also at the spiritual care of the total person in all the psycho-physical and psycho-social dimensions.

The next category concerns possible threats posed by psychological counselling to the Sacrament of Confession.

5.4.12 Category 12: The healing remedies

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

3:524–579 “Priests should give ¹**proper instruction on confession**. However, ²**familiarity** with the same priests **compromises** its frequency. ³**The majority of parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling**. Psychological counselling and confession ⁴**are interrelated**, although confession is divine. Gender plays no role in confession. ⁵**Psychological counselling is an alternative to human problems, but it cannot replace confession.**”

6:356–408 “Psychological counselling and confession are ⁶**compatible**; hence, there ⁷**is no threat between the two**. Confession re-establishes the penitent’s broken relationship with God, teaches love, forgives and draws one closer to God; thus it is ⁸**valid**. **A dead conscience is a threat to confession**. Psychological counselling and confession are ⁹**alternatives to solve problems and they do not govern each other**. ¹⁰**Psychological counselling deals with the mind and confession treats beyond the heart.**”

11:247–295 “Most parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling, but ¹¹**its relevance is valued**. Psychological counselling ¹²**is not a threat to the Sacrament of Confession, though the Church should guard sacred things against the world.**”

19:672–676 “Psychological counselling addresses human problems. It ¹³**assists confession in offering direction** to penitents who have social problems. ¹⁴**Confession forgives sin which psychological counselling is incapable of doing.**”

23:413–456 “Psychological counselling deals with social and mental problems to help relieve unnecessary human pressure.”

25:130–133 “Psychological counselling and confession ¹⁵**co-exist harmoniously** and ¹⁶**are both effective for spiritual growth**. ¹⁷**Confession leads the penitent to accept his or her failings.**”

30:353–390 “Psychological counselling is ¹⁸**offered by specialists to assist human beings who have social and mental problems**. It is not a threat to confession. ¹⁹**Some priests do not teach and value confession, leading to inadequate knowledge.**”

30:353–390 “Confession ²⁰**transforms** the penitents and ²¹**lifts their faith**. Psychological counselling is offered by specialists to assist human beings who have social and mental problems. It is not a threat to confession.”

29:148–192 “Psychological counselling and confession ²²**both aim to help human beings and have some healing aspects**. ²³**Confession mostly targets the soul and cleanses sins.**”

In the category that “psychological counselling poses a threat of extinction ...” interviewees 3, 6, 11, 19, 23, 25, 29 and 30 were randomly selected and they raised the following concepts:

Table 17 : Concepts of the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling

“COMPATIBLE” The Collins dictionary states that the word “compatible” means “able to exist together harmoniously”.

This means that psychological counselling and confession have no conflict.

“PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING DEALS WITH THE MIND AND CONFESSION TREATS BEYOND THE HEART” This is a very good distinction between the two disciplines which defines their particular works.

“ASSISTS CONFESSION IN OFFERING COUNSELLING” Spiritual direction is a religious activity which includes counselling. One would think that confession and psychological counselling can be used in spiritual direction.

“CONFESSION HELPS IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN, WHICH PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING IS INCAPABLE OF DOING” It is true that the Sacrament of Confession absolves sins and psychological counselling has nothing to do with sin.

“ARE BOTH EFFECTIVE FOR HUMAN GROWTH.” It is a point that needs to be carefully considered because both disciplines are effective means of dealing with human problems. To say both enhance spiritual growth can be disputed because psychological counselling has nothing to do with spiritual growth, unless it is employed in spiritual direction.

“CONFESSION LEADS THE PENITENT TO ACCEPT HIS OR HER FAILINGS” It is a sign of spiritual growth when one can accept his or her failures and repent.

“OFFERED BY SPECIALISTS TO ASSIST HUMAN BEINGS WHO HAVE SOCIAL AND MENTAL PROBLEMS.” Psychological counselling can be categorised with abnormal psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry, where great expertise or specialisation is needed.

“TRANSFORMS” The concept of transformation features here as part and parcel of the Sacrament of Confession. It is spiritual growth.

“BOTH AIM TO HELP HUMAN BEINGS AND HAVE SOME HEALING ASPECTS.” The healing aspect touches both the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling.

“CONFESSION MOSTLY TARGETS THE SOUL AND CLEANSSES SINS.” The role of the Sacrament of Confession is underscored; it cleanses sins and aims at righteousness of the soul.

Axial Code 12: TFPC – Therapeutic functions of psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession

The Sacrament of Confession and or psychological counselling have already been proved as the two distinct healing models in pastoral therapy that can bring new perspectives in practical theology with specialisation in pastoral therapy. This may be the first time in practical theology that a match between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling as healing models, especially within the context of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe, could be made.

Theoretical Code 10: Empowerment

The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling lead to another underlying principle of this study: empowerment. The two disciplines empower human beings to live stable lives, both spiritually and socially (Pope Pius XII 1953; Osmer 2010:30). This central category is discussed further below.

The term “empowerment” emerged as a theoretical code in this section of the study because the two disciplines empower human beings with virtues and skills to live a positive life.

We gathered from the empirical data, especially from the interviewees who had knowledge of psychological counselling, that psychological counselling does not pose a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession. Instead, it offers empowerment to human beings to have survival skills for coping with life problems. Hence the claim that psychological counselling or psychotherapy poses a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession was unfounded according to the empirical data analysis. The two disciplines are compatible (as already mentioned in some of the abovementioned categories). It was established that the Sacrament of Confession offers a divine approach to human problems and psychological counselling follows a human professional approach (Pope Benedict XVI 2007:22; St Augustine 398 AD: XXXIX 73; Van den Blink 1995:203–204). Psychological counselling offers an alternative approach to address human problems. Therefore, the theoretical code is empowerment. Despite the fact that psychological counselling is not common to the parishioners, there was consensus that it could be incorporated into the Sacrament of Confession to enhance its spiritual direction. Admittedly, the two disciplines are compatible but this does not mean that

they currently co-exist in our parishes. It only means that if they were to co-exist in parishes, we would not experience friction between the two.

The next category is about the loss of the pastoral confessional role of the Sacrament of Confession.

5.4.13 Category 13: Losing the pastoral confessional role

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

4:581–635 “¹**Too much socialising of priests at public places** leads to **deliberate disrespect** by their parishioners who ²**withdraw to go for confession, making it lose its role** (especially among ³**the youth**), hence there is a ⁴**need to constantly teach** the youth about confession to ⁵**foster unity, love and forgiveness.**”

7:52–98 “⁶**Few parishioners go for confession**, but they ⁷**testify that they get satisfaction** from it. Psychological counselling gives solutions to some human problems and it is a handmaid to confession. ⁸**The Church is aware of the challenging issues of faith**; hence, there is a need to constantly teach parishioners the Sacrament of Confession to ⁹**avoid misconception**. Confession gives the penitent peace with God and humanity.”

8:580–633 “¹⁰**If compromised parishioners avoid confession, Holy Communion is more preferred** than confession. Psychological counselling solves social and mental problems, and it helps confession. The ¹⁰**youth are losing respect for confession**. Going for ¹¹**confession should be natural and free.**”

9:812–863 “Confession is natural. Psychological counselling addresses social and mental problems. Confession and psychological counselling focus on peace building and reconciliation of humanity. The youth undermine confession, but they are aware that they need to acknowledge sin through it.”

14:335–348 “¹²**Addiction to technology affects prayer life.**”

17:582–632 “¹³**When a sense of sin is lost; confession loses value**; yet confession ¹⁴**paves avenues for the grace of God**. Confession builds a good relationship of the penitent with God and others, but ¹⁵**some are bothered by reciting the confessional rite.**”

20:414–466 “Holy Communion is preferred to confession. Psychological counselling is helpful in life and it helps confession. ¹⁶**The Church should control excessive desire for**

money and the use of technology; however, confession is valid and some priests encourage it.”

25:86–97 “¹⁷The Church’s core business is not affected by transient things, nor disrupted by an unforeseeable possible future; hence confession is absolutely necessary.”

In the category that “the Church is losing its pastoral confessional role”, interviewees 4, 7, 8, 9, 14, 17, 20 and 25 came up with the following concepts:

Table 18 : Therapeutic functions of psychological counselling and confession

“TOO MUCH SOCIALISING OF PRIESTS AT PUBLIC PLACES BRINGS DELIBERATE DISRESPECT” The priests preach the Good News and give pastoral care or shepherd the parishioners. The parishioners expect them to be a good example by avoiding public places like beer halls, night clubs, casinos, cinemas, music galas or bands. They expect priests to preach against evil, like the gambling, prostitution, excessive drinking, drug abuse and corruption that are rampant in such places. In such places, sin that needs to be confessed is most committed.

“WITHDRAW TO GO FOR CONFESSION, MAKING IT LOSE ITS VALUE” When parishioners see priests in public places, they can justify themselves by saying priests are like us and there is no need for us to confess to them, making the Sacrament of Confession lose its value.

“THE YOUTH” The youth are associated with any pleasure (like drug abuse, gambling and the like) in the world. They are easily carried away with what titillates their bodies and emotions or what occupies them most. Most sins are committed by the youth, from the adolescent stage to their thirties.

“FOSTERING OF UNITY, LOVE AND FORGIVENESS” The Sacrament of Confession is meant to unite the people of God.

“FEW PARISHIONERS GO FOR CONFESSION” The few parishioners who cherish the Sacrament of Confession adhere to the teachings of the Church and regularly go for confession because they see its value.

“TESTIFY THAT THEY GET SATISFACTION” Those who go for confession get transformed spiritually and become mature in faith.

“THE CHURCH IS AWARE OF THE CHALLENGING ISSUES OF FAITH” The Church exists to evangelise. She lives with challenges to test the strength of the faith of her children. Challenges and temptations are necessary in the Church so that they can prove the power of the intervention of God in the believers’ lives.

“AVOIDANCE OF MISCONCEPTION” Wrong perceptions and misunderstandings are always found in people. They are very difficult to avoid.

“IF COMPROMISED PARISHIONERS SHUN THE SACRAMENT OF

CONFESSION” Both priests and parishioners need to stand firm to defend the importance of the Sacrament of Confession so that others may see its value in the Church and come for it.

“CONFESSION SHOULD BE NATURAL AND FREE” The Sacrament of Confession is done with a person who has committed himself or herself to go for it by using their choices and freedom as they understand the sacrament.

“ADDICTION TO TECHNOLOGY AFFECTS PRAYER LIFE” Both parishioners and priests face the challenges of too much use of technology. For example, computers, iPhones, iPads, tablets and so on are used to take videos, pictures and to download any information even during Church services or any time that the congregation can no longer pay attention to the smooth running of Holy Masses and other Church services. Sometimes believers make unnecessary noise and cause interference with such gadgets during Church business.

“WHEN A SENSE OF SIN IS LOST, CONFESSION LOSES ROLE” Earlier on, we mentioned the need for conscience. Some people can no longer distinguish between evil and good. This makes it difficult for the Sacrament of Confession. For example, a couple can stay together without marrying in Church and they do not see anything wrong with that. Gays may want to marry in Church and they claim that it is their right to live together as gays and adopt children. In such scenarios, the Sacrament of Confession suffers because any action is justified as good.

“SOME ARE BOTHERED BY RECITING THE CONFESSORIAL RITE” (Bear in mind that what was said in the confessional is not divulged here; they are just examples.) There is a very strong point here because after absolution, parishioners are given some penance to make. For example, one can be told by the priest to go and recite the prayer “Hail Mary” 10 times for a sin of adultery that he or she committed once. The other can be told to recite the profession of faith three times for insulting a person once. Maybe that person is not used to such prayers and finds it difficult to follow the penance. At the end of the day, the penitent may not find any meaning in absolution from sin and fail to link it with daily living. Some parishioners do not see the practicality of the absolution compared to the sins they have committed. They may be discouraged to go for the next confession for fear of repeating the same prayers they had done in the previous confession. Again, there is a need for proper teaching on how to do penance and restitution (paying back or compensating for what was lost).

“THE CHURCH SHOULD CONTROL EXCESSIVE DESIRE FOR MONEY” This is a very thorny issue because the desire can only be controlled by the one who has it. The Church can only facilitate in preaching, but it needs a change of heart for parishioners to accept the sermons.

“THE CHURCH’S CORE BUSINESS IS NOT AFFECTED BY TRANSIENT THINGS, NOR DISRUPTED BY AN UNFORESEEABLE POSSIBLE FUTURE; HENCE CONFESSION IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY”. As mentioned earlier, the Church’s core business should not stop because of the temptations of her children. She should carry on preaching the Good News. Contingencies come and go, but “the words of God never end”.

Axial Code 13: AV – Avoidance and value of the Sacrament of Confession losing its pastoral confessional role

Opinion on the claim that the Church is losing its pastoral confessional role because of the ambivalence between avoidance and the value of the Sacrament of Confession, leading to a pastoral vacuum, was confirmed by the study. The confessional role of the Sacrament of Confession has become compromised due to the **ambivalence and avoidance of parishioners** who lack appropriate knowledge of the sacrament. It was found that the Sacrament of Confession is losing its pastoral confessional role due to a number of factors that were already mentioned in the contingency category. The pastoral dimension was only to give proper instruction on the Sacrament of Confession to the parishioners.

Some concepts in the category can enlighten us.

Theoretical Code 11: The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession

This was the central theme of the study: The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession. The argument that the Sacrament of Confession is losing its **pastoral confessional role** was confirmed in the previous category. However, losing the meaning of confession in the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession was not confirmed by the analytical memo. The experiential knowledge of the interviewees was that the frequency of going for confession was decreasing (Ogoe 2010:24; Mandava 2011:1–3). The decrease was due to the loss of the pastoral confessional role, but not the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession. A theory that develops from the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is that **“grace builds on nature”**. The concept is borrowed from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and was asserted by the theologian Thomas Aquinas (CC 1996:1264). In short, the meaning here is that divine intervention starts from the natural and human intervention. It does not start from a vacuum, but from something that already exists. In other words, the Sacrament of Confession has to build on psychological counselling/psychotherapy in order to promote its pastoral role with a practical therapeutic value.

The term “nature” means anything that exists and depicts something created by God. Without minimalising the term “nature”, it can be contextualised to mean human knowledge, feelings and the like. It can mean creatures. To be more specific, “nature” in this context can refer to

psychological counselling/psychotherapy (that is, human science). Again, in this context, all that belongs to human nature can be dealt with by the human science that is psychological counselling. All that is divine has the Sacrament of Confession as its vehicle. For example, the grace that comes from God through forgiveness of sins is conveyed through the Sacrament of Confession. The word “grace” comes from the Latin term “*gratia*”, which etymologically means favour, charm or thanks. The immediate meaning that follows is that grace is an unmerited divine assistance which is given for our spiritual transformation and growth. Grace is a virtue or goodness that comes from God and enables one to bear a charisma or a spiritual gift, as in the sense of St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:4) which goes: “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but from the same Spirit. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CC 1996:1264) defines Grace as a “ ... a favour ... undeserved help that God gives to respond to his call to become his adopted sons and daughters and partakers in the divine nature of eternal life”. The Catholic Church (CC 1996:1264) defines grace in this way based on the understanding that the Christian life is a call to eternal supernatural life. Thus, in one way, it depends much on the gratuitous initiative of God’s help that comes to our human nature which has the inclination to sin (CC 1996:1264).

The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession makes parishioners realise their Christian life as a call to the supernatural gift of God. Due to human limitation, human nature is in the temporal order. Thus, the earthly and human consequences of sin remain in the parishioners, such as suffering, illness and death (1 Corinthians 4:7; Colossians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:1), and such frailties are inherent in life as weaknesses of character (CC 1996:1264). A person with such weaknesses needs psychological counselling/psychotherapy, first as a natural remedy. This is very true from the scientific perspective. However, the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession should be available to conscientise parishioners that the Sacrament of Confession essentially boosts human sciences like psychological counselling in assisting people to live a holistic life. From a practical theological point of view, the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is to alert a person who has been wounded by sin to maintain moral balance. Through the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession, Christ’s gift of salvation offers us the grace that is necessary to persevere in pursuit of the virtues of Christian life. Everyone should ask for this grace of light and strength by frequenting the Sacrament of Confession which gives forgiveness, peace and love as particular types of grace.

In the light of the pastoral therapeutic point of view, the statement that “grace builds on nature” refers to psychological counselling/psychotherapy as a natural remedy of responding to some psychological crisis which usually comes from failure to cope with some situation. In a way, psychological counselling creates a disposition in the client upon which grace that comes through the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is to assist or overshadow divine intervention for holistic healing. In so far as the Sacrament of Confession surpasses the power of human intellect and will by infusing the Holy Spirit into one’s soul to heal it of sin and sanctify it, it plays a significant pastoral and therapeutic role. St Augustine, in his argument of “irresistible grace” that rescues the sinner, states that this is not some kind of mechanical action or crude coercion but the gift of God's Spirit working within the person and increasing his or her freedom and dignity. This experience of irresistible grace was therapeutic for St Augustine and he emphatically confessed: “At last I am conclusively persuaded by the goodness and greatness of God’s love to follow his leading without hesitation. The stubborn resistance of my egoism and its lusts for power and pleasure are defeated by the insight into God’s great care for me. The way he wants to lead me is the only true direction” (St Augustine 398 AD: X 4).

As the Sacrament of Confession is discussed in comparison with psychological counselling, it is very important to note the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession as that of imparting sacramental grace and incorporating psychological counselling in providing a therapeutic model to the church members by touching on spiritual and physical healing (CC 1996:1423 & 1424).

In the light of the above exposition, psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession are compatible. Psychological counselling cannot replace the Sacrament of Confession under whatever circumstances. Psychological counselling can prepare someone for confession or after confession help with the continuity of grace by offering him or her some human coping strategies.

The confessional meaning is discussed below.

5.4.14 Category 14: The Sacrament of Confession as a practice for spiritual transformation

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

17:638–694 “Confession makes one ¹**aware of God’s healing hand**; those who deny confession may become spiritually dry.”

18:144–245 “Confession ²**heals the soul** and prayer **saves us from sin**.”

20:321–347 Confession ³ **“gives gratitude and transforms one’s spiritual life**. Confession ⁴**prepares one for Holy Communion**. A penitent who admits that he or she is a sinner ⁵**receives God’s blessings**. Prayer and proper confession ⁶**address sin as such**.”

22:102–143 “After confession, the penitent grows spiritually and ⁷**starts a new life**, thus ⁸**showing change of behaviour**.”

26:530–580 “Done properly after close self-examination, confession becomes effective. God is ever-loving, merciful and forgives sins. Confession is the ⁹**manifestation of God’s love** to a sinner.”

27:695–751 “Confession heals and ¹⁰**makes parishioners forgive each other**.”

30:273–289 “Confession is ¹¹**effective in drawing the penitent nearer to God** and in ¹²**amending bad habits to a better and enjoyable Christian lifestyle**. Confession ¹³**has a therapeutic effect** on the penitent which changes and mends bad behaviour. Confession ¹⁴**helps in offering solutions to human life problems**. Confession is superior since ¹⁵**God forgives sins through it**. It teaches and helps us to stay away from sin.”

Interviewees 17, 18, 20, 22, 26, 27 and 30 raised the following:

Table 19 : Concepts of the Sacrament of Confession in existential life

“AWARE OF GOD’S HEALING HAND” Through the Sacrament of Confession, people become aware of the healing hand of God.

“HEALS THE SOUL” When a person sins, the soul gets affected and becomes sick. The sickness of sin can only be healed by the Sacrament of Confession.

“GIVE GRATITUDE AND TRANSFORM ONE’S SPIRITUAL LIFE” Through the Sacrament of Confession, parishioners are spiritually transformed so that they see the reason for their existence and give glory to God.

“PREPARES ONE FOR HOLY COMMUNION” It has been mentioned earlier that the Sacrament of

Confession is preparatory to the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

“RECEIVES GOD’S BLESSINGS; PRAYER AND PROPER CONFESSION ADDRESS SIN AS SUCH” Confession is meant to deal with sin and enhance spiritual healing.

“SHOWING CHANGE OF BEHAVIOUR” The effects of sin are seen in the behaviour of a person. In the same way, the effects of confession are seen in the change in the behaviour of the penitent.

“MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S LOVE” The phrase “sacrament means manifestation of the sacred confession” is the manifestation of God’s love in the parishioner who confesses.

“MAKES PARISHIONERS FORGIVE EACH OTHER” The character of confession is forgiveness. Parishioners who confess should be able to forgive each other.

“AMENDING BAD HABITS TO A BETTER AND ENJOYABLE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE” A true Christian lifestyle is full of joy and peace. The one who confesses maintains good Christian habits.

“HAS A THERAPEUTIC EFFECT” It can heal a person

“HELPS IN OFFERING SOLUTIONS TO HUMAN LIFE PROBLEMS” The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling are both approaches for solving human problems.

“GOD FORGIVES SINS THROUGH IT” God can use human means to reach his people. He uses the Sacrament of Confession as a vehicle for forgiving the sins of his faithful.

Axial Code 14: TSH – Confessional transformation of sinful habits towards a new life filled with gratitude and joy

The healing effect of the Sacrament of Confession in relation to the problem of sin was already highlighted in some of the categories discussed before. Another problem that human beings experience is suffering. This problem is discussed in the category below.

5.4.15 Category 15: Dealing with the problem of suffering

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

27:638–688 “Confession changes the penitent’s behaviour in a positive way. Sin and suffering ¹can be addressed by prayer and sharing.”

28:923–970 “Suffering ²is a reality; through confession, God heals, forgives and loves. ³The hand of God gives security.”

29:29–68 “Through the Sacrament of Confession, God gives peace of mind to the penitents to amend the wrong that they have done to others. Confession leads to a virtuous life, self-satisfaction and forgiveness of sins, and heals the soul. Confession confers graces which are invisible in nature and heals and reunites the penitents with God. It transforms the whole person. Suffering is a reality of life which needs prayer as an answer.”

30 (412-461) “There are ⁴**no natural and quick solutions to the problem of suffering**, but resorting to prayer.”

Interviewees 27, 28, 29 and 30 raised the following:

Table 20 : Concepts of the problem of suffering

¹ **“CAN BE ADDRESSED BY PRAYER AND SHARING”** Suffering comes to human beings at any time. Suffering can be a way of testing the strength of the faithful. It is written in the bible, gold to prove itself it has to go through the blasting furnace. For the faithful to prove their strength in faith, they have to go through suffering.

² **“IS A REALITY”** The question that is asked by people when they are in suffering is “Why me”? Suffering is real. Just as people exist, suffering exists with them in different ways. Suffering is not necessarily a punishment from God, but it could be a way of God to speak to his people.

³ **“THE HAND OF GOD GIVES SECURITY”** In divine providence, human beings find security.

⁴ **“NO NATURAL AND QUICK SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING”** The implication here is that suffering is not intended but comes naturally. For example, death, sickness, poverty and disasters (like drought, floods, and earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides and so on) just come naturally. We can only put temporary measures in place to reduce their intensity, but we cannot avoid them.

Axial Code 15: SSL – The Sacrament of Confession leads to spiritual transformation, virtuous life, self-satisfaction and forgiveness of sins, and heals the soul

Dealing with the problem of suffering as a reality of life was discussed above. We have to learn to exist with suffering and pray to God to help us to endure (Louw 2000). The next category is about support systems.

5.4.16 Category 16: Shona cultural support systems as sustainable means for the Church

The data corpus from the initial codes is:

1:357–368 “Ranks in the Church are graded according to senior roles; those in positions should select useful elements from our ¹**Shona culture** to blend them with ²**Christian practices.**”

5:201–202 ³**Religion and culture are complementary.**”

7:150–167 “The ⁴**Church hierarchies** should make use of the culture of the parishioners, especially those that promote reconciliation, to assist them in evangelisation.”

6:470–477 “Christian religion should ¹**correct** and ²**evangelise** culture.”

9:931–947 “Confession renews one’s life. In Shona culture, ³**hospitality folk song and dance can be adopted** into confession. ⁴**Church leaders** should **encourage uniformity** in administering confession.”

10:149–174 “The penitent wishes to ⁵**live in a peaceful and perfect relationship with God**, who is ever-ready to forgive. The Shona culture has a ⁶**concept of reconciliation, which involves paying back or making restitution to the offended with a live animal or bird (like goats and chickens)**, that should be adopted in the Church. For example, folk songs and dance (when performed) depict how communities live and how they can improve to promote peace and harmony.”

12:580–637 “Confession teaches to forgive; it restores the broken soul, thus giving satisfaction. ⁷**For anything that is wrong, parishioners should not lay the blame on the priest but should work collaboratively to solve challenges.** Parishioners need ⁸**proper instruction** to teach other members about confession. Culture may be changed to fit ⁹**Christian values.**”

19:870–884 “Culture and religion are compatible. However, many believers have a strong conviction that confession is superior to culture. Some ⁵**elements in the Shona culture (like folk song and dance, paying back the offended with a goat or chicken, and hospitality) should be used to support the Sacrament of Confession as a form of restitution.**”

4:641–704 “⁶**Priests** should be faithful to their work and God intervenes to assist ⁷**the faithful** when they need his help. Culture cannot be taken by a Christian as a priority because it is inferior to ⁸**Christian faith.**”

19:870–884 “Culture and religion are compatible. However, many believers have a strong conviction that confession is superior to culture. Some elements in the Shona culture should be used to support the Sacrament of Confession.”

25:151–188 “On the Church support system, priests should be exemplary, empathetic mouthpieces of God and should have ¹³**relevant qualifications in counselling**. The Church doctrine should be linked to the culture of individuals.”

In the category “supporting systems in the Church”, the following concepts were obtained from interviewees 1, 4, 5, 7, 14, 19 and 25:

Table 21 : Concepts of support systems in the Shona culture and the Church

“SHONA CULTURE” Culture is rich in many ways. The Church can adopt good elements and Christianise them to maximise worship in God.

“CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES” Christian activities have to support individuals to confess, like having penitential services, retreats/recollections, conventional, seminars, workshops and pilgrimages.

“RELIGION AND CULTURE ARE COMPLEMENTARY” Religion and culture can assist people to live positively.

“CHURCH HIERARCHY” The diocese, leaders, associations and different congregations need to work together.

“ELEMENTS IN THE SHONA CULTURE” There are elements that are supportive of religious activities, like the Sacrament of Confession.

“PRIESTS” In all Church activities, the priests help the faithful in the celebration of the sacraments and in pastoral care.

“THE FAITHFUL” The priests cannot work alone and without the presence of the faithful. Teamwork is needed between the two.

“PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING” Psychological counselling is needed, especially when people face social and health challenges. Even those who are in the Church need proper counselling and spiritual guidance or direction.

“CHRIST” Christ is the centre of Christian faith.

“HOLY COMMUNION” Every Sunday when parishioners gather for Holy Mass, they receive Holy Communion. It is the teaching of the Church that a person who receives Holy Communion should be in a state of grace. The state of grace is attained through the Sacrament of Confession.

“BOTH OLD AND YOUNG” The Church accommodates all ages. Therefore, priests should be approachable to all ages.

“RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS” It was encouraged that priests be well equipped with relevant qualifications, including psychological counselling, in order to assist parishioners in all dimensions of life.

Theoretical Code 12: Support systems in the Shona culture and the Church

In this section of the study, we derived from the concepts in the table above as our theoretical code that the Church moves and has her being in the support systems within the culture of parishioners (Lartey 1997b:11 & 12; Mampolo 1991:105; Augsburg 1986:13; Gelfand et al 1985; Zvarevashe 2009:6; Ponde 2006:3). **What we observed as a missing link in the church's reconciliation system is the aspect of Shona culture of facilitating harmony by paying back the wronged person with something tangible like a live hen, goat or cow.** This shows that the person who wronged another is serious in rebuilding the good relationship and maintaining reconciliation, love and harmony. This aspect of restitution has to be reviewed within the context of the Shona culture. When somebody has offended, he or she can pay something live to the offended and to the Church as a sign of admitting guilt (Zvarevashe 2009:6). This can be done in the presence of the local leaders, like village heads and chiefs. By doing this, the aspect of **community pastoral counselling is enhanced as it will lead to the absolution of a penitent by a priest in the confessional.** Another aspect that emerged as a sustainable part of the Sacrament of Confession was the **Shona use of folk song and dance which reflects the existential life of their communities** (Gelfand et al 1985). These elements show how communities live and they can be used in the Church to play an important part in the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in reconciling individuals and communities (when people confess to the public in folk song and dance and those offended accept the confession, also in folk song and dance, without pointing fingers to anyone but showing that such wrongs in communities should be rectified). Why it is good to adopt folk song and dance is because **it has an aspect of psychological counselling in the sense that a person can say aloud all that affects him or her in a relaxed atmosphere where nobody acts as a judge or assessor of individuals.** Furthermore, particular individuals are mainly involved in the reconciliation process, together with other community members. This means that even the priest can join in the folk song and dance, and then give room to finalise the confession in the confessional box for absolution. This also means that nobody is left out in the reconciliation process. Finally, the priests can use the **Shona aspect of hospitality, like welcoming strangers, giving them something to eat or drink, and creating a conducive atmosphere for dialogue** (Zvarevashe 2009:4). If these Shona cultural elements are adopted, they can change the understanding of the Sacrament of Confession from something that is only recited to something that is lived through support systems that can sustain the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Church (Ponde 2006:2).

The final goal of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is to evangelise so that church members may attain eternal life.

Core Theory 13: Evangelisation

The Church exists to **evangelise** and reach all people of God through sustainable means (ZCBC 2011b; CC 1992:359; CC 1996; CC 2005:508). This theory shares the sentiments in *The Code of Canon Law* (2007: 386) that the “salvation of souls must always be the supreme law” in the Church.

5.5 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

After analysing the empirical results of the interviewees, the results of the empirical study were analysed and they are given below in the form of a table. Table 22 shows the categories of concepts and core categories (Saldana 2009; Rubin & Rubin 2011; Hermans 2012b):

Table 22 : Summary of core categories and categories of concepts

Category from interview questions	Categories of concepts	Table number
Meaning and value of confession	Meaning and value	9
Emotions	Emotions	10
Efficacy of confession	Absolution	11
Goals and choices	God	12
God		13
Contingency		14
Spiritual practices	Sacramental life stages	15
Frequent the Sacrament of Confession	Proper instruction	16
Participation in the Sacrament of Confession		17
Gender equality and discrimination		18
The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling		19
Healing remedies	Empowerment	20
Two distinct healing models	Alternative approach	21

Therapeutic functions		22
Losing the pastoral confessional role	Avoidance and value	23
The Sacrament of Confession: A practice for confessional transformation		24
Dealing with the problem of suffering		25
Shona cultural and church support systems		26
Evangelisation		
Themes		Codes
1 Meaning and value of the Sacrament of Confession		MVC
2 Emotions		ESC
3 Efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession		EFC
4 Goals and choices		GC
5 God, the Source of all		GA
6 Contingency		C
7 Spiritual practices		SP
8 Frequent confession		FC
9 Participation in the Sacrament of Confession		PSC
10 Gender equality and discrimination		GED
11 Confession and psychological counselling		CP
12 Therapeutic functions of confession and psychological counselling		TFCP
13 Avoidance and value of the Sacrament of Confession		AV
14 Transformation of sinful habits		TSH
15 Self-satisfaction		SSL
Theories		
1 Reconciliation		
2 Emotions		
3 Absolution		
4 Meaning of life determined by God		
5 Counselling therapeutic model		
6 Sacramental life stages		
7 Proper instruction		
8 Gender sensitivity		

9 Interdisciplinary helping practice
10 Empowerment
11 Pastoral role
12 Support systems
13 Evangelisation

Comparison of the old and new models

The theories that came to the fore are illuminated by the spiritual life story model of Hermans (2012c), the psychological counselling and psychotherapy models of Crabb (1977) and Cawley (1977), Van Arkel's (2007) helping discipline and the therapeutic model of Egan (2007). The following diagram of spiritual life was adapted from the model of Hermans (2012c) to illustrate the results of the empirical data, including the missing elements.

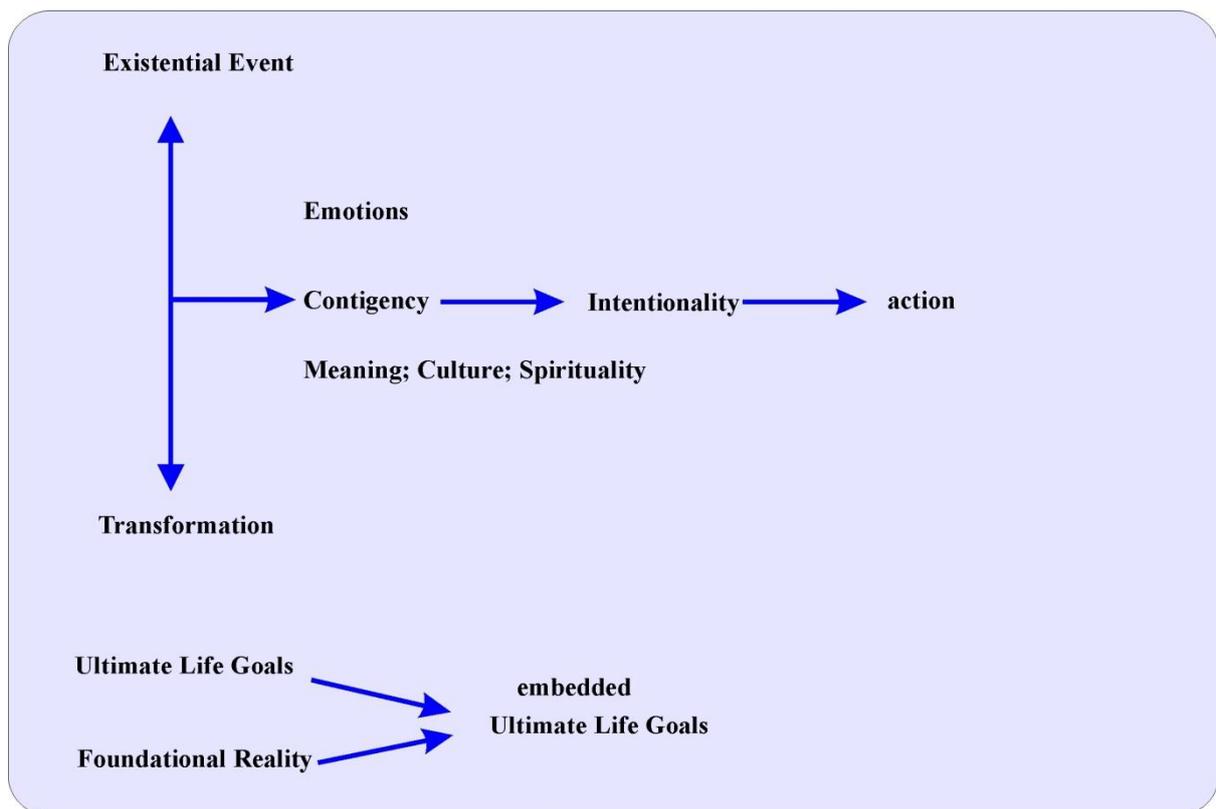


Figure 8: The spiritual life narrative model

Crabb (1977) and Cawley's (1977) models of psychological counselling and psychotherapy concentrate more on clinical psychology and exclude the existential life of the clients. For example, Cawley propounds psychotherapy in four levels that need a highly professional

psychotherapist. The same applies to Crabb, who levels psychological counselling in three stages, namely: encouragement, exhortation and enlightenment. The two models lack practical theology and the element of pastoral therapy. They only include those who can read and write. These models are based on the Western world and rarely affect the core of many African clients who are still striving to read and write. They also miss the spiritual aspects.

Hermans' (2012c) spiritual life narrative model seems to be a relevant one in practical theology and can apply to many situations of African clients. African people are storytellers who find themselves involved in the healing process through narratives. The model touches all aspects of the lives of clients. The only aspects that are not in this model are reconciliation and absolution. Otherwise it is good for pastoral therapy.

Van Arkel's (2007) framework for pastoral work includes mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. This framework can be used to choose the areas in which we want to specialise. However, the model needs the cultural and spiritual elements of both the counsellor and the client. Van Arkel's helping disciplines model includes the medical, the social, the pastoral and the psychological. In this way, the whole person is included. However, this model is not specific and constant. The interdisciplinary model can work, but there is no mode for how the disciplines use underlying principles of collaboration with the client concerned.

The therapeutic model of Egan (2007) is a professional model that is used by skilled helpers. However, it lacks the spiritual and the cultural aspects of clients. From the empirical data, it was clear that both psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession can be contained in the new **therapeutic counselling model** that offers the psychological, cultural and spiritual aspects of pastoral therapy. It is the model that emerged from the interview transcripts which has some bearing on psychologists like Cawley (1977), Crabb (1977) and Egan (2007), and it has strong pastoral therapeutic support from Van Arkel (2005) and Hermans (2012c). The model follows the spiritual life story and is interdisciplinary in nature as it emphasises the cultural, psychological and confessional participation of clients.

The elements that developed from the empirical data are as follows:

- Reconciliation.
- Emotions that are found in doing confession.
- Absolution, which prepares one to receive Holy Communion.
- God determines our meaning of life.
- The counselling therapeutic model as an intervention to contingency.
- Sacramental life stages.
- Proper instruction.
- Gender sensitivity.
- Interdisciplinary helping practice.
- Empowerment.
- Pastoral role.
- Shona cultural support systems.
- Evangelisation.

These elements have aspects of reconciliation, absolution and evangelisation that add on Hermans' (2012c) spiritual life stories (which include goals, contingency, emotions, foundational reality, spirituality, transformation and culture).

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the presentation and analysis of the empirical data on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. 30 participants were interviewed, namely six priests (with ages ranging from 30 to 44 years), eight male laypeople (with ages ranging from 24 to 53 years) and 16 female laypeople (with ages ranging from 28 to 72 years). The interviewees came from the five deaneries of the Masvingo Diocese. Their life stories pertaining to the Sacrament of Confession were captured through a life narrative interview instrument. The data was transcribed and then coded into first and second cycles in search of corresponding categories, concepts and theories. The first step was to code the data according to first-cycle coding (see Appendix A). The data was further coded and recorded to produce Appendices A and B. The data was then analysed in a second cycle of coding (extracted from Appendices A and B as the data corpus from the initial codes); the

concepts were put in bold and direct quotes. The concepts were then tabulated following the interview instrument. The different concepts were re-examined by using axial and theoretical coding. The sequence of identifying the relevant categories with initial and *in vivo* coding was followed; the corresponding concepts were captured by means of analytical memos and axial coding; and followed with theoretical coding. In the last part of the chapter, the results were presented in a table of core categories and categories of concepts. Finally, the chapter was concluded by comparing empirical theories with psychological counselling and pastoral therapy models from which a new **therapeutic counselling model (which includes counselling, absolution and evangelisation)** was derived.

The next chapter is a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 6: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the data was analysed, synthesised and presented in a coded system, this final chapter is a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

6.2 KEY FINDINGS

6.2.1 Empirical data

The empirical data was obtained from both priests and laypeople in the Masvingo Diocese. The respondents concurred that the Sacrament of Confession is confidential and it offers an opportunity to penitents to acknowledge their failures. There was an overwhelming positive response from both the priests and laypeople in affirming that the Sacrament of Confession heals and reconciles humanity with God and also transforms one's spiritual life by way of absolving one from sin (CC 2005).

The priests and laypeople confirmed that it is prescribed that the Sacrament of Confession is administered by a priest in the Catholic Church (Vatican 2007b). However, the priests and laypeople did not totally agree with the argument that there are some priests who are not exemplary in their morality and who are not following Christ as their model. Each respondent showed some bias for his or her own camp. However, the empirical data obtained that there should be a collaborative effort between the priests and laypeople in preaching the gospel and curing the sick members of the Church (ZCBC 2011a). Some of the parishioners highlighted that they felt ashamed and embarrassed to confess their sins because the process exposed their weaknesses. The priests disclosed that they could not see the reason for embarrassment and argued that parishioners should not fear priests but God who sees all that they do in private life.

Regarding visits to confession, both the priests and laypeople concurred that they are subjective and are not publicised. The underlying argument here is that nobody was bothered about who went to confession and who did not.

The argument that the Sacrament of Confession was instituted by Christ to forgive sins, which counselling is incapable of doing, resulted from trying to equalise the Sacrament of Confession with counselling (Nouwen 1980). There were mixed feelings about this among the respondents. Those who had some idea of psychological counselling could not see any problem in co-operation between the two disciplines. However, the majority of the laypeople sounded uncomfortable with the idea because they were not informed about psychological counselling. From the side of the priests, almost every respondent had an idea of psychological counselling and they could not see any harm in using psychological counselling to boost the Sacrament of Confession. The priests and a few parishioners responded that they were aware that psychological counselling is scientifically proven and is of human invention, while the Sacrament of Confession is faith-based. In the argument, the priests and few laypeople did not see how the Sacrament of Confession could be affected by psychological counselling in any way. It follows that confession is superior to psychological counselling because of its divine nature. Nouwen (1980) and Van Arkel's theory (2005) undergird this finding (as shown in chapters 2 and 3). However, some interviewees were hesitant to merge the two disciplines for fear that the Sacrament of Confession would be compromised. This fear is addressed by Nouwen in his assertion that psychotherapy is a specialty that can be adopted for use by pastors but with collaboration on different specialties.

On the issue of a confession timetable, the interviewees concurred that there were no standard timetables for confessions in parishes and missions throughout the diocese. This is something that should be looked into. It is, however, yet to be established whether the issue of different timetables is the cause of little attendance for the Sacrament of Confession. It is part of the empirical data of this study that needs further exploration.

In terms of the inclusion of culture in the Sacrament of Confession, very few of the laypeople did not agree because they viewed most cultural elements as evil and associate them with the devil. These parishioners cannot be blamed because this orientation and understanding was received from the missionaries when they arrived in the country. Gelfand et al (1985) confirm that the Shona people had their different ways of worship in an African traditional religion

before the advent of missionaries (Zvarevashe 2009). Some were then influenced by Christianity and their African way of ancestor veneration in the form of different rituals. However, the majority of the respondents concurred that culture can boost the Sacrament of Confession, especially when we look at elements like hospitality. For example, giving water to a stranger, accommodating one with respect, restitution, folklore, and traditional songs and dances can be included in conducting the Sacrament of Confession.

Regarding the material goods, there was no total consensus on the effect they have on the Sacrament of Confession. However, it was singled out that the youth and urban dwellers have fallen victim to technology, like being attached to cell-phones, televisions and computers to the extent of forgetting their spiritual values. Both priests and laypeople, with the exclusion of very few, concurred that both parishioners and priests are occupied with material goods and forget spiritual self-examination that leads to valuing the Sacrament of Confession. The empirical data showed that material goods had compromising effects on the Sacrament of Confession. With regard to spirituality and modern technology, the interviewees said that the youth, some adult parishioners and some priests are adversely affected by modern technology. There is an unhealthy attachment to modern technology that affects the spirituality of Christians. On the attitude of the youth towards confession, the interviewees said that very few youth came for confession; hence, they undermine the importance of the Sacrament of Confession. The interviewees confirmed that the Sacrament of Confession was meant to fight sin (Ogoe 2010). Through the Sacrament of Confession and prayer, sin is conquered. The interviewees asserted that the significance of confession in the Church is that the Sacrament of Confession remains valid despite the challenges that exist. It is the sacrament of peace and grace.

Regarding the issue of “instruction on the Sacrament of Confession” the interviewed priests and parishioners had the perception that both parishioners and priests need proper instruction on sacraments in general (CC 1992; ZCBC 2011a). This could be done in the form of seminars, workshops and conferences within the diocese or in collaboration with other dioceses. Constant teaching of the Sacrament of Confession is needed to avoid the defection of the parishioners to other denominations. It was noted that many parishioners are still ignorant about the importance of the Sacrament of Confession, because some are new converts who had never received proper teaching and others were taught by semi-trained catechists who are not well versed in the details of the Sacrament of Confession.

Regarding the gender issue, the respondents concurred that in religious matters, women outnumbered men. The interviewees agreed that there is no preferential treatment of gender in the Sacrament of Confession. Males and females are treated equally as they come to confess. This could lead to the conclusion that more women than men frequent the Sacrament of Confession. This was not properly substantiated by the empirical data, but there was an assumption that more women go for confession because there were more women than men. This could be the same with the youth – that more girls go for Confession than boys. However, it was revealed that the youth in general do not frequent the Sacrament of Confession.

Both priests and laypeople concurred that when it came to the problem of suffering, there was very little that they could do but to resort to prayer as a solution. The problem of suffering is real. Only God can intervene when people suffer. However, sharing problems with close friends may develop a positive attitude in the one who suffers. It was also clear from the priests and laypeople's responses that suffering is not caused by sin. It is not always true that the one who suffers has sinned and it is not always true that the one who does not suffer has not sinned. Suffering could come as a test of righteousness, like the personality of Job in the bible. One can be tested for endurance (Louw 2000).

Both priests and parishioners confirmed that the majority of parishioners are unfamiliar with psychological counselling. It is not even available in the parishes of the diocese. Very few parishioners said that they would consult their priests for some direction, but it was very rare. From the side of the priests, they expressed that they had an idea of psychological counselling, though at a very minimal level. They felt it is an honour if one is given a chance to study it for parishioners who need counselling assistance (Nouwen 1980; Capps 2005).

The idea of a priest socialising too much in public places came from the laypeople. They said that some priests do not live as they are expected to by their flock. Hence, they lead a common life like anybody else. Statements like these have implications. The parishioners further argued that a priest who has a lifestyle that is not expected by the parishioners leads to deliberate disrespect and shunning or withdrawing from the Sacrament of Confession conducted by the priest. The priests could not defend themselves but suggested that they would strive for perfection like all other people (ZCBC 2011a).

The interviewees confirmed that there were longer queues for Holy Communion than for the Sacrament of Confession. This suggests that Holy Communion is attended more than the Sacrament of Confession. This confirms what Pope Benedict XIV (2007) once said: that there are longer queues for Holy Communion than for the Sacrament of Confession.

Regarding s confessional privacy, the interviewees confirmed that the confidentiality and privacy of the confessional (the confessional seal) were not kept strictly (Ogoe 2010). Violation of confessional confidentiality was mainly noted in sermons, though they were not direct. The interviewees said that there is a need for priests to keep their dignity and respect. Too much familiarity between the priests and parishioners at public places compromises the Sacrament of Confession's frequency and its privacy.

The aforementioned empirical data emerged in categories that are summarised below.

6.2.2 Categories

The following categories were distinguished (Hermans 2012c; Rubin & Rubin 2011; Saldana 2009):

- (1) *Meaning and value of the Sacrament of Confession.* Confession is the sacrament that reveals the love for God and one another by way of forgiveness.
- (2) *Emotions.* The empirical data confirmed that there are positive and negative feelings for the Sacrament of Confession.
- (3) *Efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession.* The efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession lies in the healing, reconciling and transformation of parishioners' lives...
- (4) *Goals and choices.* Human beings plan their way of life through the inspiration of God's Spirit.
- (5) *God.* God is the source of life and love.
- (6) *Contingency.* Whether we like it or not, things have to happen as they are determined.
- (7) *Spiritual practices.* Human beings relate with God through spiritual practices like prayer and confession.

- (8) *Frequency of the Sacrament of Confession.* The Sacrament of Confession can be frequented as many times as one may wish.
- (9) *Participation in confession.* Parishioners need to know that the Sacrament of Confession invites them to participate in the love of neighbour and God.
- (10) *Gender equality and discrimination.* The Sacrament of Confession includes all parishioners irrespective of their gender.
- (11) *The relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling or psychotherapy.* These are two distinct disciplines that can assist each other in empowering human beings.
- (12) *The healing remedies.* The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling can collaborate in the pastoral and healing ministry.
- (13) *Losing the pastoral confessional role.* There is a devaluing of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession due to the avoidance of the youth and adult town-dwellers. Technology also has also a negative influence on the attendance of the Sacrament of Confession.
- (14) *The Sacrament of Confession as a practice for spiritual transformation.* The Sacrament of Confession helps parishioners to live positive lives and enhance spiritual transformation.
- (15) *Dealing with the problem of suffering.* The interviewees concurred that suffering is real and humanity is not an entity on its own. Therefore, there is a need to share problems with others who are close to let the burden out.
- (16) *Shona cultural support systems as sustainable means of the Church.* Culture can be used as a vehicle for evangelisation.

The empirical data was coded and are shown below.

6.2.2 Coded concepts

The data was coded into the following concepts (Saldana 2009; Hermans 2012c):

- (1) MVC: Meaning and value of the sacrament of confession
- (2) ESC: Emotions experienced during the Sacrament of Confession
- (3) EFC: Efficacy of the Sacrament of Confession in the Church
- (4) GC: Goals and choices

- (5) GA: God, the Source of all things
- (6) C: Contingency
- (7) SP: Spiritual practices
- (8) FC: Frequent confession
- (9) PSC: Participating in the Sacrament of Confession in parishes
- (10) GED: Gender equality and discrimination
- (11) CP: The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling (12) TFPC: Therapeutic functions of psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession as healing models
- (13) AV: Avoidance and value of the Sacrament of Confession losing its pastoral confessional role
- (14) TSH: Confessional transformation of sinful habits towards a new life filled with gratitude and joy
- (15) SSL: The Sacrament of Confession leads to spiritual transformation, virtuous life, self-satisfaction and forgiveness of sins, and heals the soul

Theories from the empirical data and the study are summarised below.

6.2.3 Theories

(1) Reconciliation

Reconciliation is an act of love and forgiveness towards someone who has offended you in one way or another (CC 1992:358, Ogoe 2010:25). This act of love or charity comes with the realisation that God has forgiven our sins and therefore we have to forgive others their sins. Reconciliation brings peace to the one who forgives and to the one who is forgiven. That act of forgiveness is celebrated in the Sacrament of Confession, which brings healing in relationships and transformation for the penitent, and creates unity and love among believers and other human beings. The theory of reconciliation is not new. Ogoe (2010), the Catholic Church (CC 1992; CC 1996; CC 2005) and Mandava (2011) treat reconciliation as equal to the Sacrament of Confession. This is different from the angle of this study, where reconciliation was taken to be part of the Sacrament of Confession and not the sacrament itself. People have to reconcile with one another first in order to make a good confession. The word “reconciliation” is used formally in the context of Sacramentology, liturgy and dogma.

It is well placed as part of practical theology with a perspective on reconciliation as pastoral therapy.

(2) *Emotions play an essential role in the Sacrament of Confession*

The concepts of positive and negative emotions obtained from the interviewees match Lazarus' (1999:140) list of emotional narratives of good and negative emotions: anger, envy and jealousy, fear, guilt, shame, relief, hope, sorrow, concern, disgust, happiness, pride, love, gratitude, compassion, wonder and awe. These emotions of individuals could determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Sacrament of Confession, as the interviewees concurred (Hermans 2012c:2). The empirical data showed that emotions can lead a penitent to think positively or negatively about the Sacrament of Confession. It is through emotions that one can make a motion to confess.

(3) *The Sacrament of Confession, through absolution, prepares parishioners for Holy Communion*

Absolution, like reconciliation, is an essential part of the Sacrament of Confession. After being absolved of their sins, people are clean to go for Holy Communion. Absolution therefore prepares parishioners for Holy Communion. For one to do a successful confession, one has to be absolved by a priest (CC 1992). The reason why absolution is discussed here is because the respondents emphasised that they need to be in a good relationship with God first before they can receive Holy Communion. In this context, this understanding of absolution is the same as what is expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CC 1992).

Absolution is given by a priest to a penitent as he acts as a bridge between God and the penitent for the forgiveness of sins. This process prepares parishioners to receive Holy Communion without sin (CC 1992:355; Stumpf 1996:106; Smith 1995:138). From a practical theological point of view, absolution is a positive practice of accepting spiritual transformation and growth. It is also confirmation that one is accepted back into the community of believers to have full participation in the communion of the believers.

(4) *The meaning of life is determined by God*

God is the Ultimate or Supreme Being who causes all things. When human beings to make plans, it is God who allows it (Hermans 2012c; CC 2005). Goals and choices are determined by the will of God. Hence the empirical data affirms St Augustine's narratives on intentionality, meaning and spiritual action. According to St Augustine (398 AD: 158), a believer in God does not live in a vacuum where there is no intentionality, contemplation of the meaning of life and action that is led by spiritual contemplation. The believer, conscious of being a stranger on this Earth, embraces a life of contemplation and action led by God. St Augustine considered it a great thing to contemplate first the whole creation (corporeal and spiritual, visible and invisible, this world and the world to come) and then to contemplate the Creator and learn from God himself (St Augustine 398 AD: XIX 19). St Augustine (398 AD) and Hermans (2012c) note that human beings cannot plan anything without the assistance of God. In order for their plans to be practical and to succeed, they need to realise that God has control over their lives.

(5) *The intervention of contingency*

The theoretical theme of contingency seems to be very important for human beings in existential life. Life stories have shown that a contingency is not planned (Hermans 2012c:3; Van de Brand et al 2013:28–36). It is a situation that can occur in the sphere of religious life or daily existential life. Human suffering like hunger, sickness, death and other natural disasters are examples of contingencies that adversely affect human beings and we have no control over it. The only option that human beings have is to appeal to God's mercy through the practice of prayer (which includes the Sacrament of Confession). What this study showed was that prayer was constantly mentioned as a solution to the problem of sin and suffering (CC 2005:1241). However, we cannot be onlookers of contingencies. While people pray, they also need counselling and spiritual direction. Hence, from a practical theological point of view, there is a need for a therapeutic counselling model to help parishioners who have different problems because of contingency. Bear in mind that the way that the contingency emerged from the empirical data is slightly different from the way it is propounded by Hermans (2012c). In this study all the eventualities that can come our way are included. Although we may not have full control over them, we can alleviate the intensity of pain and stress by applying a therapeutic counselling model.

(6) *Sacramental life stages*

It is not something new that Church members celebrate sacraments. The empirical data confirmed the Church's practice of celebrating the sacraments, of which Holy Communion is the source and summit of Church life (CC 2005; CC 1994; Capps 2005:83; Ogoe 2010:19). There are more sacraments than the Sacrament of Confession. For example, there are sacraments of initiation, service and healing. Baptism, confirmation and Holy Communion are the three sacraments of initiation. This means that when a child is born in a Catholic family, he or she is baptised in the early days of life. When the child is an adolescent, he or she gets catechism classes to learn the doctrines of the Church. Thereafter, the child is confirmed as a sign that he or she is mature to follow the precepts of the Church and teaches them to others by way of a spiritual life. He or she accompanies his or her parents to Holy Mass and other church functions. Marriage/matrimony and ordination are the sacraments of service in the Church. This theory developed from the empirical data, when the respondents gave their lifelines of the past, present and possible future (Hermans 2012c). Despite having a good life and comfortable salaries, the respondents still opted for the life in Christ. They felt that sacramental life would prepare them for a better future and even a decent death (CC 2005).

(7) *Proper instruction*

The respondents concurred that Church members need proper teaching on the Church's traditions. The catechism and Canon Law refer to the teaching office of the Church (CC 1992; CC 1996; CC 2005; Vatican 2007b).

Proper instruction on the need for the Sacrament of Confession was emphasised by both parties (priests and parishioners) (CC 1992; CC 1996; CC 2005:360). The reason why parishioners were not frequenting the Sacrament of Confession could be because of sheer ignorance and lack of spiritual commitment to the subject (Mandava 2011:1 & 2; Ogoe 2010:25). What emerged from the empirical data was that even the priests need further orientation on the Sacrament of Confession so that they can convey the proper knowledge to the parishioners. It can be asserted that proper instruction is needed for parishioners and priests in order to make the Sacrament of Confession more known, frequented and viable in the Church. From a practical theological point of view, the practicality of the Sacrament of

Confession can only be a reality when proper knowledge by relevant authorities is received. Relevant authorities in the context of practical theology and pastoral therapy are theologians such as Van Arkel (2005), Heitink (1977; 1984) and Hiltner (1961), who strongly argue on the sacramental character of pastoral care that relevant knowledge in the light of the gospel is necessary.

(8) *Gender sensitivity*

In the analytic memo writing, the properties and dimensions of gender equality continued to feature that males and females are equally treated when it comes to the Sacrament of Confession. However, the issue of gender sensitivity was not pronounced in the Sacrament of Confession as such, but there were underlying sentiments that the Sacrament of Confession does not provide for gender freedom to choose whom to go to for confession because it is prescribed by the Church that priests only hear confession (Noyce 1998:121; Audette 2003:128). This issue is still very sensitive in the Catholic Church and there were debates about women priests who will be able to attend to the issues of women; however, according to the norms of the Church, there is no room for women priesthood yet. In other circles, the issue has divided the Church. Why this issue was raised in this study was to probe for counselling sessions that would prepare different genders to go for the Sacrament of Confession for issues that only need absolution and not counselling. This means counselling by different specialists can be done before as parishioners prepare to go for confession and absolution. This will be left to the academic world to fill in some gaps in this context in the light of pastoral therapy.

(9) *Interdisciplinary helping practices*

The **Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling have an interdisciplinary healing relationship** from which Church members can benefit (Nouwen 1980:242; Van Arkel 2005:130; Hunter 2005:187). The argument goes as follows: There is a link between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling only in terms of **a link between socio-emotional problems and sin**. Some socio-emotional problems lead people to sin. For example, unemployment of a breadwinner can cause him or her to steal in order to fend for the family and a low salary or income can lead or expose someone to a worst condition of corruption in order to make ends meet. Hence Smith (1995:134) says that there are other

limitations that are imposed by internal psychic conflicts, compulsions, fears, passions and prejudices on life.

These conditions call for the **integration of psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession as remedies**. The Sacrament of Confession brings in the divine remedy for sin that is caused by the socio-emotional conditions of a parishioner. However, **psychological counselling offers coping strategies to the same person who had socio-emotional problems**. In fact, while the **Sacrament of Confession brings grace or divine remission to the parishioner who has admitted failures** due to socio-emotional conditions of life, psychological counselling brings psychological and social stability to the same person with problems by empowering him or her with survival skills. **Psychological counselling offers human and natural remedies, while the Sacrament of Confession offers divine remedies in the form of grace and forgiveness** (St Augustine 398 AD: XXIX 158; Osmer 2010:30; Hiltner 1961:29–31).

(10) Empowerment

The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling lead to another underlying principle of this study: empowerment. The two disciplines empower human beings to live stable lives, both spiritually and socially (Pope Pius XII 1953; Osmer 2010:30).

The term “empowerment” did not emerge from the respondents directly, but there were pointers to the two disciplines of the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling as empowering agents of human beings with virtues and skills to live positive lives. Van Arkel (2005) and Van den Blink (1995) argue on the healing disciplines that involve more than removing obstacles to personal growth.

The empirical data, especially from the participants who had knowledge of psychological counselling, showed that psychological counselling does not pose a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession. Instead, it offers empowerment to human beings by giving them survival skills to cope with life problems. Hence, the claim that psychological counselling or psychotherapy poses a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession was not confirmed in the empirical data analysis. The two disciplines are compatible. It came to the fore that the Sacrament of Confession follows a divine approach to human problems and psychological

counselling a human professional approach (Pope Benedict XVI 2007:22; St Augustine 398 AD: XXXIX 73; Van den Blink 1995:203 & 204).

(11) *The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession*

This was the central theme of the study: the pastoral role of the sacrament of confession. The argument that the Sacrament of Confession is losing its **pastoral confessional role** was confirmed by the empirical data. This supports what Mandava (2011) and Ogoe (2010) allude to (see chapter 3). However, losing the meaning of confession in the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession was not confirmed by the empirical data. This confirms what Makamure (2009) argues about the indispensability of the Sacrament of Confession. The experiential knowledge of the interviewees was that the frequency of going for confession was decreasing (Ogoe 2010:24; Mandava 2011:1–3). The decrease is due to the loss of the pastoral confessional role, but not the meaning and value of the Sacrament of Confession. This means that the problem is not the sacrament *per se*, but the performance and response of those who practise it. Hence, a theory developed from the empirical data on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession – that “**grace builds on nature**”. The concept is borrowed from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and was asserted by the theologian Thomas Aquinas (CC 1996:1264). In short, the meaning here is that divine intervention should have its basis in what is on the ground. In other words, the implication here is that what is witnessed is the devaluing of the practice of the Sacrament of Confession by people because of their natural tendencies and they need divine intervention. This divine intervention does not come from a vacuum but from what already exists. What we have as human beings are other helping disciplines like psychology and counselling. These should be used to confirm the presence of the Sacrament of Confession and to enhance its effectiveness by giving priests the necessary skills to offer spiritual direction and absolution. Hence, the Sacrament of Confession has to build on psychological counselling/psychotherapy in order to promote its pastoral role with a practical therapeutic value.

(12) *Shona cultural and Church support systems*

The Church moves and has her being in the support systems within and from the culture of parishioners (Lartey 1997a:11 & 12; Mampolo 1991:105; Augsburg 1986:13; Gelfand et al 1985; Zvarevashe 2009:6; Ponde 2006:3). The empirical data brought a new perspective

which was a missing link in the Church's reconciliation system – the aspect of the Shona culture of facilitating harmony by paying back the wronged person with something tangible like a live hen, goat or cow. This shows that the person who wronged another person is serious in rebuilding the good relationship and maintaining reconciliation, love and harmony. This aspect of restitution has to be reviewed within the context of the Shona culture. When somebody has offended, he or she can pay something live to the offended and to the Church as a sign of admitting guilt (Zvarevashe 2009:6). This can be done in the presence of the local leaders, like village heads and chiefs. This empirical data brought a new view on community pastoral counselling that is therapeutic physically, socially, mentally and spiritually. This may facilitate the Sacrament of Confession and help parishioners to seek assistance that will lead them to absolution by a priest in the confessional. Another sustainable aspect from the empirical data that can empower the Sacrament of Confession is the Shona use of folk song and dance which reflect the existential life of their communities (Gelfand et al 1985). Although Gelfand et al (1985) and Zvarevashe (2009) mention something in this line, the aspect of folk songs and dance was never pronounced as something that could be used in the Sacrament of Confession. This is an aspect of this study that could be further explored.

(13) *The core theory of evangelisation*

The Church exists to **evangelise** and reach all people of God through sustainable means (ZCBC 2011; CC 1992:359; CC 1996; CC 2005:508). This is reflected in *The Code of Canon Law* (Vatican 2007b:1752), which states that “salvation of souls must always be the supreme law” of the Church.

(13) *The new therapeutic counselling model*

This was discussed under the theory of contingency, but it is singled out to demonstrate that it is not merely a theory but a model that can be followed. The empirical data showed that there is a need for a therapeutic model that caters for both human and spiritual aspects and that can address contingency (Benedict XVI 2007:231; Klink 1993). It might not answer all our problems, but human effort is necessary to intervene in contingency. Hence **the Sacrament of Confession can be used with psychological counselling as a therapeutic model**. Patton (2005) and Clinebell (1984) mention growth and holistic counselling (see chapter 3 of this study). This new therapeutic model is **holistic** in the sense that it offers **reconciliation with**

God and humanity. It is a model that caters for the socio-emotional and spiritual being, and renders healing to the human soul through absolution. It heals mental and socio-emotional problems by offering psychological counselling for spiritual direction that can be offered during the Sacrament of Confession. Finally, it **leads to change of life and attitude**. This model also has its basis in the interdisciplinary helping model of Pruyser (1976) and Van Arkel (2005) which includes medical, pastoral, psychological and pastoral elements (discussed in chapter 2). However, the difference with this new model is that the two disciplines of psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession are merged without compromising the value of the Sacrament of Confession to form one therapeutic model that is holistic, namely **the counselling therapeutic model**. This model can be conducted by priests during the Sacrament of Confession and it has therapeutic value that is offered in four phases, namely: (1) **spiritual direction through psychological counselling**, (2) **reconciliation with God and neighbour that has cultural value**, (3) **private confession that is followed by prayer and absolution**, and (4) **implementation of change in existential life**. Just like other models and theories, this model may have shortcomings which might have been overlooked. However, the academic world can explore this further within practical theology and pastoral therapy.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the empirical data and the literature study.

In terms of the influence and dominance of psychological counselling as a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession (Zvaiwa 2009), **no evidence was found of it in the parishes of the 30 interviewees in this study**. There was thus no confirmation that psychological counselling and psychotherapy posed a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession as it was earlier declared in “Confession out, psychology in” (Zvaiwa 2009). More than two-thirds of the priests and the parishioners who were interviewed professed ignorance of psychological counselling in their parishes and missions (Makamure 2009). A small number of the interviewees admitted that they had an idea of psychological counselling or psychotherapy through reading books or through other people, but they did not know how it could affect the Sacrament of Confession. The conclusion is therefore drawn that there is no influence and dominance of psychological counselling as a threat that can lead to the disappearance of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe.

On the relationship between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling, the study established that the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling are compatible sciences in the sense that psychological counselling and psychotherapy are handmaids of the Sacrament of Confession (Makamure 2009). However, the Sacrament of Confession was seen as superior to psychological counselling because of its divine nature and because it was instituted by Christ. It was confirmed that the Sacrament of Confession assists in the forgiveness of sins, which psychological counselling is incapable of doing. The study established that psychological counselling is scientifically proven and is of human invention, unlike the Sacrament of Confession which is faith-based and divine. However, more than half of the interviewed parishioners professed ignorance of being engaged in psychological counselling. Therefore, it is concluded that although psychological counselling is said to be compatible with the Sacrament of Confession, it is not available or practiced in the parishes of the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe.

Concerning the preference for psychological counselling and psychotherapy over the practice of confession in the Masvingo Diocese, it was found that psychological counselling was positively regarded as being included in the Sacrament of Confession wherever possible. The interviewees preferred that the skills of psychological counselling be adopted so that the priests could use it during confession and to provide spiritual direction (McGarry 2009).

The priests and laypeople who were interviewed did not confirm the impact of psychological counselling and psychotherapy on the practice of confession in the Masvingo Diocese because they said that there was no sign of its existence in the parishes. More than two-thirds of the interviewed parishioners professed ignorance of being involved in psychological counselling and psychotherapy as healing models. The aspects of confidentiality and privacy were noted as necessary in the two disciplines (Makamure 2009). The conclusion can be drawn that the preference for psychological counselling and psychotherapy over the practice of confession in the Masvingo Diocese was accepted by the interviewees, though they had had little exposure to it.

The study established the loss or devaluing of pastoral confession through the tendency of contingency due to the excessive materialism of the youth, priests and parishioners in general. The excessive regard for modernity and the need for technology created ambivalence and avoidance of the Sacrament of Confession which created a spiritual vacuum for Church

members (Ogoe 2010). This means that their destiny is determined by modern machines, computers, cell-phones and other modern gadgets. The interviewees highlighted that priests were not exemplary in following Christ as their spiritual model who preached the gospel and cured the sick. The loss of pastoral confessional value through the tendency of contingency was aggravated by priests who were not living as their parishioners expected them to live. The interviewees confirmed that there were priests and parishioners who occupied themselves with material goods and forgot their spirituality and self-introspection to value the Sacrament of Confession. It was noted by the interviewees that too much socialisation of priests with people at public places led to deliberate disrespect by parishioners who tend to withdraw from going for confession.

The empirical data confirmed that the youth undermined the Sacrament of Confession. The reason that was given was that the Sacrament of Confession exposed their failures and passivity in religious activities. The youth are seeking something that will emotionally titillate them into action (Ogoe 2010). In this regard, the Sacrament of Confession is not losing its meaning but rather its pastoral role in the context of the Church. It was confirmed, therefore, that there was a general lack of understanding about the Sacrament of Confession – not only among the youth and urban dwellers but also by a number of parishioners. This resulted in some not going for confession and others defecting to other denominations. The study confirmed that parishioners frequented Holy Communion more than confession, yet confession had to prepare them for Holy Communion (Pope Benedict XVI 2011).

Concerning the use of culture in the Church, it was found that there are some cultural elements of privacy and secrecy that are fictitious and have a negative influence on the frequency of parishioners making use of the Sacrament of Confession (Gelfand et al 1985; Zvarevashe 2009). However, some empirical data indicated that there were cultural values like respect, hospitality, and the expression of happiness and sorrow that could be adopted to enhance the Sacrament of Confession.

The study confirmed the efficacy and meaning of the Sacrament of Confession and its therapeutic value as a necessary function in pastoral work in the Masvingo Diocese. It was confirmed that the Sacrament of Confession acts as an effective Christian practice for parishioners' behavioural changes in order to live in a positive way. The Sacrament of Confession boosts one's spiritual life by bringing inner peace and freedom (St Augustine 398

AD; Pius XI:1953). Genuine confession removes shame and builds a healthy relationship with God and neighbours. It was concluded that the Sacrament of Confession heals the soul of penitents (parishioners who confess) and reconciles humanity with God. The Sacrament of Confession offers spiritual solutions to the problem of sin and heals the penitent's soul by emphasising the presence of a God who is ever-loving and ever-forgiving. The negative attitude of some parishioners and priests towards the Sacrament of Confession does not make it insignificant because it was divinely instituted.

Concerning the problem of sin, the study established that the Sacrament of Confession exists in the Church to give parishioners who sin a second chance and to create peace of heart and bring joy to those who confess their sins (CC 2005; Ogoe 2010). The Sacrament of Confession also confers grace on the penitents (St Augustine 398 AD). The study confirmed that the Sacrament of Confession, accompanied with continuous prayers, helps to address the problem of suffering which is a reality to humanity (Louw 2000). It was concluded that the Sacrament of Confession has efficacy and meaning, and therapeutic value, in pastoral work in the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo in Zimbabwe.

There are **preferred theories** that can help to improve the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe. These are discussed below.

The two disciplines (the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling) can be merged to make one **counselling therapeutic model** that has both human and spiritual aspects to address contingency (Hermans 2012c; Van de Brand et al 2013). Bear in mind that this was discussed before, but as this study draws to conclusion, emphasis is necessary for a better understanding. The **therapeutic counselling model** is holistic in the sense that it offers reconciliation with God and humanity, healing of the human soul through absolution, healing of mental and socio-emotional problems by offering psychological counselling and spiritual direction that can be offered during the Sacrament of Confession. Finally, it enhances and changes lives and attitudes.

This model has the same elements of the interdisciplinary helping model of Pruyser (1976) and Van Arkel (2005) (discussed in chapter 2), in other words medical, pastoral, psychological and pastoral elements. This model can be conducted by priests during the Sacrament of Confession and it has therapeutic value that is offered in four phases, namely:

(1) **spiritual direction through psychological counselling**, (2) **reconciliation with God and neighbour that has cultural value**, (3) **private confession that is followed by prayer and absolution**, and (4) **implementation of change in existential life**. The new elements that were missing in the interdisciplinary helping model were reconciliation, absolution and evangelisation.

The distinctive characteristic of a pastoral counsellor is that he or she can use different disciplines to help parishioners (Nouwen 1980; Van Arkel 2005). By doing this, the gap in the Sacrament of Confession (that it only answers spiritual problems without attending to human social and mental needs) can be filled. In the same way, the gap in psychological counselling (that it addresses only human needs that are of a psychological and social nature without bringing any spiritual benefit to the troubled person) can be filled. The Sacrament of Confession has therapeutic value in pastoral care, especially when contingency has precedence in human life. A contingency was identified as an adversity to the Sacrament of Confession, the therapeutic value of which can be demonstrated by making Church members realise the limitedness of their human effort and the need for God's intervention when contingency appears as an obstacle to the routine of life. An appeal to prayer and the Sacrament of Confession soothes the soul that is tormented by sin and suffering. Human relationships that are enhanced through sharing social problems do not end only in people without expertise but point to the need for psychological counselling with experts. This theory shows the need for psychological counselling to complement human intervention.

Another contribution to the study is the definition of **reconciliation** (CC 1992). Reconciliation is an act of love and forgiveness towards someone who has offended you in some way. This act of love or charity comes with the realisation that God has forgiven our sins and therefore we have to forgive others their sins. Reconciliation brings peace to the one who forgives and to the one who is forgiven. That act of forgiveness is celebrated in the Sacrament of Confession, which brings healing to the penitent and creates unity and love among believers and other human beings. In the context of practical theology and pastoral therapy, the aspect of reconciliation can extend beyond the confines of the confessional boxes into the existential life of parishioners and with other people of God (Klink 1993).

Another contribution is the addition of the Sacrament of Confession to the interdisciplinary helping practices. The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling have **an**

interdisciplinary healing relationship that can be used by Church members (Nouwen 1980; Van Arkel 2005). The argument goes as follows: There is a link between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling as **there is a link between socio-emotional problems and sin**. Some socio-emotional problems lead people to sin. For example, the unemployment of a breadwinner can cause him or her to steal in order to fend for the family and a low salary or income can lead or expose someone to a worse condition of corruption in order to make ends meet. Hence, Smith notes that there are other limitations that are imposed by internal psychic conflicts, compulsions, fears, passions and prejudices on life (Smith 1995:134).

These conditions call for the integration of psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession as remedies (Stumpf 1996; Browning & Reed 2004). The Sacrament of Confession brings in the divine remedy for sin that is caused by the socio-emotional conditions of a parishioner. However, **psychological counselling offers coping strategies to the person who has socio-emotional problems**. In fact, while the **Sacrament of Confession brings grace or divine remission to the parishioner who has admitted his or her failures** due to the socio-emotional conditions of life, psychological counselling brings psychological and social stability to the same person who has problems by empowering him or her with survival skills. **Psychological counselling offers human and natural remedies, while the Sacrament of Confession offers divine remedies in the form of grace and forgiveness**. Hence we say that grace builds on nature (CC 1996). This means that human beings, limited as they are, can easily succumb to problems and sin. The Sacrament of Confession offers divine intervention, while psychological counselling stabilises the natural and human psychological equilibrium of normalcy. **As psychological counselling provides natural coping strategies, the Sacrament of Confession brings forgiveness and healing of the soul** to the repentant sinner in order **to enhance holistic healing**. This theory is supported by Hunter (2005:187), who locates the pastoral therapeutic approach in a theology of pastoral care which serves the healing of the human soul (*cura animarum*). This implies **a ministry that is directed not merely at human inner life, but also at the spiritual care of the person in all the psycho-physical and psycho-social dimensions** (Nouwen 1980).

The central theme of the thesis was brought to the fore: the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession. The argument that the Sacrament of Confession is losing its pastoral confessional role was confirmed by the empirical data and the literature study. By its

very nature, the Sacrament of Confession is not famous for its achievements because it deals with the problem of sin. People rarely see the expected results for the spiritual nature because they are not ours to determine (St Augustine 398 AD: XXIX 73; Osmer 2010; Van den Blink 1995). However, the research did not confirm that the meaning of confession was lost in the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession. The experiential knowledge of the interviewees was that the frequency of going for confession was decreasing. The decrease was due to the loss of the pastoral confessional role and not the loss of the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession. A theory that synthesises the central theme of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession as **“grace builds on nature”** can be propounded. This concept is borrowed from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as asserted by St Thomas Aquinas (CC 1996:1264). In short, the meaning here is that divine intervention is based on natural and human settings. It does not start in a vacuum. In other words, what can be inferred here is that the Sacrament of Confession has to build on psychological counselling/psychotherapy in order for it to promote its pastoral role with a practical therapeutic value. This is a significant contribution to this study.

Another significant and the final contribution to this study was the **infusion of Shona cultural elements** and Church support systems as sustainable means to the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession (Gelfand et al 1985; Ponde 2006; Zvarevashe 2009). The missing link in the church’s reconciliation system that was brought forward by the empirical data is the aspect of capitalising on Shona culture to facilitate harmony by paying back the wronged person with something tangible like a live hen, goat or cow (Zvarevashe 2009). This is very practical and shows that the person who wronged another person is serious in rebuilding the good relationship and in maintaining reconciliation, love and harmony. This aspect of restitution, with its cultural implications, has to be reviewed within the context of the Church. When somebody has offended, he or she can pay something live to the offended and to the Church as a sign of admitting guilt. This can be done in the presence of local leaders, like village heads and chiefs. Through this, the aspect of **community pastoral counselling is enhanced. The Sacrament of Confession could be easily accessed in the same way, leading to the absolution of the penitent by a priest in the confessional.** Another aspect which emerged in the Shona culture that can be used as a sustainable element of the Sacrament of Confession is the **Shona use of folk song and dance, which reflect the existential life of their communities** (Gelfand et al 1985; Zvarevashe 2009). These elements show how communities live and they can be used in the Church to play an important part in

the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession by reconciling individuals and communities when individuals confess to the public in folk song and dance and the offended in turn accept the confession in folk song and dance without pointing fingers to anyone. Thus everyone will be alerted that wrongs in communities should be rectified. The reason why it is good to adopt folk song and dance is because it has an aspect of psychological counselling since a person can express what is affecting him or her in a relaxed atmosphere where nobody acts as a judge or assessor. Furthermore, particular individuals become involved in the reconciliation process together with other community members. This means that even the priest can join in the folk song and dance, and then make room to finalise the confession in the confessional box for absolution. Thus nobody is left out in the reconciliation process. Finally, the priests can use the **Shona aspect of hospitality, like welcoming strangers, giving them something to eat or drink, and creating a conducive atmosphere for mutual dialogue**. If these Shona cultural elements are adopted, they can change the understanding of the Sacrament of Confession to a multicultural view rather than a Western view of using cognition by only reciting sins. The new thinking leads to lived experience and can sustain the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Church through home-grown approaches to life. The final goal of the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession is to evangelise so that Church members may attain eternal life (Ponde 2006; Zvarevashe 2009).

The significant findings can be expressed as follows: The Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling or psychotherapy can collaborate as therapeutic disciplines in pastoral therapy. The Catholic Church, particularly in the Masvingo Diocese, is experiencing a devaluing of the church's pastoral confessional practice among its priests and laypeople. A new **model of therapeutic counselling** to enhance the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese in Zimbabwe is proposed.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher seeks to encourage the hierarchy of the Church and their members to observe and consider the following recommendations.

In order for the Church to restore the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Diocese of Masvingo, the parishioners need continuous and proper instruction on the Sacrament of Confession by priests who are experts in the field. This will decrease spiritual

indifference among the parishioners and prevent them defecting to other denominations. Workshops, conferences, symposiums, retreats and seminars should be conducted regularly in order to fully restore the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession. Parishioners who frequent Holy Communion have to do the same with the Sacrament of Confession, because confession prepares them spiritually to receive Holy Communion (Pope Benedict XVI 2011).

Various workshops and seminars should be introduced to address the negative influence of modern technology and ideology within different groups of parishioners, like the youth; St Anne Guild, St Joseph Guild and St Mary Guild; and young and old priests. Experts in the area of technology and various economic fields can be invited to present topics on the advantages and disadvantages of modern gadgets in order to inform members of the Church how to use modern technology to the benefit of the Church and society.

The following recommendations are also made:

- **Confessional boxes with screened grills should be restored** in order to foster confidence in the parishioners who do not want to be seen or face the priests during confession, and to preserve their confessional privacy (Ogoe 2010). The priests have to observe strictly the confidentiality and privacy of confession and should not give in to the temptation of divulging confessional information, especially during sermons or general conversations.
- **Timetables for confessions should be introduced in parishes and missions throughout the diocese** to motivate parishioners to go for confession (Ogoe 2010). Parishioners (youth, men and women) should be encouraged to attend confession as a way of preserving sanity in the Church. The healing aspect of the Sacrament of Confession should be emphasised to attract parishioners to confess.
- The Sacrament of Confession in the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo in Zimbabwe, as **a therapeutic counselling model, should recognise the insights and appropriate practices of the custodians of our local culture** (like chiefs, headmen and village heads) by incorporating good elements (like folklore, singing and dance) and applying them in the Church environment. Cultural elements that are wanted by parishioners and are not in agreement with the Church's teachings should be carefully examined (Zvarevashe 2009; Ponde

2006). The Church should engage researchers to continuously evaluate what the *n'angas/sangomas* offer parishioners to lure them to secretly leave the Church and consult them (*n'angas/sangomas*). If such elements could be Christianised, they could heal more parishioners and keep them from uncritically syncretising Christianity and African traditional religion.

- To minimise the defection of parishioners to other denominations and sects, **the diocese has to engage in dialogue with other denominations** and Pentecostal churches to discover what they offer and – if essential – to appropriate these ministry practices in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe (ZCBC 2011).
- Psychological counselling and psychotherapy should serve as helping disciplines for members in the Catholic Church.
- Priests should acquire knowledge and **skills of psychological counselling or psychotherapy**, where necessary. This therapeutic knowledge and skills could be **used for confessions or spiritual direction in parishes**.
- Since parishioners may experience social and mental challenges, parishes and missions in the diocese should be encouraged **to introduce counselling and spiritual direction sessions – not necessarily combined with the Sacrament of Confession**. These could be **performed in psychological counselling centres in parishes and missions of the diocese, or somewhere central and accessible within the diocese**. **Priests could receive more training as pastoral therapists**. Other psychology counsellors and pastoral therapists could be invited to deal with the different cases of the parishioners.
- Ample space and time should be allocated for confessions in parishes. Priests should avail themselves and create an appropriate atmosphere for confession by using local cultural elements that can attract parishioners, because it is in the purpose of the Sacrament of Confession that a penitent finds healing of the soul and peace of mind.
- The Sacrament of Confession as an area of research is still not much explored, especially in the disciplines of practical theology and pastoral therapy. This practical theological study focused only on the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession by employing the life narratives of the parishioners and a qualitative approach to practical theology. The Church should make available time and resources for research projects on the Sacrament of Confession to try and fill the

gaps in relation to cultural values as a practical theological component. This could help the Catholic Church not only in Zimbabwe but all over the world to be informed about how their faith and practices relate to local contexts. This could pave the way to enriching the theoretical basis of confessional practices and faith in different theological contexts and academic spheres. As research occurs, new initiatives that could enhance the body of knowledge of the priests and laity would emerge and this could help to improve the effectiveness of pastoral work.

On the basis of these recommendations, it is hoped that the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese of Zimbabwe will be effectively implemented for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

To recap the study, the following points are of significance: Zvaiwa's (2009:4) observation that the "influence and dominance of psychological counselling pose a threat of extinction to the Sacrament of Confession" was not confirmed by the empirical study. In fact, it was established that psychological counselling did not exist in the parishes of the diocese, except in hospitals and clinics. If it is adopted to work in parishes, the two should work together as compatible disciplines. Hence, there is no dominance of psychological counselling over the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese. However, there were other challenges, like the advent of technology and materialism that affect the youth and urban dwellers and influence them not to constantly go for confession and to attend Church services in general. The assertion that Church members in the Diocese of Masvingo disregard the Sacrament of Confession and prefer psychological counselling was not confirmed by the empirical data. The problematic phenomenon that the Church is losing its pastoral confessional role and value through the tendency of contingency was answered by developing theories and a therapeutic counselling model. That the Sacrament of Confession is losing its meaning in the context of the pastoral role of the Church was not confirmed, but it was an issue that the number of parishioners who go for confession is decreasing. After the integration of the literature study and empirical data, the aforementioned theories and therapeutic counselling model emerged in an effort to restore the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Masvingo Diocese of Zimbabwe.

The study was conducted following a qualitative life narratives methodology which was coded in the discipline of practical theology with specialisation in pastoral therapy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Analysis of interviews with priests (SUMMARISED RESPONSES)

1:66–85

Confession is a confidential sacrament which reconciles humanity with God and transforms one's spiritual life.

1:88–96

Depending on one's moral standing in the community, visits to confess sins are subjective.

1:99–110

The Sacrament of Confession was instituted by Christ and is regularly administered by a priest. Due to attitudes of parishioners towards confession, the priest should constantly urge them to confess.

1:116–152

A genuine confession removes shame and builds a healthy relationship with God and humanity. Confession is free to all parishioners but shame of being associated with sin makes them to prefer frequenting Holy Communion more than confession.

1:153–155

Leading by example, priests should teach proper doctrine on confession.

1:156–195

Psychological counselling or psychotherapy solves human problems professionally. It is compatible with confession, though the latter is superior due to its divine origin. Parishioners are occupied with material goods and forget spiritual self-examination which values confession.

Though parishioners go to confess to priests of their choice, constant teaching is needed to avoid defection of believers to other denominations.

1:200–240

Parishioners have alternatives to solve problems; they can go for psychological counselling since they are ashamed to confess their sins although God is ever loving and forgiving. Confession boosts one's spiritual life; it gives relief and freedom but the penitent may feel dissatisfied if the process is done insufficiently, so there is need for proper spiritual guidance and counselling.

1:244–289

Prayer is the solution to the problem of sin. Suffering is real and humanity is not an entity on its own. There is need to share problems with others who are close to let the burden out.

1:290–319

Some parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling but they find that confession creates a peaceful, loving and perfect life.

1:323–349

The moral aspect of a priest does not invalidate the Sacrament of Confession. However, priests are mediators of God and people. God's saving grace makes human life a mystery.

1:357–368

Ranks in the Church are graded according to senior roles; those in positions should select useful elements from our Shona culture to blend them with Christian activities.

4:514–523

Confession heals and reconciles one with God. It is not properly timetabled.

4:527–543

Some priests do not avail themselves for confession and parishioners lack courage to approach the priest for confession.

4:547–580

Parishioners need proper instruction on confession and this should be rooted in the Church fathers. Psychological counselling and confession are compatible; the former is scientifically proven while the latter is faith based, making confession superior to psychological counselling.

4:581–635

Too much socialising of priests at public places leads to deliberate disrespect by their parishioners who withdraw from going for confession and lose value, especially among the youth; hence there is need to constantly teach the youth in confession to foster unity, love and forgiveness. God is the answer to human problems and sharing relieves them.

4:641–671

Confession improves the penitent's good relationship with God and humanity. Priests should dedicate themselves to serving God through his people in celebrating masses on Sundays. A day other than Sundays should be set apart for confession because Sunday is a busy day for priests.

4:641–704

Priests should be faithful to their work and God intervenes to assist the faithful when they need his help. Culture cannot be taken by a Christian as a priority because it is inferior to Christian faith.

7:27–49

For some people, one's lifeline is difficult to share. Confession enables parishioners to re-establish a good relationship with God and neighbours. Confession should be on the timetable every Sunday before mass. Human beings are inclined to sin; hence, they need to constantly confess.

7:52–98

Few parishioners go for confession but they testify that they get satisfaction after it. Psychological counselling gives solutions to some human problems and it is a handmaid to confession. The Church is aware of the challenging issues of faith; hence, there is need to constantly teach parishioners the Sacrament of Confession to avoid misconception. Confession gives the penitent peace with God and humanity.

7:102–131

Some people think that suffering is a result of sin which can be restored through confession. Psychological counselling can assist confession since both are helpful in human life. Confession teaches parishioners to forgive one another.

7:136–147

Priests should identify with the needy. Confession changes one's life and it is the prerogative of priests to follow in the footsteps of Christ, their model.

7:150–167

Coming back to God heals the soul. Human life is a mystery which can only be understood by God the Creator. The Church hierarchy should make use of the culture of the parishioners to assist them in evangelisation.

14:229–247

Confession is a way of accepting one's sins. Some parishioners expect to live a stable life with less temptation at an advanced age, but repeating the same sin is shameful for them.

14:251–290

Confession was founded by Christ to show love for sinners. Reflection makes one shun sin and realise the value of confession. Time for confession is not specific at parishes. It depends on the parish priest and the way he wants to conduct confessions, but one can visit confession any time – especially during important religious events.

14:297–329

Parishioners should be encouraged to go for confession, because many are ashamed to confess due to shyness. However, this does not make confession insignificant as it gives peace of mind.

In confession, female and male parishioners are treated the same. Psychological counselling, even without its formal learning, helps in life situations and it complements confession.

14:335–348

Addiction to technology affects prayer life but with proper instruction, confession remains valid even to the youth and town folk who are more exposed to sin and lack understanding of the Sacrament of Confession.

14:353–401

Positive behaviour develops after confession and one enjoys freedom of the heart. Prayer answers the problem of suffering. Psychological counselling heals the mind and does not combat confession, but it helps confession to be more effective.

14:410–462

Confession deals with the problem of sin, while psychological counselling addresses human and social issues. The penitents should find happiness in sharing with others their problems in life. Confession should be private and confidential for it to be more effective. Many parishioners prefer to confess to a priest whom they are not familiar with. Christ is the ever-forgiving high priest and he is our model who suffered death on a cross. Sometimes God speaks to humanity through inflicting suffering on them. Parishioners and the clergy should familiarise themselves with the Church doctrine.

19:589–634

Confession frees the penitent from sin and leads them to spiritual growth. The priest who administers confession continues the healing ministry of Christ and he should encourage parishioners to confess their sins.

19:638–668

Confession is a gift from God by which the penitents scrutinise their actions. The penitents feel uneasy before confession and become comfortable after effective confessional direction and absolution. All priests can hear confession for both male and female parishioners who are accountable for their personal sins and go to confess.

19:672–676

Psychological counselling addresses human problems. It assists confession in offering direction to penitents who have social problems. Confession leads to forgiveness of sin, which psychological counselling is incapable of doing.

19:804–862

Priests should strive for holiness, be careful in carrying out confession and avail themselves to the penitents in the confessionals. When confession and prayer are done properly, they lead to salvation of human souls.

19:695–699

Despite threats from different angles of life, confession remains valid in the Church and parishioners should receive proper teaching in order to obtain forgiveness, transformation and satisfaction. As penitents, they should admit their personal sins.

19:728–749

Confession heals the souls of penitents and restores their good relationship with God and neighbours. Introspection is essential for positive life. Any approach to solve problems may be used.

19:752–789

When done effectively, confession has an impact in one's life for it gives spiritual healing and it is superior to psychological counselling, which is only limited to mental and social issues.

19:794–822

Confession as the sacrament is preparatory for the Holy Communion and it teaches reconciliation with God and others. Priests should be exemplary in order to attract parishioners, both old and young, to confession.

19:870–884

Culture and religion are compatible. However, many believers have a strong conviction that confession is superior to culture. Some elements in the Shona culture should be used to support the Sacrament of Confession.

25:26–45

Due to their weak nature, human beings should constantly build a good relationship with God through confession, which is divinely instituted. Parishioners should constantly be taught the spiritual and theological meaning of confession.

25:50–82

In confession, a penitent gets satisfaction from absolution by a priest who is also striving for perfection. Parishioners prefer holy mass to confession and women outnumber men in many religious activities. Psychological counselling caters for the human mind; whereas confession deals with the human soul. Though the two are compatible, confession is superior.

25:86–97

The Church's core business is not affected by transient things nor disrupted by unforeseeable possible future events, hence confession is absolutely necessary.

25:103–125

Confession radiates love, mercy and a close relationship with God to the penitent. It also heals the mind and soul. Through sharing, the problem of suffering is lessened. Parishioners need proper Church instructions for them to remain staunch believers.

25:130–133

Psychological counselling and confession co-exist harmoniously and are both effective for spiritual growth. Confession leads the penitent to accept his/her failings.

25:151–188

Confession draws one nearer to God; it leads to perfection and reconciles one with God. Priests should be exemplary, empathetic mouthpieces of God and should have relevant qualifications in counselling. The Church doctrine should be linked to the culture of people.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRIESTS' RESPONSES

Similarities

Definition of confession

- (1) 1.66–85; 1.116–152; 4.515–523; 4.641–671; 7.27–49; 7.52–98; 14.229–247; 19.589–634; 19.638–668; 19.728–749; 19.794–822; 25.26–45; 25.103–125; 25.151–188

Confession is a confidential sacrament of acknowledging one's failures. It heals and reconciles humanity with God and transforms one's spiritual life by way of accepting one's sins.

Administration of the Sacrament of Confession

- (2) 1.99–110; 4.641–671; 4.641–704; 7.136–147; 14.251–290; 19.589–634; 19.638–668

The Sacrament of Confession should be administered by a priest.

Morality of priests

- (3) 1.153–155; 1.323–349; 4.581–635; 4.641–671; 4.441–704; 7.136–147; 19.804–862; 19.794–822; 25.130–133; 25.158–188

Priests should be exemplary following Christ their model.

Timetable of confession

- (4) 4.514–523; 4.641–671; 7.27–49

Confession should be timetabled to avail priests and parishioners.

Confession and gender

- (5) 14.297–329; 19.638–668

Females and males are treated the same during confession.

Frequency of confession and Holy Communion

- (6) 1.116–152; 25.50–82

Parishioners frequent Holy Communion more than confession.

The relationship between confession and psychological counselling

- (7) 1.156–195; 4.547–580; 7.52–98; 7.102–131; 14.297–329; 14.353–401; 14.410–462; 19.672–676; 25.86–97; 25.130–133; 7.52–98

Psychological counselling and confession are compatible in the sense that psychological counselling is a handmaid to confession.

Shame and guilty about confession

- (8) 1.116–152; 14.251–290; 14.297–329

Parishioners are ashamed and feel embarrassed to confess.

Differences*Subjectivity of confession*

- (1) 1.88–96; 14.251–290

Visits to confess sins are subjective.

The relationship between confession and psychological counselling

- (2) 1.99–110; 1.156–195; 4.547–580; 14.257–290; 14.410–462; 19.672–676; 19.752–789; 25.26–45; 25.50–82

Confession is superior to psychological counselling because of its divine nature. It was instituted by Christ to forgive sins, which counselling is incapable of doing. Psychological counselling is scientifically proven and a human invention, while confession is faith based.

Confession and culture

- (3) 19.870–884; 25.151–188; 4.641–704

Confession is superior to culture, though the two may work hand in hand.

The value of confession versus material goods

- (4) 1.156–195; 14.335–348

Parishioners are occupied with material goods and forget spiritual self-examination which values confession.

Instruction on confession

- (5) 1.153–155; 1.200–240; 4.547–580; 14.410–462; 19.695–699; 25.103–125

Parishioners need proper instruction on confession.

Religion and gender

- (6) 25.50–82

Women outnumber men in religious activities.

The problem of suffering

- (7) 1.244–289; 4.581–635

Suffering is real and humanity is not an entity on its own; therefore, there is a need to share problems with others who are close to let the burden out.

The problem of sin

(8) 1.244–289; 4.581–635

Prayer is the solution to the problem of sin.

NEW THEMES

Lack of understanding the Sacrament of Confession

(1) 1.156–195

Constant teaching of the Sacrament of Confession is needed to avoid defection of the parishioners to other denominations.

Familiarity with confession and psychological counselling

(2) 1.290–319

Some parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling.

The priest and socialisation

(3) 4.581–635

Too much socialising of a priest at public places leads to deliberate disrespect by parishioners who withdraw from going for confession.

Appendix B: Interviews with laypeople (summarised responses)

2:29–43

Parishioners have a desire to confess but are afraid to do so. However, after confession, they feel relieved.

2:52–100

Confession shows God's revelation. It gives peace, joy and transforms one's life. God is the author of everything.

2:104–147

Confession prepares one for Holy Communion and, as such, leads to righteousness. Confession should be timetabled to make priests available and priests should give more attention to confession. During confession, the confessor should give sound advice and avoid being emotional.

2:151–190

Psychological counselling is useful for mental problems, but it is a handmaid to confession. Spirituality is highly challenged by modern technology. Parishioners prefer going for confession to outside priests for privacy.

2:198–239

Confession puts the penitent in grace and restores the soul. It is a powerful tool to appeal to when one has problems. In the same vein, the confessor has to be effective. God is the answer to the problem of suffering. Confession should be given much attention to increase its value.

2:247–288

Confession is superior to psychological counselling because of its divine nature, but both disciplines work hand in hand; they give spiritual direction. Confession helps one to recognise God in others. Parishioners should constantly confess because there is conflict between the desire of the flesh and the spirit.

2:296–359

The youth should be motivated to go for confession, which was founded by Christ. The Church should find reviving methods to encourage confession. Confession gives inner peace of heart, freedom to praise God and transforms one's spiritual life. Culture and religion are interrelated.

3:440–466

Confession and marriage are events controlled by God; hence, they both give parishioners joy and a sense of responsibility.

3:467–518

Confession is a manifestation of God's love, reconciles one with god, leads to forgiveness of sins, restores one's spiritual life and leads to a change of heart to perfection – hence the need to visit it regularly.

3:524–579

Priests should give proper instruction about confession. However, familiarity with the same priests compromises its frequency. The majority of parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling. Psychological counselling and confession are interrelated, although confession is divine. Gender plays no role in confession.

3:585–637

Maturity in faith helps one to understand confession. Confession gives one freedom to serve God and it rebuilds good relations. To be effective, the priest should give sound counselling during confession. Suffering is real, but prayer and sharing overcomes sin and suffering.

3:641–694

Psychological counselling is an alternative to human problems, but it cannot replace confession. Confession should be on the timetable.

3:702–729

Some parishioners feel relieved after confession because of the renewed relationship with God and clearance of sin. There is a link between Shona culture and confession.

5:25–50

God authors everything and baptism makes one a child of God. Confession helps parishioners to maintain a good relationship with God.

5:53–97

Confession gives value to the relationship between God and human beings. Although God is all-loving, a few parishioners go for confession.

5:103–149

Confession gives spiritual growth and inner freedom, but parishioners are shy and afraid to confess – hence participation has decreased. Gender plays no role in confession. Psychological counselling is human oriented and confession is divine. Prayer is a solution to all human problems.

5:153–194

Psychological counselling does not combat confession and it is not common to many, though some parishioners go for it when referred. Confession offers peace, heals the soul and reveals God's mercy; while counselling heals the body. Many parishioners prefer holy mass to confession. Confession should be timetabled. God intervenes in critical issues.

5:201–202

Religion and culture are complementary.

6:272–294

God is the source of everything. Confession prepares one for mass. Before confession, some parishioners are hesitant to go through the process but are cheerful after confession.

6:298–352

Confession, mass and marriage give meaning to the spiritual growth of a Christian so that he/she can reach maturity in faith. Confession is surrendering and acknowledging failures to the Lord. Confession is valued; priests give time for confession but only few mature parishioners frequent it. For some parishioners, it is not easy to go for confession because of shame. There is time for confession but only few mature parishioners frequent it. For some parishioners, it is not easy to go for confession because of shame.

6:356–408

Familiarity breeds contempt. Psychological counselling and confession are compatible; hence, there is no threat between the two. Confession re-establishes the penitent's broken relationship with God; teaches to love, forgive and draws one closer to God – thus it is valid. Few parishioners go for confession, hence the need for proper instruction. Suffering is real.

6:414–466

Psychological counselling and confession are alternatives to solve problems, and they do not govern each other. Psychological counselling deals with the mind and confession treats beyond the heart. Some parishioners feel remorse, unhappy and lonely; hence, priests should conduct confession frequently since it heals.

6:470–477

Christian religion should correct and evangelise culture.

8:556–577

Confession heals, leads to forgiveness and reconciles the penitent with God. Parishioners are given a chance to confess, but very few do. Some priests fail to avail themselves for confession, contributing it to parishioners' reluctance to frequent it.

8:580–633

Confession is private and personal. Privacy should be maintained. If this is compromised, parishioners avoid confession. Holy Communion is more preferred to confession. Psychological counselling solves social and mental problems, and it helps confession. The youth are losing respect for confession. Going for confession should be natural and free.

8:638–691

Confession draws the penitent closer to God. Though sin is unavoidable, one should aspire to perfection. The Church should teach parishioners about confession and psychological counselling because the two are complementary, though confession is divine. Good relations give meaning to life. Confession should be timetabled. Priests from other parishes should hear confessions.

8:695–718

Confession has spiritual and healing elements, and motivates one to live positively. Culture and religion should be linked.

9:778–808

Confession offers peace of mind, heals the soul, prepares one for holy mass and leads to a virtuous life. Parishioners occasionally go for confession. They feel comfortable to confess to unfamiliar priests.

9:812–863

Confession is natural and accommodates both males and females. Psychological counselling addresses social and mental problems. Confession and counselling are focused on peace building and reconciliation of humanity. The youth undermine confession, but they are aware that they need to acknowledge sin through it.

9:866–926

Sharing relieves problems. Confession leads to forgiveness of sins and it is encouraged by priests who administer it. Some parishioners feel discomfort when they frequently interact with the priest whom they confessed to. Psychological counselling is useful in confession, but parishioners need constant teaching about confession.

9:931–947

Confession renews one's life. In Shona culture, hospitality can be adopted into confession. Church leaders should encourage uniformity in administering confession.

10:26–49

Some priests avail themselves for confession before mass to reconcile humanity with God. A good relationship with neighbours and God is created by few parishioners who go for confession.

10:50–98

Familiar priests are preferable for spiritual direction. Both male and female parishioners are given equal room for confession. Most parishioners lack knowledge of counselling but they value its relevance, accepting that psychological counselling and confession are compatible.

Confession is more significant and it gives satisfaction to the parishioners, though they feel free to confess to priests from other parishes.

10:101–146

Suffering is a reality in life. Confession heals, amends the wrong done, reconciles and draws the penitent closer to God. Parishioners should receive proper instruction so that they understand confession, which is divine while psychology is human. Therefore, confession is superior to psychological counselling since it transforms one's life spiritually.

10:149–174

The penitent wishes to live in a peaceful and perfect relationship with God, who is ever-ready to forgive. The Shona culture has a concept of reconciliation which should be adopted in the Church.

11:217–245

Confession is acknowledgement of one's sins in order to reconcile with oneself, neighbours and God. As such, parishioners need to be taught constantly about the sacrament since few go for it. Confession leads back to God, revealing one's sins and giving one satisfaction. Male and female are equal before God.

11:247–295

Most parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling, but its relevance is valued. Psychological counselling is not a threat to confession, though the Church should guard sacred things against the world. It is the duty of priests to keep confessional secrets and urge parishioners to go for confession so that the penitent can feel relieved. Sharing is also a way of solving problems with others.

11:298–352

Both psychological counselling and confession solve problems, though confession teaches love and forgiveness. Priests should avail themselves for confession. Self-examination gives one a chance to confess one's sins.

11:355–359

Religion is superior to culture; hence, it should cleanse some undesirable elements in the Shona culture and adopt those that can be used for evangelisation.

12:441–46

Confession initiates one into the family of God and it welcomes Christ in one's life. Confession and the Holy Eucharist lead parishioners to freedom and happiness. Some spiritual experiences are unexplainable.

12:470–523

God, as the father, is the author of everything and has a heart for his people. He is ready to forgive and welcomes the penitent after sinning. Confession leads to the grace of God and brings the sinner back to God. Some priests administer confession often, yet some parishioners are unwilling to go for it. Christ instituted confession; hence it gives satisfaction and reconciles one with God. Many people prefer Holy Communion to confession.

12:525–577

Many parishioners are unfamiliar with psychological counselling, so a feeling that it is a threat cannot be dismissed. Confession remains valid and points to the fact that we are all equal before God. Prayer is the answer to the problem of sin.

12:580–637

Psychological counselling is a handmaid to confession, but it does not address all human problems. Confession teaches one to forgive; it restores the broken soul, thus giving satisfaction. For anything that they lack, parishioners should not lay the blame on the priest but should collaborate to solve challenges. Parishioners need proper instruction to teach other members about confession. Culture may be changed to fit Christian values.

13:724–731

The use of confession, marriage and death are important stages for some parishioners, and there are different levels of excitement and fear in some events.

13:753–808

God is all powerful, a responsible father full of empathy and sympathy to his children. Confession cleanses sin and builds a strong relationship with God and one's neighbour. Some

priests rarely administer confession and this is probably why many people opt for Holy Communion. Gender does not play any part in confession.

13:812–863

Psychological counselling and confession work hand in hand, though counselling deals more with emotions. Technology and a low turnout have compromised the value of confession, but these do not make confession insignificant. Parishioners need to be constantly reminded about the value of confession, which leads to perfection, draws one closer to God and is sacred. Suffering is an unavoidable event. Parishioners are free to seek other alternatives to solve their problems.

13:866–922

Confession is more familiar in parishes, but sometimes the priest uses both psychological counselling and confession since both are focused on healing and solving human problems. There is need to teach confession often to motivate parishioners.

13:925–929

Workshops and seminars are tools to use to inform parishioners on the Sacrament of Confession. A clear selection of Shona cultural elements can promote confession.

15:973–1035

Confession is a process till death and it transforms one's spiritual life to keep the Christian values of respect and love for people and God. Some parishioners are reluctant to go for confession, though it is valued and done according to a timetable before mass in some parishes.

15:1036–1088

Some parishioners feel comfortable after confession. Many parishioners prefer holy mass to confession. Psychological counselling is not familiar to many parishioners and prayer gives answers to human suffering. Other alternatives should remain in the Church. Psychological counselling is linked to confession; and it encourages behaviour change.

15:4–34

Repentance leads the penitent to a virtuous life. Priests should constantly teach parishioners the Sacrament of Confession, which is therapeutic. Psychological counselling is ancillary to confession. The cultural elements of secrecy and closeness have a negative influence on confession.

16:75–98

Confession, marriage and death contribute to the lifeline of a responsible Christian.

16:103–144

Spiritual life is a journey which is unstable and affects human emotion, but God is all-powerful and controls everything. To be mature in faith, one must have continuous conversations with God. In confession, one acknowledges his/her sinfulness before God and proper instruction allows one to grasp confession and visit it often.

16:149–193

Some parishioners feel ashamed to expose their sins to priests, yet confession makes one feel sorry for the sins one committed. Holy Communion is more preferred than confession. Confession can be done anytime and anywhere, but parishioners feel uncomfortable if there is no privacy during confession. A good relationship with the confessor helps much, leading to reconciliation with God and one's neighbour and making one to view life positively. Women go for confession more than men.

16:197–242

Psychological counselling and confession are compatible. The Church should teach forgiveness to make parishioners spiritually mature. At times, the penitent becomes emotional during confession and loses direction. Prayer is the answer to suffering.

16:246–295

In some parishes, confession is encouraged but the stand on psychological counselling is unclear. Psychological counselling and confession address human problems. Correcting oneself with the offended is best before going for confession. Priests should lead by example and knowledge of psychology can help them to give effective spiritual direction during confession.

16:300–340

Trust in God makes one prosper and experience love that heals through confession. Self-criticism and confession improve one's personal relationship with God and others. Shona culture has some influence on the Sacrament of Confession.

17:437–441

Confession maintains a normal spiritual life and prepares one for communion without sin. Spiritual life is unstable during temptation and when confession is neglected.

17:465–521

Endurance leads to perfection and a Christian should accept whatever happens in life joyfully. Confession helps one to maintain a good relationship with God, who is the author of everything. Priests may wait for parishioners to come for confession, but parishioners may feel reluctant. In some parishes, confession is timetabled.

17:524–576

Confession prepares one for Holy Communion, but participation in the sacrament has dropped. Confession gives satisfaction and it accommodates male and female parishioners equally. Psychological counselling is not familiar to many people and though it deals with problems of human life, a dead conscience is a threat to confession. Many parishioners are misguided; they forget the cross and go for material things.

17:582–632

When sense of sin is lost, confession loses value. Yet confession paves avenues for the grace of God. Confession helps the penitent to build a good relationship with God and others, but some are bothered by reciting the confessional rite. Trust in God and sharing relieves suffering. There is no harm in seeking solutions in psychological counselling, but confession is superior since it goes deeper to the soul.

17:638–694

Psychological counselling works hand in hand with confession. Priests should be models that represent Christ and should use counselling during confession. Confession makes one aware of God's healing hand; those who deny confession may become spiritually dry, so priests

should constantly teach them about the sacrament. Jobs give security in life, and God intervenes in crises and this may bring positive change.

17:699–701

God's healing hand brings hope in critical moments. Secrecy and appeasement are Shona cultural elements that influence the Sacrament of Confession negatively. Parishioners should open up and forgive each other after confession.

18:40–49

In the early stages of Christian life, one does confession with zeal. However, during adolescence, the frequency of going for confession decreases.

18:62–94

Life is a mixture of ups and downs, and God permits evil even to the faithful. Yet he is ever-loving and merciful. Confession draws one closer to God and others. In some parishes, confession is timetabled and spontaneous.

18:102–143

Confession is not necessary for some since they have nothing to confess, so participation is low. Holy Communion is more frequented than confession. Common parishioners are unfamiliar with psychological counselling, yet it is useful to them.

Psychological counselling and confession are compatible, but psychology cannot replace confession. To say that the Church is losing its pastoral value is only academic and theoretical; confession remains valid in the Church.

18:144–245

Confession heals the soul; hence going for it is encouraged and should be timetabled. Prayer saves from sin and suffering. Absolution frees the penitent from sin and he/she can start a new life in Christ. Psychological counselling can work well with confession in parishes. Confession helps one to live peacefully with others and with God. Confession should be confidential.

18:246–251

Shona-Karanga culture does not promote confession since it is secretive and closed. Church members must be models in promoting confession.

20:321–347

Confession gives gratitude and transforms one's spiritual life. Confession prepares one for Holy Communion and priests should keep confessional secrets. Parishioners avoid local priests for confession if they fail to keep secrets.

20:353–403

Parishioners need encouragement from priests outside and good results of confession depend on the confessor. Some events are caused by God and others by human beings. A penitent who acknowledges sin receives God's blessings.

20:414–466

Holy Communion is more preferred than confession. Male and female parishioners are alike in confession. Psychological counselling is helpful in life and it helps in confession. The Church should control excessive desire for money and the use of technology; however, confession is valid and some priests encourage it.

20:473–520

Confession gives spiritual satisfaction, freedom from sin and relaxation of the mind. The priest should not divulge the penitent's sin. Prayer and proper confession address sin as such. Parishioners are urged to pray and share problems. Members who defect from the Church may be expressing their displeasure at the insistence for confession. These need proper instruction. Psychological counselling does not dominate confession; both have healing functions. Thus confession has the power to heal.

20:524–583

Confession relieves, heals and helps the penitent to live peacefully; it teaches them to forgive. Going for confession often gives meaning to the lives of parishioners. Shona culture needs to be Christianised.

21:673–694

Life changes as one develops to maturity and confession should be done often at different times to meet the developmental stages of human growth.

21:693–749

After confession, one experiences different emotions; above all, one experiences the love of God, who authors and intervenes in everything. Parishioners are increasingly conscious of the need to be renewed, and confession teaches one to love and to share that love with others.

Before confession, one has to reconcile with the offended but some parishioners are reluctant to go for confession because they feel insecure to confess the same sin time and again. At times, priests overwork and they fail to hear confession.

21:752–807

Many parishioners prefer Holy Communion to confession because less attention is given to it by priests. Confession brings satisfaction and has nothing to do with gender; both male and female are alike. Psychological counselling is helpful in life but lacks the power that leads to forgiveness of sins; hence, it does not draw one closer to God. The Church should intervene when some events are undesirable.

21:813–858

God inspires parishioners to go for confession because it heals, relieves and transforms. There is need to give proper instruction to parishioners on confession and to inform them that psychological counselling and confession are linked. Confession, when done effectively, helps the penitent to respect others and minimises the recurrence of sin.

21:862–918

All decisions are guided by God; prayer and sharing help to solve problems. Priests should avail themselves for confession and priests from outside the parish should hear confession. Careers and family life provide security.

21:923–943

There is need to adopt some cultural elements in religion. Faith communities should help individuals to confess their sins.

22:27–45

Through confession, God heals and controls everything.

22:50–98

Confession teaches parishioners to love the effects of confession, which are that they experience the grace and mercy of God. God loves and is behind everything that happens to a Christian. Penitents should completely surrender themselves to God to achieve healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. Confession is not offered regularly by some priests and parishioners are not comfortable with going for confession regularly, hence they need motivation from priests.

22:102–143

Though it is important, going for confession is subjective. Gender plays no role in confession, but many parishioners prefer Holy Communion to confession. Some parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling and do not realise its relevance. Psychological counselling cannot take the place of confession. After confession, the penitent grows spiritually and starts a new life – thus showing change in behaviour. Much is not done to encourage confession.

22:154–194

Confession restores the soul of the penitent to build a healthy relationship with God. Prayer and fasting give an answer to the problem of suffering. Parishioners should live harmoniously to promote love and peace. Confession helps the penitent to reflect on life in order to amend bad ways. However, some people do not see the relevance and value of the Sacrament of Confession in their Christian life.

22:200–245

Confession is the action of God's healing hand. Priests should lead by example to attract parishioners to confession. Priests from outside the parish should be invited to be confessors. A good parishioner leads a prayerful life and relates well with others in a meaningful way. When a Christian is in trouble, God is ready to intervene at any time. Culture has no influence on religion and members of the Church from different communities should encourage each other to go for confession.

23:332–347

Penitents should be sorry for the sins they have committed. They should confess them and amend the wrongs they have done. Confession can transform one's life.

23:358–408

Confession is a voluntary self-accusation of a penitent in order for him/her to return to God. God is the author of everything and loves sinners. Confession was founded by Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday. Parishioners should go for confession at least once per month.

23:413–456

Confession is a preparatory sacrament to receive communion. It leads to forgiveness of sins. After confession, the priest should keep confessional secrets. Parishioners are encouraged to go for confession during Lent, and they should feel free to confess to a priest from outside their parish. At times, going for confession is private and gender does not play a role in confession. Psychological counselling deals with social and mental problems to help relieve unnecessary human pressure.

23:467–523

Psychological counselling and confession are compatible. Confession gives grace and helps the penitent to live free of sin. Parishioners should go for confession at least once per year or at big events. Confession is divine oriented and through it, one receives Jesus' love and forgiveness. Priests have the duty to encourage confession. Confession heals the penitent and relieves them of sin, enabling them to build a firm relationship with God. Psychological counselling is good in the Church, but proper instruction should be given on confession.

23:528–582

Psychological counselling is an alternative to solve human problems but it is inferior to confession, which offers forgiveness of sins. Respecting other people gives meaning to life. Some parishioners find security in education and prayer life.

23:588–618

God's saving power is miraculous, ever-consoling and healing. There is a need for parishioners to confess their sins frequently. Priests are ordained to forgive sins of believers, leading to transformation of the penitent's life. Confession relieves and comforts parishioners

who confess, and they should encourage one another to go for confession. Shona culture has no influence on the Sacrament of Confession.

24:669–694

Baptism is the gateway to other sacraments and it can be done at infancy and old age. Effective confession can be hindered by language problems. Confession can be done at least once per fortnight and may be done face to face with the priest.

24:697–744

Spiritual life can be unstable for parishioners, but God is always patient. Before making decisions, parishioners should ask for God's guidance. Confession was established by Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Priests should have a timetable for confession.

24:752–808

Some parishioners are dissatisfied with the practice of confession in their parishes and the instruction to go for confession once per year is not beneficial to them. Sometimes it is humiliating to tell one's sins to the priest and perhaps this is why many parishioners prefer Holy Communion to confession. Gender has no impact on confession. Priests have the task to encourage their parishioners to make use of confession. For confession to be effective, it should involve spiritual direction and sound advice.

24:815–857

To be closer to God, parishioners should take confession not as an outward ritual but as inward grace. Confession relieves sin and rebuilds a good relationship with others and with God. Prayer answers all suffering, but psychological counselling can be an alternative to solve human problems. Confession should be emphasised more because it leads to salvation and helps one to realise the wrongs one has done. Regular confession and a good confessor help the penitent to mature spiritually. When in sin, one can ask God's pardon.

24:866–893

Confession should be done with great concern and God should be loved wholeheartedly. After confession, one lives peacefully with others and God (who is the healer and comforter).

26:273–284

Confession helps the penitent to live in peace with oneself, with God and with one's neighbour. Some priests avail themselves for confession and the option is left for one to confess or not. More teaching is needed on the value of confession. More parishioners receive Holy Communion than confession.

26:296–347

Some parishioners feel free to go for confession out of their free will. Confession is done equally by both male and female parishioners. Psychological counselling and confession are compatible. Confession clears the conscience while counselling heals the mind. Confession is not losing meaning but needs proper management. Priests should give good advice on the Sacrament of Confession to the parishioners.

26:353–406

Psychological counselling does not combat confession; instead, it gives alternatives to life problems. Through confession, the penitent meets Jesus and attains inner healing and peace.

26:410–444

Priests are ambassadors of God, hence they need to be exemplary and teach parishioners about confession. Culture and religion should work together.

27:498–518

The lifeline of some Christians is full of ups and downs, but there is spiritual transformation in the confessional practice.

26:530–580

Done properly and after close self-examination, confession is effective. God is ever-loving, merciful and forgives sins. Confession is the manifestation of God's love to a sinner. Some parishioners are not comfortable with going for confession so often. In some parishes, confession is given before mass.

27:585–639

Some parishioners do not see the value of confession and spend years without it; hence priests need to constantly teach it. Confession brings relief and heals the soul. Male and

female parishioners are treated alike in confession. Many parishioners lack knowledge of counselling, but they are aware of its relevance. Psychological counselling cannot substitute confession.

27:638–688

Confession changes the penitent's behaviour in a positive way. Sin and suffering can be addressed through prayer and sharing. A few parishioners are familiar with counselling.

27:695–751

Confession heals and makes parishioners forgive each other. Priests should keep the confessional seal and it is their duty to teach confession to the parishioners in order to give it adequate liturgical time. Confession should include counselling. Forgiving each other face to face is a good element of Shona culture which should be cultivated to promote the Sacrament of Confession.

28:836–853

Some parishioners aspire to practise confession until their death, since it brings about spiritual transformation.

28:866–920

Priests should imitate God, who has room for sinners and tolerates them. Confession renews and gives spiritual strength. The youth need more spiritual direction on confession.

28:923–970

The number of males and females visiting confession always fluctuates. Psychological counselling is not a threat to confession. Some parishioners appreciate the way in which confession is conducted. Suffering is a reality.

28:980–1036

Parishioners who go for counselling seek alternatives, but they need to be taught the proper doctrine on confession and that God is the greatest counsellor. Psychological counselling and confession are compatible but through confession, God heals, forgives and loves.

28:1040–1050

The hand of God gives security. There is no link between religion and culture.

29:29–68

Through the Sacrament of Confession, God gives peace of mind to penitents to amend the wrongs they have done to others.

29:50–100

Confession leads to a virtuous life, self-satisfaction, forgiveness of sins and heals the soul. Before confession, the penitents feel remorse but after a good confession, they feel relaxed. Female parishioners confess more often than males.

29:104–127

Psychological counselling deals with human problems only; confession goes deeper and involves God and humanity in the healing process. Hence confession is divinely instituted by Christ. Parishioners want confessional secrets and should get proper instruction to master the concept of confession.

29:132–144

Confession confers graces, which are invisible in nature, heals and reunites the penitent with God. It transforms the whole person.

29:148–192

Suffering is a reality of life which needs prayer as an answer. Failure by priests to keep confessional secrecy results in parishioners being reluctant to go for confession and they seek other alternatives. Psychological counselling and confession are both aimed at helping human beings and they have healing aspects. Confession mostly targets the soul and cleanses sins. After an effective confession, the penitent is expected to live positively and a virtuous life.

29:197–219

Decent shelter and a good lifestyle bring satisfaction to human beings as they are some of their basic needs. God is the author of life, the healer of souls and the forgiving father. The Shona culture has some positive impact on religion.

30:273–289

Confession is effective in drawing the penitent nearer to God and in amending bad habits for a better and enjoyable Christian lifestyle.

30:353–390

Confession transforms the penitents and lifts their faith. In some parishes, female parishioners go for confession more regularly than males. Psychological counselling is offered by specialists to assist human beings who have social and mental problems. It is not a threat to confession. Some priests do not teach and value confession, leading to inadequate knowledge.

30:395–409

Confession has a therapeutic effect to the penitent; it changes and mends bad behaviour. Priests should teach people about and get proper instruction on the Sacrament of Confession.

30:412–461

There are no natural solutions to the problem of suffering, but resorting to prayer helps. Many parishioners are not familiar with psychological counselling, but it assists confession in offering solutions to human life problems. Confession is superior since it leads to forgiveness of sins. It teaches and helps us to stay away from sin. More time should be given to confession.

30:470–497

With God's assistance, parishioners aim higher at their work places. God is ever-loving and forgiving. He intervenes when one is in trouble. Church leaders should give more time for confession and teach parishioners its importance. Shona culture contains some good elements of confession that can be adopted and used in the Church.

ANALYSIS OF LAY PEOPLE'S RESPONSES (SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES)

Similarities

What confession offers to the penitent?

- (1) 2.52–100; 2.296–359; 3.467–518; 5.153–194; 6.356–408; 8.556–577; 8.638–691; 9.778–808; 10.101–146; 10.149–174; 12.441–446; 12.470–523; 13.753–808; 15.973–1035; 17.465–521; 18.144–245; 20.473–520; 22.27–45; 22.50–98; 22.154–194; 22:200–245; 23.413–456; 24.815–857; 26.273–284; 26.530–558; 27.585–639; 27.695–757; 29.50–100; 29.132–144; 30.353–390; 30.470–497

Confession heals the soul, brings peace of heart and joy, leads to forgiveness of sins, shows God's revelation, helps one to maintain a good relationship with God and transforms one's life.

Relationship between confession and psychological counselling

- (2) 10.101–146; 11.298–352; 12.580–637; 13.812–863; 13.866–922; 15.1036–1088; 15.4–34; 16.197–242; 16.246–295; 17.582–632; 17.638–694; 18.102–143; 20.414–446; 23.413–456; 23.467–523; 23.528–582; 24.815–857; 26.296–347; 26.353–406; 27.585–639; 27.638–688; 28.923–970; 28.980–1036; 29.148–192; 30.353–390; 30.412–46

Psychological counselling is human and confession is divine.

Confession timetable

- (3) 23.588–618; 24.669–694; 24.697–744; 24.752–808

Confession should be timetabled.

Christianity and culture

- (4) 6.470–477; 9.31–47; 10.149–174; 11.355–359; 12.580–637; 13.925–929; 15.4–34; 16.300–340; 21.923–943

Christianity is superior to culture.

Shame and feeling guilty about confession

- (5) 8.695–718; 16.149–193; 26.410–444; 27.695–751; 28.1040–1050

Parishioners are ashamed to confess their sins.

The teaching on confession

- (6) 10.26–49; 11.298–352; 13.753–808; 16.246–295; 3.585–637; 11.217–245; 30.395–419

Priests should teach more on the Sacrament of Confession.

Confession and gender

- (7) 9.812–863; 10.50–98; 11.217–245; 13.753–808; 16.149–193; 17.524–576; 22.102–143; 23.413–456; 24.752–808; 26.296–347; 28.923–970

Females and males are treated equally during confession.

Holy Communion and confession

- (8) 12.470–523; 15.1036–1088; 16.149–193; 18.102–143; 20.321–347; 20.414–466; 23.467–523; 24.752–808

Holy Communion is revered more than confession.

Confessional privacy

- (9) 3.524–579; 6.298–352; 8.580–633; 8.638–691; 9.778–808; 9.866–926; 10.50–98; 16.149–193; 20.321–347; 21.693–749 21.862–918; 23.413–456; 27.695–751; 29.104–127; 29.148–192

There is need for privacy and confessional secrets. Familiarity with the priest compromises the Sacrament of Confession's frequency.

Suffering

- (10) 6.356–408; 13.812–863; 30.412–461; 10.101–146; 13.812–863; 29.923–970; 20.414–466

Suffering is real.

Differences*Spirituality and modern technology*

- (1) 2.151–190; 17.524–576; 20.414–466

Spirituality is highly challenged by modern technology.

The role of gender in confession

- (2) 5.103–149; 11.217–245; 13.753–808; 22.102–143; 23.413–456; 24:752–808

Gender plays no role in confession.

Attitudes of the youth towards confession

- (3) 8.580–633; 9.812–863; 28.866–920

The youth undermine the Sacrament of Confession.

The problem of sin

(4) 12.525–577; 16.197–242; 22.154–194; 22.200–245; 27.638–688

Prayer is the answer to the problem of sin.

Culture and confession

(5) 15.4–34; 17.699–701; 18.246–251

The cultural elements of secrecy and closeness have a negative influence on confession.

The significance of confession in the Church

(6) 18.102–143

Confession remains valid in the Church.

Confession and grace

(7) 29.132–144

Confession confers grace.

After you have name **two events of your confession in the past** and **one in the future**, explain them by answering the following questions. (I will ask questions 1 to 11 for event one, for event two and then for event three.)

1. R. "Would you describe the responsibility of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd event to a person or to God?" (Explain why you say so.)
2. R. "How did the 1st, 2nd and 3rd event change your immediate situation in terms of new meaning in your life?"
3. R. "Why do you refer to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd event specifically?"
4. R. "How would you describe your experience of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd event in terms of how you reacted/will react/will make specific decisions?"
5. R. "How would you describe your spiritual experience in event 1, 2 and 3?"
6. R. "Tell me about your experience. What meaning did event 1 and 2 and will event 3 add to your life?"
7. R. "Some people connect the events that you plotted to God or a higher reality. What do you think?"
8. R. "Are there any other critical events of the Sacrament of Confession?"
9. R. "Which image/word best describes God or this higher reality?"
10. R. "Which principle of the Sacrament of Confession would you say fits the 1st, 2nd and 3rd event most appropriately?"
11. R. "Can you tell me more about your answer? Why did you choose this principle?"
12. R. "What meaning does the Sacrament of Confession have for your spiritual life?"
13. R. "How frequent do you partake in the Sacrament of Confession?"
14. R. "Tell me more about why you feel the need to partake in the Sacrament of Confession frequently or infrequently."
15. R. How would you explain the way in which you value your participation in the

Sacrament of Confession at your parish?"

16. R. "Explain your feelings or emotions before and after going for the Sacrament of Confession."
17. R. "Can you say something on the number of male and female members who frequent the Sacrament of Confession at your parish?"
18. R. "Tell me a bit more about the meaning of psychological counselling and/or psychotherapy in your life. How do you relate the two?"
19. R. "How would you answer the claim that psychological counselling poses a threat to the Sacrament of Confession?"
20. R. "What is your opinion on the claim that the Church is losing its pastoral confessional value because things that do not have to happen, happen even though they are not necessary in life?"
21. R. "What can you say about the argument that the Sacrament of Confession is losing meaning in terms of the pastoral role of the Church?"
22. R. "What meaning or value does the pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession have in how you deal with change in terms of your spiritual life and your relationship with God?"
23. R. "What can you say about the helpful or unhelpful results of participating in the Sacrament of Confession?"
24. R. "Tell me about the healing effect of the Sacrament of Confession in relation to the problem of sin or how you conduct your life in times of strife or difficulty."
25. R. "How would you deal with the problem of suffering as a reality of life?"
26. R. "How do you feel about members of the Church who defect and get psychological counselling instead of the Sacrament of Confession?"
27. R. "How would you explain, if any, the influence or dominance of psychological counselling and that of the Sacrament of Confession at your parish? How do you relate to the two?"

28. R. "What impact would psychological counselling and the Sacrament of Confession make in your life?"
29. R. "If relevant, tell me a bit more about your choice of the Sacrament of Confession and/or psychological counselling as healing models in your life."
30. R. "What contributes to meaning in your life? And to your emotions as you relate to others?"
31. R. "Tell me a bit about your spirituality as someone who participates in the Sacrament of Confession."
32. R. "What suggestions can you make on how best the Sacrament of Confession could be practiced in the Church?"
33. R. "Tell me about your greatest (ultimate) goals and your vocation. How do you relate them with God?"
34. R. "How does the Sacrament of Confession give meaning to your life through the healing action of God? What words would you use to describe the healing action of God as a reality?"
35. R. "When you look back at your life, tell me about some events that you think were influenced by God and how you responded/reacted to them."
36. R. "What can you tell me about systems in the Church and/or in your culture that support you in your life? How do you relate personally to the supporting systems of the Church and your culture?"

Close of interview

1. R. "Is there anything of interest that you think I did not ask?"
2. R. "How did you experience the interview?"
3. R. "Would you like to receive a transcript of the interview?"
4. R. "Would you like to receive an analysis of the interview?"

2. Attachment 1: Emotion narratives list (Lazarus)

1. Anger
2. Envy/Jealousy
3. Fear
4. Guilt
5. Shame
6. Relief
7. Hope
8. Sorrow
9. Concern
10. Disgust
11. Happy
12. Pride
13. Love
14. Gratitude
15. Compassion
16. Wonder/Awe

3. Attachment 2: List of emotion-scripts (Lazarus)

Brief emotions – Scripts of Lazarus (“emotion-narratives”)
Nasty emotions
Anger
– demeaning offence against me and mine
Envy
– wanting what someone already has
Jealousy
– resenting a third party or threat to another’s affection or favour
Existential emotions
Anxiety
– facing uncertainty
– existential threat

Fright/Fear
– immediate, concrete, and overwhelming physical danger
Guilt
– having transgressed a moral imperative
Shame
– failing to live up to an ego-ideal
Favourable conditions
– making reasonable progress towards the realisation of a goal
Pride
enhancement of one's ego-identity by taking credit for a valued object or achievement (either one's own or of a group with whom one identifies)
Love
– desiring or participating in affection (reciprocated/not reciprocated)
Unfavourable conditions
Relief
– a distressing goal-incongruent condition that has changed for the better or has gone away
Hope
– fearing the worst but hoping for better
Sadness/Depression/Sorrow
– having experienced an irrevocable loss
Empathy emotions
Gratitude- being thankful for what is done

4. Attachment 3: Aspects and dimensions of contingent life experiences (ADCL) list

Person passive	Negative Unlucky	Positive Lucky	Negative Tragedy	Positive Gift	Negative Desolation	Positive Grace
Person active	Failure	Achievement	Guilt	Obligation	Sin	Vocation

Unlucky	The event is an accident during unfavourable conditions.
Lucky	The event has a favourable outcome.
Failure	I am responsible for the adverse event, or it took place because of my failure.
Achievement	I am responsible for the positive event.
Tragedy	The event happened to me and I am negative about what this has done to me or the opportunities that it deprived me of.
Gift	The event happened to me and I am positive about the new, better opportunities that arose for me.
Guilt	I am responsible for what went wrong or did not happen.
Obligation	I have to do it because it is expected of me.
Desolation	The event happened to me and I am negative about what this has done to me or the opportunities that it deprived me of. I miss this support or the presence of God/something/a higher reality.
Grace	The event happened to me at the hands of God/something/a higher reality and I am positive about the new, better opportunities that arose for me.
Sin	I am in the presence of God/something/a higher reality, and I am responsible for what went wrong or what was not done.
Vocation	I have to do this; it is expected of me by God/something/a higher reality.

Attachment 4: Spiritual formation awareness (Waaïjman & Hermans 2012c)

EXPLICIT

1. I become more and aware that my existence in time and place is given to me by God.
2. The awareness grows in me that I myself needs to be renewed by God's mercy.
3. The more I walk my spiritual path, the more I feel God's leading hand.
4. The more the love of God fulfils me, the more love radiates through me.
5. The desire grows in me to lose myself completely in God, although I do not know what this is.

IMPLICIT

1. I grow in knowledge that my very existence is given to me.

2. The awareness grows in me that I myself needs to be renewed.
3. By following spiritual examples, I get on the path where I feel a leading hand.
4. The more an empowering love fulfils me, the more love radiates through me.
5. The desire grows in me to lose myself completely, although I do not know what this is.

1. Demographic information.

The people who gave their life narratives were in the range of 1943 to 1989. Most of them were Catholics who were working at various missions of our diocese as teachers, nurses, catechists, priests, brothers, nuns and accounts. Some of them had been born and grew up in the Diocese of Masvingo. Almost everyone who was interviewed had spent more than 10 years in the Diocese of Masvingo and practiced the Sacrament of Confession. Most of the respondents were in relationships, even those who were targeted as single. The total number of the interviewees was 30 and all of them had exposure to the Sacrament of Confession. Most of them confirmed that they understood the meaning of the Sacrament of Confession and its implication to Catholic members. 15 were females and 15 were males.

2. Lifeline of critical incidents

Many interviewees had their lifeline of past and possible future events that highlighted critical incidents. However, six of the interviewees did not feel free to give critical incidents of the past and possible future. Their reason was that they could not reveal the way that they were practising the Sacrament of Confession, for it was their personal life with God. The rest of the interviewees confirmed their lifeline of past and possible future events, highlighting the critical incidents that had to do with the Sacrament of Confession. Some thought that the Sacrament of Confession increased their anxiety, and especially in the first incident were they anxious to confess to the priest.

Interviewee 1: In the lifeline, she expressed that her first confession was full of anxiety and fear. That was her first critical incident. The second critical incident was that of motivation because of the good practise of confession in her community and the availability of the priest. However, the third critical incident (that is, the possible future one) was pessimistic because of the non-availability of priests in the confessional box.

She expressed that the Sacrament of Confession was no longer encouraged and was losing its confessional value. So the critical incident was low, until her death.

The following summarises the themes used in the narratives:

- Meaning of the Sacrament of Confession in spiritual life
- Frequency of the Sacrament of Confession in different parishes
- The value of participation in the Sacrament of Confession
- Feelings and emotions before and after the Sacrament of Confession
- The meaning of psychological counselling/psychotherapy
- Psychological counselling/psychotherapy as a threat of disappearance to the Sacrament of Confession
- The Church's pastoral and confessional value through the tendency of contingency
- The pastoral role of the Sacrament of Confession in the Church
- The Sacrament of Confession and its influence in the spiritual life in relation to God
- The benefits of participating in the Sacrament of Confession
- The healing effect of the Sacrament of Confession in relation to the problem of sin, strive and difficulty
- Members of the Church who defect from the Sacrament of Confession and are in favour of psychological counselling or psychotherapy
- The influence or dominance of psychological counselling/psychotherapy in the presence of the Sacrament of Confession
- The choices between the Sacrament of Confession and psychological counselling/psychotherapy as healing models
- The meaning of emotions in relation to other people
- The Sacrament of Confession and one's spirituality
- Suggestions on how to practise the Sacrament of Confession in the Church
- Ultimate goals in the presence of God as foundational reality
- The healing action of God in the Sacrament of Confession
- Faith communities and culture as supporting systems in the Church

APPENDIX D: MAP OF ZIMBABWE



(Source: <http://i.infoplease.com/images/mzimbab.gif>)