

# **TANGAZA COLLEGE**

---

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**THE JOINT DECLARATION ON THE DOCTRINE  
OF JUSTIFICATION  
AND ITS  
PASTORAL RELEVANCE IN AFRICA WITH A SPECIAL  
REFERENCE TO THE CONTEXT OF THE DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

**BY**

**BUMBA KAMUDIONGO GUILLAUME, SVD**

**SUPERVISOR: DR. GEORGE KOCHOLICKAL, SDB.**

**FEBRUARY, 2002  
NAIROBI – KENYA**

## Epigraph

If thou, O Lord, should mark our iniquities,

Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with thee,

That thou mayest be feared.

(RSV - Ps. 130:3-4)

*Si tu retiens les fautes, SEIGNEUR!*

*Seigneur, qui subsistera?*

*Mais tu disposes du pardon et l'on the craindra.*

(French translation from TOB - Ps. 130:3-4)

*Kana nge landaka masumu na beto,*

*Nani zolaka kubaka ndola ve?*

*Kansi nge kelolulaka beto*

*Sambu beto tina nge boma.*

(Kikongo translation Ps. 130:3-4)

## **Dedication**

To my Brother Bumba Matshindji Alain,

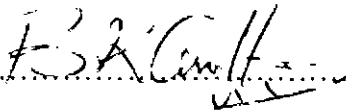
my late grandmother Mukuta Marie; whose loving heart I miss,

my family and friends who taught me to love and fear the Triune God,

I dedicate my premise in this theological reflection.

## Student's Declaration


I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other College or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed:..........

BUMBA KAMUDIONGO GUILLAUME, SVD.

Date:.....14.02.2002.....

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College supervisor:

Signed:..........

Rev. Prof. Dr. GEORGE KOCHOLICKAL, SDB.

(Supervisor)

Date:.....14.02.2002.....

## Acknowledgement

After a long reflective and analytical period in this academic exercise, it is my moral obligation to thank all the people who have helped and encouraged me turn my dream into a reality. Henceforth, my heartfelt gratitude goes first of all to my moderator, Fr. George Kocholickal, SDB. Reverend professor, you were always ready to shed light on my path whenever the darkness obscured my rational horizon. Besides, your availability, patience and most of all critical mind have been of great benefit to me. Thank you Father.

Undoubtedly, my parents and friends have been a great source of encouragement for me in times of distress and grief. Through their smile and support, I found the reason to believe against all uncertainties and hope for the best. Thus, I would like to mention in a special way my father Bumba Muyomb' and his spouse Kamudiongo Cletine, my dear uncle Kamudiongo Ignace and his spouse Masoji Solange. For sure, my dear beloved aunt Mwatshiyonga Celine, you cannot be forgotten. My words of thanks might not be enough to say *Matondo* for fashioning my personality. May you harvest today the fruit of your labor.

During my time of formation, I came across some unforgotten people who have really left their marks in my life. These are: Mrs. Assobga Lucile and Mr. Fred Kakama (my sponsors), *Maman* Niaty Cleny Clementine, my dear friend and *mama* Anne Ng'ang'a *mama* Winfried Okul, Lylian Kabole and my sisters Mwausangule Annie and Bumba Ida Mutombo Kashita, Mutombo Elois and Mwatangi Elois (my former headmaster) . Some companions in the quest for knowledge merit also to be mentioned: Fr. Mwakisenda Dash Lutende Darius, Musehenu Mwaku, Mutombo Noel, Kamweji Juliette Francine Malembe and Mamie Beni Babou, Kakanu Theodore (for his computer collaboration in making this paper).

nice), Didier Delanote, Ezoka Jean-Jacques, Ikanga Jean, Munimi Modeste, Bujiriri Gilbert, Ipoma Leon, Mazenga Alpha, Jules Mapela, Aristide and Misengo, Joseph Mongi, Jelagat Sergon Pascalia and Sr.Consolata. We say a special thanks to our friends William Boda-boda, sr. Annie Mumbemba, P. Jacques Mutikwele and Joseph Mongi for their special assistance throughout our reflection.

Lastly, with a sincere heart, I say a big thank you to the Society of the Divine Word. I am grateful to all my confreres in the CFC Langata and especially to Mzee Tomas Leyden for his exemplary life, Fr. Gerald McCarthy, Br. Charles Ashun, Fr. Jerome Cajetano (for having been a big brother to me during my pastoral experience in Kayole), Fr. John Serrao and all my formators in CFC Langata. To all people of good will, I say thank you and may you experience God's love and blessings.

# Table of Contents

Epigraph.....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Student's Declaration.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
<b>Chapter One.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.0 A Brief Biblico-Historical Background of the Christian Doctrine of Justification.....	3
1.1 Biblical Background of the Doctrine of Justification.....	3
1.1.1 The Old Testament Background of the Doctrine of Justification.....	3
1.1.2 The New Testament Background of the Doctrine of Justification.....	5
1.1.2.1 St. Paul's Consideration of Justification vis-à-vis the Gospel.....	5
1.1.2.2 The Concept of Righteousness in the Pauline Theology.....	5
1.1.2.3 St. Paul and Justification Through Faith in Christ.....	6
1.1.2.4 St. Paul's Attitude Towards the Law.....	7
<b>1.2 Historical Background of the Problem of Justification.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.2.1 The Pelagian Controversy (AD 411 – 418).....	7
1.2.2 Pelagian Teaching.....	8
1.2.3 The Conference of Carthage (411).....	8
1.2.4 St. Augustine and the Post Carthagian Debate.....	9
1.2.4.1 St. Augustine's Theology of Grace.....	9
1.2.4.2 St. Augustine's Theology of Merit.....	10
1.2.5 The Council of Orange (AD 529).....	12
1.2.6 Towards the Reformation.....	13
1.2.7 Martin Luther's Contribution to the Doctrine of Justification.....	13
1.2.7.1 Justification by God and Through Christ.....	14
1.2.7.2 Justification by Faith Alone.....	15
1.2.8 The General Ecumenical Council of Trent vis-à-vis the Reformation Doctrine on Justification (1545-1563).....	15
<b>Chapter Two.....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.0 An Analysis of the Joint Declaration: Convergences and Remaining.....	19
2.1 The Bible as the Foundation of the Message of Justification.....	20
2.2 The Common Articulation of the Doctrine of Justification.....	21
2.2.1 Convergence: Justification as the Work of the Triune God.....	21
2.2.2 Remaining Difficulty: The Doctrine of Justification vis-à-vis Other Truths.....	22
<b>2.3 Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification.....</b>	<b>23</b>
2.3.1 Convergence: Justification by God's Grace.....	23
2.3.2 Remaining Difference: On Human Passivity and Cooperation.....	24

<b>2.4 Justification as Forgiveness of Sin and Making Righteous.....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.4.1 Convergence: The Raison d’Etre of Justification.....	25
<b>2.5 Justification by Faith and Through Grace.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2.6 The Justified as Sinner .....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.6.1 Convergence: The State of a Human Being after Justification .....	27
2.6.2 Remaining Difference: Simul Iustus et Peccator and Concupiscence.....	28
<b>2.7 The Law and Gospel.....</b>	<b>28</b>
2.7.1 Convergence: Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law.....	28
2.7.2 Remaining Difference: On the Validity of the Law/God’s Commandments .....	29
<b>2.8 The Assurance of Salvation .....</b>	<b>29</b>
2.8.1 Convergence: Is a Total submission to God the only Condition for the Assurance of Salvation? .....	29
2.8.2 Remaining Difference: The Problematic of Created Mediations .....	30
<b>2.9 The Good Works of the Justified .....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.9.1 Convergence: Good Works as Fruits and Signs of Justification .....	31
2.9.2 Remaining Difference: Good Works vis-à-vis Justification.....	31
 <b>Chapter Three.....</b>	 <b>33</b>
<b>3.0 Significance of the Different Emphases in the Joint Declaration for the Life of the Church’s Mission.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.1 Significance of the Lutheran emphasis for the Church’s Life and Mission.....</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1.1 The Significance of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith.....	33
3.1.2 Human passivity and Simul Iustus et Peccator.....	35
3.1.3 The Problematic of Created Mediations and the Good Works of the Justified.....	37
<b>3.2 Significance of the Catholic Position for the Church’s Life and Mission.....</b>	<b>38</b>
3.2.1 Cooperation and Concupiscence .....	38
3.2.2 Created Mediation and Good Works.....	39
<b>3.3 New Perspective for Church’s Life and Mission .....</b>	<b>40</b>
3.3.1 Justification as Universal Call .....	40
3.3.2 A Transition from a Criterion to Criteria.....	40
3.3.3 Necessity of Created Mediations.....	40
3.3.3.1 Ecclesiastical Authority .....	41
3.3.3.2 Sacraments: Baptism and Repentance.....	41
3.3.4 The Church as a Sacrament vis-à-vis Justification.....	42
3.3.4 Faith, Grace and Good Works .....	43
 <b>Conclusion .....</b>	 <b>45</b>
 <b>Bibliography.....</b>	 <b>47</b>

## Introduction

A retrospective reflection in the history of the Church testifies to decades of divisions and conflicts, the causes of this conflict are diverse. Among them, the reformation doctrine of justification.

Understood and defined in different theological languages, this doctrine led to mutual condemnations on both sides; the Roman Catholic Church on one side and the Lutheran Church on the other.

In recent years, the two communions have shown a great desire for unity through ecumenical dialogues intending to sort out differences and to overcome the mutual condemnations. It is in this context that the Joint Declaration on Justification is to be located besides many previous writings.

We really felt concerned and challenged by the call of the signatories who stated “We recommend these texts for careful study in seminaries and in parishes, and we encourage a thorough reading of them by individual Christians. We request that common and deepening ecumenical reflection be continued on the biblical message of justification and its meaning for the churches, for the life of individual persons, and for human society.”<sup>1</sup> Our interest in this theme is an attempt to contribute to the call of the signatories of this declaration.

Following a retrospective and analytical method, our essay is made up of three different chapters. Each one of them deals with a specific problem but in view of one objective. Hence, the first chapter, a bit longer than the two others, is an investigation on the biblico-historical background of the topic.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2000), p. 9. N.B: from now on abbreviated as J. D.

Although the document has achieved great agreements in basic truths, there are some remaining differences still. Thus, our second chapter will dig into the convergences and remaining differences. At that point, we shall focus much of our attention on the remaining differences in view of the third chapter.

For sure, it is not without significance that the two groups still put emphasis on these points. After reflecting and understanding their message, the third chapter is going to give some suggestions that can be applied in our parishes for evangelical and pastoral purposes. This will help us to be concrete in our answer to the invitation and recommendations of it.

# Chapter One

## **1.0 A Brief Biblico-Historical Background of the Christian Doctrine of Justification**

### **1.1 Biblical Background of the Doctrine of Justification**

The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is the primary source of both Christian faith and Christian theology. Themes on God's dealing with his people form the centrality of the biblical message. Moreover, we also find some important aspects of the scriptural witness to God's gracious dealings with his people, which converge in the doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>2</sup>

#### **1.1.1 The Old Testament Background of the Doctrine of Justification**

The Old Testament gives us an account of the first stage in relation to God's dealing with his people. A closer reading of the Old Testament message reveals to us that the doctrine of justification finds its roots within the framework of the Old Testament writings. As McGrath observes, the first 11 chapters in Genesis are a prelude, introducing the themes that will dominate the rest of the scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

These are themes such as human sinfulness, the rebellion of humanity against God, the righteousness of God, and the covenant between God and man.<sup>4</sup> Not only do these 11 first chapters give the above aspects, but they also deliver an explanation of human race in its relationship with God and its destiny. In addition, they are an elaboration on God's justice and abiding fidelity to the race.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> McGrath, A. E., *Studies in Doctrine*, With a foreword by Packer, J. I., (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997). p. 368.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368.

<sup>5</sup> Clifford, R. J., "The Introduction and Comment on Gen. 1-11," in Brown R. E. and others, eds, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000), p. 9.

Despite the fact that God created them in a state of holiness, they later sinned by not keeping his order: You shall not eat or even touch it, lest you die (Gen.3:3). As a consequence, sin entered into the world and God's punishment followed (Gen.3:13-19). And also, "their sense of guilt forces them to hide from God because they have also broken their harmonious relationship with Him."<sup>6</sup>

It is in order to reverse the sin committed by Adam and Eve, to redeem the fallen humanity that God chose Noah of whom Lamech said: Out of the very ground that the Lord has put under a curse, this one shall bring us relief from our work and the toil of our hands (Gen.5: 29). Noah was seen and declared to be a good man and blameless for he walked with God (Gen.6: 9-10). Out of this line, in order to carry out his salvific plan for humanity, God called Abraham whose response was faith (Gen.12: 1). And because of his faith, God credited to him as an act of righteousness (Gen.15: 6). It is from this scriptural passage that we encounter the Biblical idea of righteousness that is of great relevance to the understanding of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the Old Testament, we see that righteousness is a personal concept. It is essentially fulfillment of the demands and obligations of a relationship between two people. A relationship that is governed by obligations on the part of both parties and fulfillment of these obligations constitute what is called righteousness. So, justification is something that God does in declaring one to be within the covenant.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> McGrath, A. E., *Op.cit.*, p. 371.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

## **1.1.2 The New Testament Background of the Doctrine of Justification**

The Pauline literature is of great relevance for a better understanding of the doctrine of justification, within the context of the New Testament theology. Starting from the letter to Galatians and then to Romans, Paul makes an elaboration of the present doctrine in order to refute the false teaching about the Gospel and its content. The main point that Paul wants to clarify concerns the way through which gentiles receive God's gift in Jesus. Justification is offered to human beings through faith in Christ.

### **1.1.2.1 St. Paul's Consideration of Justification vis-à-vis the Gospel**

What conception does Paul have of the Gospel when he says that he must preach the Gospel to Greeks, non-Greeks and also to Romans (Rom.1:14-15)? He answers to us in these words: the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jews first, and then Greeks. For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, the one who is righteous by faith will live (Rom.1:16-17).

### **1.1.2.2 The Concept of Righteousness in the Pauline Theology**

Can one claim to be righteous before God? Certainly Paul will answer with a big No. Through the sin of Adam and Eve, we are all sinners. Hence, Jews and Greeks are also under the dominion of sin (Rom.3:9-10).

What does the word righteousness mean? In the Greek world-view, righteousness meant "an idea or ideal against which the individual action can be measured. In contrast, in Hebrew thought righteousness is more a relational concept. It is the meeting of obligations laid upon the individual by the relationship of which he or she is part."<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Dunn, J. D. G., The Theology of Paul the Apostle, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), p. 341.

In Pauline letters, we see a diversity of meanings given to the word righteousness. It means to justify, to pronounce, to treat as righteous or to put right. From the letter to the Romans we understand righteousness as being declared to be in the right with God.<sup>10</sup> This righteousness is a gift of God. Hence, according to Paul God's righteousness means "God's basic attitude toward human beings, his power and activity on their behalf in acquitting them through Christ, for apart from this gospel only divine wrath is revealed from heaven."<sup>11</sup> If it is true that no one is righteous and all have sinned, how then is man justified before God? This question introduces us to our next point in the Pauline theology.

### ***1.1.2.3 St. Paul and Justification Through Faith in Christ***

In response to the false teaching spread by the preachers Paul argues that it is not by observing the law that the human being will be justified for through the law comes consciousness of sin (Rom. 3:20). On the contrary, God manifests his righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Because of this righteousness, all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, ... through faith without any distinction.

Hence, no one can boast on the basis of keeping the Law but rather on faith in Jesus Christ (Rom.3:26). In other words, a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law (Rom.3:28). It is according to this principle of faith that the circumcised and uncircumcised will be justified (Rom.3:30).

---

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Romans 4:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12. The following dictionary gives a nice understanding of this concept in the Pauline context. But due to our limitations, we cannot do much in going into detail, as we would wish. Hawthorne, G. F. ed., Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), pp. 830-831. It gives an explanation of righteousness of God; righteousness as declared to be, righteousness as a gift and discusses what it is understood by righteousness of faith. As he explains it, this later is based on God's word and works in Christ, a gift of God's grace that comes to believers in the context and through the instrumentality of faith. Rom. 4.11, 13-14 refers to it as that which is based neither on circumcision nor on the deeds of the Law but on God's grace

<sup>11</sup> Fitzmyer, J. A., "The Letter to the Romans." in Brown, R. E. and others, eds., Op.cit., p. 834.

### **1.1.2.4 St. Paul's Attitude Towards the Law**

For Paul, the Law gives no guarantee against divine wrath. On the contrary, it will condemn the Jews as well as the Gentiles despite the circumcision (Gal.2:17-24). It is interesting to see that Paul appreciates the law in so far as it tells us what is good and what is bad. But it was only of temporary use until Christ came. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul shows that through Jesus we have been freed from the Law (Gal.3:25).

## **1.2 Historical Background of the Problem of Justification**

Although every generation has a search for a true understanding of reality, not everybody agrees on the same interpretation of it. The creation account in Genesis tells us that what God made was good. Yet each generation has to struggle with the reality of evil. In the second century, a man called Manicheus believed that matter was evil. It was against this teaching that Pelagius reacted. It is then on this basis that the background of his teaching goes back to his fight “against the determinism which was implicit in the Manichaeian doctrine of the evil character of matter and the idea of the two souls.”<sup>12</sup> This influenced much his theological prospect.

### **1.2.1 The Pelagian Controversy (AD 411 – 418)**

Pelagius' year of birth is uncertain according to Gerald Bonner. His date of birth can be situated between AD 350 and 380.<sup>13</sup> Although he was a layman, people used to call him a monk.<sup>14</sup> Pelagius was a “well-educated man with a profound knowledge of the Biblical and respectable familiarity with the classical authors and the Christian fathers.”<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Bonner, G., *Saint Augustine of Hippo. Life and Controversies* (London: The Canterbury Press Norwich, 1986), p. 317.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bonner, G., *Saint Augustine of Hippo. Life and Controversies* (London: The Canterbury Press Norwich, 1986), p. 316.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

### **1.2.2 Pelagian Teaching**

We can summarize his theological teaching as follows. 1. The human will is morally omnipotent. Hence, there is a possibility for man to be sinless and perfect if he chooses to do so. 2. Original sin is nonexistent. He denied the preternatural gifts especially freedom from death and concupiscence. 3. The sacrament of Baptism is unnecessary for removing original sin and therefore one can gain eternal life without it. 4. The sanctifying grace is not the principle of supernatural life, but a remedy for actual sin. It is not absolutely necessary even for this, but a mere ornament of help. 5. Actual graces are merely external; that is instruction and example; no internal grace can directly influence the human will. 6. Christ's redemptive mission, consequently, was designed not to free men from sin, but merely to give them good example and counsel towards their own unaided use of perfectly competent natural powers.<sup>16</sup> Finally, he defined "grace as being either a natural faculty or, at best, a form of illumination"<sup>17</sup> and he denied that "Adam's sin injured his descendents, or that there was any transmission of his fault in consequence of his transgression."<sup>18</sup> From the year 405, not much is heard of him. It is his disciple Caelistius who is thus held responsible for the spread and development of what is called Pelagianism.<sup>19</sup>

### **1.2.3 The Conference of Carthage (411)**

The council of Carthage saw the condemnation of Caelistius as he failed to present a satisfactory defense on his teaching about the original sin and the question of children as being unaffected by Adam's sin. He stated that they are in the state that Adam was before the

---

<sup>16</sup> For more information, contact "welcome to the Catholic Church on CD-ROM. [www.harmonymediainc.com](http://www.harmonymediainc.com)

<sup>17</sup> Bonner, G., *Op.cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

fall.<sup>20</sup> His refusal to renounce his teachings occasioned his excommunication by the prelate of Carthage.<sup>21</sup>

### **1.2.4 St. Augustine and the Post Carthagian Debate**

St. Augustine (AD 354-430), the bishop of Hippo was not at the synod of Carthage. He comes on the scene after the condemnation of Caelistius by Aurelius, the then Bishop of Carthage. In response to Caelistius on Pelagianism, he wrote: *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione et de Baptismo Parvulorum* (411-412). In this work he tackled the question of the transmission of sin from Adam.<sup>22</sup> Augustine is convinced that “no one has ever lived or will live in the present world without sin, except the one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all.”<sup>23</sup> For this reason, there is a necessity for infant baptism. But despite the remission of sin through baptism, there remains what he calls concupiscence.<sup>24</sup>

#### **1.2.4.1 St. Augustine's Theology of Grace**

The Pelagians had defined grace as being a human power. This power is sufficient of itself to do good and does not need any help from God.<sup>25</sup> And that “the only grace man needed was that of being shown the good he was to do and the evil he was to avoid. This was adequately done by the Law and teaching of the Gospel; with their external aid man’s natural possibilities were sufficient unto salvation.”<sup>26</sup> By the way, for St. Augustine, “the law is not

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>22</sup> Fitzgerald, A. D., *Augustine Through the Ages. An Encyclopedia* (Michigan: William B Eedmans, 1999), p. 632.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 633.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p 633.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Deferrari, R. J. ed., *The Fathers of the Church. Saint Augustine - The Retractations*. Vol. 60, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), p. 258.

<sup>26</sup> Murray, J. C., ‘Admonition and Grace.’ in Schopp, L., *The Fathers of the Church. Writings of St. Augustine*. Vol. 4, (New York: CIMA Publishing Co. INC, 1947), p. 247.

evil, though it increases concupiscence of sinners. The law is good because it is the prohibition of sin.”<sup>27</sup>

Saint Augustine identifies the Pelagianism as being a new heresy and while at the council of bishops he declares, “let us, then not put our hope in man in the performance of good as to make strong the flesh of our arm, and let our heart not depart from the Lord, but rather turn to him and say: ‘Be thou my helper, forsake me not; do not despise me, O God, my Saviour’ (Ps.26.9).”<sup>28</sup> In response to Pelagianism he explains the grace of God is that “by which alone men are free from evil, and without which they do no good whatsoever, either in thought, or in will and love, or in action; not only do men know by its showing what they are to do, but by its power they do with love what they know is to be done.”<sup>29</sup> He continues in elaborating: “Without grace, we are incapable of doing good. When God invites us to turn to Him, he makes reference to the will and his turning towards us refers to His grace (Zach.1.3).”<sup>30</sup>

#### **1.2.4.2 St. Augustine's Theology of Merit**

Pelagius can be called the champion of the theology of merits. For St. Augustine stated “Pelagians sustained that Grace is given according to our merits.”<sup>31</sup> In reaction to this, St. Augustine argued that this view was “foreign to Catholic teaching and so destructive of Christ’s grace.”<sup>32</sup>

At the council of bishops, Pelagius gave an impression of renouncing charges made against him and he even anathematized those who would hold such teaching. According to

---

<sup>27</sup> Bourke, V. J. ed., Saint Augustine. The City of God, with a foreword by Gilson, E., (New York: Image Books, 1958), p.254.

<sup>28</sup> Deferrari R. J., Op.cit., p. 258.

<sup>29</sup> Murray, J. C., Op.cit., p. 247.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Deferrari, R. J., Op.cit., p. 258.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

Augustine, Pelagius hold this teaching in later works that God's grace is given according to our merits. Augustine taught that even turning to God is a gift. He said this in reaction to those who held the view that it is according to our merits for turning to God that He gives us that grace by which He himself turns to us. Those who hold this view fail to observe that unless this turning of ours to God were itself a gift, we could not say to Him: "O God of hosts, convert us; and, Thou will turn, O God, and trying us to life; and, Convert us, O God, our Saviour."<sup>33</sup>

Saint Augustine argues, "Pelagians based their opinion of man's merit on the expression 'if you seek him', and fend support for their view that grace is given according to such merit from the expression: 'Thou find Him'."<sup>34</sup>

Pelagians held also that because of merits received, one's sins are remitted. And due to the previous merits, eternal life is awarded in return. St. Augustine could not let this pass without reacting against it. Not bearing with such a teaching, Saint Augustine thought that what God crowns is not a human being's merit but His own gift to the person.<sup>35</sup> Without grace there is nothing that we can do. It follows then that our salvation is not an outcome of our works. Consequently, it is by grace that we are saved (Eph.4:8-9). Faith alone is sufficient and there is no reason for one to boast of his good works.

Therefore, "unless the power is given from God, out of free will there can be none; because it will not be free for good if the deliverer has not made it free."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, "those

---

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>36</sup> Schaff, F. ed., A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol 5. Saint Agustin: Anti-Pelagian Writings (Michigan: T&T Clark , 1997), p. 379.

that the lord justified by faith in such a way after already believing they began to do works not that they merited the gift of believing because they had done good works.”<sup>37</sup>

### **1.2.5 The Council of Orange (AD 529)**

After a long period of struggle to eradicate the Pelagians heresies taught by Pelagius and his disciple Caelistius, a new wind of heresy springs up. This was referred to as semi-Pelagianism. Hence, the “Council of Orange was an outgrowth of the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius. This controversy had to do with degree to which a human being is responsible for his or her own salvation, and the role of grace of God in bringing about salvation. The Pelagians held that human beings are born in a state of innocence, i.e., that there is no such thing as a sinful nature or original sin. As a result of this view, they held that a state of perfection was achieved in this race, though fallen and passed a sinful nature, is still ‘good’ enough to be able to lay hold of the grace of God through an act of unredeemed human will.”<sup>38</sup> As an outcome of this Council, some 25 canons were promulgated.

All in all, since the sin of our first parents has so affected and weakened the free will we need God’s grace to enable us love God.<sup>39</sup> This free will is bestowed by kindness of Christ (Phil.1:29). It is through this grace that we are saved through faith. Our being saved is not our own doing but God’s grace (Eph. 2:8). It is when “grace has been received through baptism that all baptized persons have the ability and responsibility, if they desire to labor faithfully to perform with the aid and cooperation of Christ what is of essential importance to the salvation of their soul.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Rozele, J. E. ed., The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Sermons 1-19 on Old Testament (New York: New City Press, 1990), p. 181.

<sup>38</sup> For more details on the Council of Orange see <http://www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/ORANGE.HTM>, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

From this it follows that “in every good work it is not we who take the initiative and are then assisted through the mercy of God, but God himself first inspires in us both faith in him and love for him without any previous good works of our own that deserve reward, so that we may both faithfully seek the sacrament of baptism, and after baptism be able by his help to do what is pleasing to him.”<sup>41</sup>

### **1.2.6 Towards the Reformation**

Despite the effort of Saint Augustine and the different councils to set a clear and sound doctrine about justification by faith, it was generally held in the Middle Ages that through good works and fulfillment of the moral law, Christians could earn salvation. This sounds Pelagian. Besides, some thought that the observances of ecclesiastical rules also guaranteed salvation. In order to escape purgatory, one had to buy indulgences by paying the appropriate amount of money. As the indulgence dealer Johannes Tekzel states, “as soon as the coin in the coffer rings the soul from purgatory springs.”<sup>42</sup> This is to say that forgiveness of sins was treated as marketable commodity, human salvation then depended on whether or not we have met the basic preconditions for justification. This led Luther to apprehend the notion of righteousness of God as referring to an impersonal attitude of God, which stands over against us and judges us with complete impartiality.<sup>43</sup>

### **1.2.7 Martin Luther's Contribution to the Doctrine of Justification**

Martin Luther could not bear with the way the doctrine of justification was commonly held. He saw in it some marks of Pelagianism. Hence, his efforts will consist in re-establishing the Pauline teaching on this doctrine. In his commentary on the letter to the

---

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> McGrath, A.E., *Op.cit.* p. 385.

<sup>43</sup> During this period, it was commonly said that for humanity to be saved, it has to meet the two preconditions, faith and humility. It was on the basis of these two preconditions that one could be condemned or justified.

Galatians (1:2,3) he writes, “If we lose the article of justification, we lose all things together.”<sup>44</sup>

In the following lines, we shall try to present what Luther’s understanding of justification is all about. From time to time, we shall make reference to his commentary on the letter to the Galatians.

### **1.2.7.1 Justification by God and Through Christ**

It is God who justifies man through Christ Jesus. Prior to Luther, the Roman Catholicism held that, “the sinner is justified by God through Jesus”. It understood the reality of righteousness through which man is justified as “that which was demanded by God.”<sup>44</sup> Besides, the prevailing pre-reform view in the West understood the “righteousness of God as being a distributive justice whereby God judges justly according to God’s holiness.”<sup>46</sup> In his new approach, he makes what we can call a rehabilitation of Jesus position in the work of justification. For he says, “these vain spirits which so deal with God that exclude the mediator.”<sup>47</sup>

According to Martin Luther, the person who only deals with God and forgets the Son as his/her mediator will be wandering. In order to avoid a wandering situation, one must turn toward the incarnate God.<sup>48</sup> Human salvation finds its cause in the righteousness of God. He qualifies this righteousness as that by which we are made righteous by God.<sup>49</sup> In saying so Luther underlines the character of this righteousness as a gift. A gift that man accepts in faith. There is nothing that he does to merit it.

---

<sup>44</sup> Watson, P. S., Martin Luther. Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, A Revised and Complete translation based on the “Middleton” text (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1978), p. 40.

<sup>45</sup> Hawthorne, G. F. ed., Op.cit., p. 833.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 833.

<sup>47</sup> Watson, P. S., Op.cit., p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>49</sup> Hawthorne, G. F. ed., Op.cit., pp. 833-834.

### **1.2.7.2 Justification by Faith Alone**

What is faith? From Luther's perspective, "faith is God's gift and work". Martin Luther attributes man's turning to God as an action of faith. For, "it is this faith that directs, turns man towards God's concrete word of promise, and trying him to accept it and trust it."<sup>50</sup> Consequently, it is not through our merit or good works but through faith in the Gospel that we are justified before God. Then, he warns all those who think like Monks that "these works which I do, please God, God will regard these my vows, and for them will save me."<sup>51</sup> This will not be the case. He advises the troubled conscience to look at the mediator who is Jesus Christ our savior.

To be brief, Martin Luther reminds all those who do not know the article of justification that despite their good works, there is no way for them to pacify God with their own works.<sup>52</sup> That is why "Christians should avoid seeking in the upright human actions they carry out, anything that could smack of complacency and self-seeking, anything that might contribute to their salvation or justification."<sup>53</sup>

### **1.2.8 The General Ecumenical Council of Trent vis-à-vis the Reformation**

#### ***Doctrine on Justification (1545-1563)***<sup>54</sup>

The Holy Ecumenical and General Council of Trent lawfully assembled from 1545 to 1563 for the purpose of reflecting upon the correct definition of the doctrine of justification. Besides, this Holy Ecumenical and General Council was also concerned about the unity of the Church vis-à-vis the threat of the time. This was meant to be a counter attack against the

---

<sup>50</sup> O'Callaghan, P., Fides Christi: The Justification Debate, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Watson, P. S., Op.cit., p. 42.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>53</sup> O'Callaghan, P., Op.cit., p. 27-28.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. "Council of Trent," in Tanner, N. P. ed., Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils Vol. 2, Trent-Vatican II (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), p. 671.

reformist's new understanding of justification that they claimed to be a return to the Pauline theology.<sup>55</sup>

During its sixth session held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1547 under the authority of the Holy Father Paul III, the present points were discussed, made public and protected by the promulgation of some canons.

According to the holy council, we all are the children of wrath as we share in the sin of Adam and Eve. Because of this original sin, our free will has been weakened but not extinct.<sup>56</sup> It is because of this that God sent his only Son to liberate and save us. The mission assigned to Him "was to redeem the Jews who were under the Law, and the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness might attain to it, so that all might receive adoption as sons. Christ expiated us by his blood so that we may receive through faith the forgiveness of our sins and those of the whole world."<sup>57</sup>

To be justified, one needs to be born in Christ in order to be justified since we all share in the sin of Adam. The new birth is bestowed upon them through "the merit of his passion, the grace by which they are made just."<sup>58</sup> It is through the hearing of the Gospel that the transitional process towards justification takes place; through the waters of rebirth. In this process of justification, there is a great need for preparation in the case of adults.

The Holy council states that Justification proceeds from the predisposition of God's grace through Jesus Christ that invites them, that is, without any merit on their part. This

---

<sup>55</sup> Cf. O'Callaghan, P., *Op.cit.*, p. 31. The reformation approach on the doctrine of justification was based or founded on the following principles: *Solus Deus, Sola Gratia, Solus Christus and Sola Fidei*.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. "Council of Trent" in Tanner, N. P. ed., *Op.cit.*, p. 671.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672.

grace helps them to convert themselves and cooperate with this same grace. Without this man cannot do anything by his own free will in order to be justified in God's sight.<sup>59</sup>

How does the preparation happen? The sinners are "roused and helped by the divine grace and attaining the faith that comes from hearing, they are moved freely towards God justified by God by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ. Understanding themselves to be sinners, turning themselves from the fear of divine justice by which they are aroused to consider the mercy of God they repent before baptism and after it lead a new life and keep the commandments of God."<sup>60</sup>

The justification of the sinner consists in the "remission of sins, the sanctification and renewal of the inward. Following the order in the Council document, the causes of justification are listed below. The final cause is the glory of God and of Christ and life everlasting. The efficient cause is the merciful God who washes and sanctifies gratuitously. The instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism and the single final cause is the justice of God (by which he makes us just).<sup>61</sup>

How is justification of the sinner freely granted through faith to be understood? Sinners are "justified by faith because faith is the first stage of human salvation and only the foundation of all justification.

Justification is a free gift. It is not merited through whatever comes before it. Justification is true grace.<sup>62</sup> Once justified, men are called to observe the commandments and through faith cooperating with good works, they obtain the increase of justification. However, we should keep in mind that what a human being loses through a mortal sin and by apostasy

---

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 672-673.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 672-673.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 674.

is not faith but grace. This means that faith remains. After being justified, the justified person must produce good works. Finally, let us make it clear that our good works after justification are not vain. We should not lose our confidence. God being just, will be mindful of them. He will not be indifferent.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 677.

## Chapter Two

### 2.0 An Analysis of the Joint Declaration: Convergences and Remaining

#### Differences

The doctrine of justification was in focus at the reformation debate of the sixteenth century. Dissatisfied with the “Roman Catholic Church and theology of the time,”<sup>64</sup> the reformists held that “the doctrine of justification is the first, the chief article and also the rule and judge over all other Christian doctrines.”<sup>65</sup> Moreover, they asserted and defended a doctrine of justification of a different character based on the principle *Solus Deus, Solus Christi, Sola Fidei*, and *Sola Gratia*. This theological revolution gave rise to an age of theological debates that culminated into doctrinal condemnations. The condemnations of the Holy Council of Trent testify to this controversial atmosphere between the two rivals.<sup>66</sup>

The recent Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification is an effort by both sides to overcome the dividing effects of the doctrinal condemnations. In fact, it is to be understood as a summary of the previous dialogue reports aiming at reaching a common understanding of this doctrine. This document’s intention is to “show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran Churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ.”<sup>67</sup> In addition, this document tends also to prove that “the remaining differences in its explication

---

<sup>64</sup> J. D., p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. J. D., p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. “Council of Trent,” in Tanner, N. P., *Op.cit.*, pp. 678-681.

<sup>67</sup> J. D., *Op.cit.*, p. 11.

are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnation.”<sup>68</sup>

Henceforth, our main task in this second chapter will consist of analyzing the document so that we may identify the convergent and the remaining different opinions. Throughout our reflection, we shall follow the order set in the document but attention will be given to more polemical articles.

## ***2.1 The Bible as the Foundation of the Message of Justification***

With one voice, both confessions agree that the message of justification finds its foundation in the Bible. From both the Old Testament and the New Testament, they discovered significant themes of great relevance to this doctrine. On the one hand, they found in the Old Testament themes such as human sinfulness, human disobedience and judgment.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, the New Testament reveals themes like righteousness and justification.<sup>70</sup>

Taking the Biblical message into consideration, the two confessions profess together that justification is the saving work of God for humanity through Christ and by faith. Following the footsteps of St. Paul, they declare with one voice “in Christ, God’s righteousness and justification become ours (Rom.1: 6f; 2Cor 5:21; Rom. 3:21, 25).”<sup>71</sup> Since it is written that “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing it is the gift of God –not result of works.”<sup>72</sup>

All in all, “justification is the forgiveness of sin.”<sup>73</sup> Through justification, our sins are forgiven and we are liberated from the power of sin and from the curse of the law.<sup>74</sup> The

---

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. Para. 11.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. Quotations from -Psalms 51: 1-5 on human sinfulness. -Gen. 3:1-19 on human disobedience and finally -Ecc1 12:14; Ps. 9:5f; 76:7-9 on judgment.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. In the New Testament, Paul presents a nice elaboration on these themes especially in his letters to Galatians and to Romans.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. For more information, a reference can be made to: -Rom. 1:6f; 2Cor 5:21; -Rom. 3:25 and also -Rom 3: 21

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13. With reference to Eph. 2: 8f.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

justified person is called to live by faith and keep God's promises anew by participating in Christ's body and blood, and be exhorted to live righteously in accord with the will of God. St. Paul writes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you."<sup>75</sup> The justified should not rely on the law because "there is no commandment for those who are in Christ Jesus and in whom Christ lives (Gal. 2:20), Christ's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all (Rom. 5:18). If this is what the Biblical message on justification is all about, what is their common understanding in relation to their respective theological teaching?

## ***2.2 The Common Articulation of the Doctrine of Justification***

### ***2.2.1 Convergence: Justification as the Work of the Triune God***

Justification is the work of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In their unity, each plays a significant role. The Father sent his beloved Son to redeem the fallen humanity. Justified, the human being leads a new life in the Spirit. This is why, "justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presumption of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father."<sup>76</sup> Through the bestowal of grace and faith, the justification of the sinner becomes a reality and is actualized. Apart from this, the saving works of Jesus Christ are not to be overlooked.

In emphasizing the role of faith and grace, the two rivals make it clear that, the sinner is not saved by his works, nor does he earn his salvation. On the contrary, s/he receives it as

---

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13. Forgiveness of sin Rom. 3: 23-25; Acts 13: 39, Lk. 18:14, Liberation see Rom. 5: 12-21 and for law- Gal. 3:10-14.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

God's gift. When God accepts her/him, He pours on the sinner the Holy Spirit that renews his/her heart so that s/he may produce good works as fruits of justification.<sup>77</sup> Working through word and sacrament in the community of believers, the Holy Spirit leads the believers into the renewal that will be brought to completion by God in the eternal life.<sup>78</sup> The new life that follows justification is a consequence of "the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way."<sup>79</sup>

Defined in this way, the doctrine of faith consequently "stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our Churches to Christ."<sup>80</sup>

### ***2.2.2 Remaining Difficulty: The Doctrine of Justification vis-à-vis Other Truths***

Despite the fact that an important agreement in basic truths has been reached, some differences still persist in the articulation of this point. Bertram Stubenrauch uses the expression 'consensus without Unity?' to introduce the evident disunity.<sup>81</sup> This difference is so evident in their articulations. While Lutherans underline the uniqueness of this criterion, Catholics find themselves bound by several criteria.<sup>82</sup>

In fact, what we understand from Lutherans is that the doctrine of justification by faith alone remains in a total independence from other criteria. This means that this doctrine does not depend on ecclesiastical and sacramental criteria as one would think. Such an approach gives an impression that our Lutheran friends still hold to the principle of article by which the

---

<sup>77</sup> Cf. J. D., p. 15

<sup>78</sup> J. D. *Op.cit.* p. 16.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>81</sup> Stubenrauch, B., *Consensus Without Unity?* in *Theology Digest*, Vol. 41. No. 1, 2000, p. 49.

Church stands or falls. In any case, if this is not what they have in mind, then they give more importance to it although they recognize the interrelationship between all the truths of faith.

This way of defining the relationship of the doctrine of justification vis-à-vis other truths of faith seems to be unaccepted by Catholics. Catholics do not think that the doctrine of justification is the only criterion for the life and practice of the Church.<sup>83</sup> This disagreement clearly introduces a different way of looking at the significance of this doctrine in relation to others despite the rapprochement. For it is generally known that for the Catholic Church the message of justification, “according to scripture and already from the fathers, has to be organically integrated into the fundamental criterion of the *regula fidei*, that is the confession of the one God in three persons, Christologically centered and rooted in the living Church and its sacramental life.”<sup>84</sup>

## 2.3 Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to Justification

### 2.3.1 Convergence: Justification by God's Grace

Undoubtedly, Lutherans and Catholics agree that human salvation depends on the saving grace of God. Thus, sinners are subjected to God's judgment. But as sinners, they are incapable by themselves of turning to God and seek his deliverance or of meeting justification before God. Consequently, justification takes place solely by God's grace.<sup>85</sup> If this is the case, does a human being participate in this process or does s/he remain passive as s/he waits for God's intervention?

---

<sup>82</sup> Cf. J. D., *Op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Hans, L. M., “The Joint Declaration on Justification: A Nordic Catholic Perspective,” in *Ecumenical Review*. Vol.52. No.2. (Geneva: World council of Churches, 2000), p. 216.

<sup>84</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*. Weekly Edition in English. 8 July 1998, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. J. D., *Op.cit.* . p. 17.

### 2.3.2 Remaining Difference: On Human Passivity and Cooperation

The difference here lies in the role assigned to the human being in the process of justification. The theological languages and vocabularies used by both groups point to different ways of looking at the human being.

In the Lutheran opinion, after justification, the human being remains *Simul iustus et Peccator*. As a justified, s/he also remains a sinner. Hence, there is nothing that s/he can do in order to bring forth justification. Advocating for a mere passivity, they state, "A person can only receive (mere passive) justification –without any possibility of contributing to one's own justification."<sup>86</sup> Due to this double state of life, although this sin is under the rule of Christ, there is no way that one can preach any theology of human cooperation. This would be misleading. The consequence of this theology is negative in the sense that they see in it an excessive optimism of the value given to good works to the detriment of faith and confidence in God. In addition, this theology diminishes the important role of grace and its primacy in justification with the risk of manipulating God.<sup>87</sup>

It is true that through Adam and Eve, all have sinned and stand in need of God's salvation. Henceforth, humanity is justified through the saving grace that comes from God. But the problem lies in the way through which salvation takes place and also the role of the person in this process. Two theological languages used by both Lutherans and Catholics seem to introduce some ambiguities in the articulation of the state of the human being after justification.

According to the Catholics, human beings are called to cooperate in preparing for and accepting justification while the Lutherans advocate for a mere passivity. They preach that despite being justified, the justified remains *Simul iustus et Peccator*. There is nothing that

human being can do in order to bring forth justification. In other words, “a person can only receive (mere passive) justification –without any possibility of contributing to one’s own justification.”<sup>88</sup>

Catholics do not agree with the role and the state of man after justification as understood by Lutherans. A human being is not passive. S/he has a role to play. S/he is called to cooperate in preparing for and accepting justification. From the Tridentine writings we read that the human being cooperates through the free will “by responding to God’s summons and invitation to dispose and prepare itself to obtain the grace of justification.”<sup>89</sup>

From our observation, we also have an impression that both parties have a conflicting understanding of the role played by grace. On the one hand, Catholics are convinced that after the reception of grace a human being has the ability to cooperate. On the other hand, the Lutherans think that no cooperation is possible because s/he remains *simul iustus et peccator*.

## 2.4 Justification as Forgiveness of Sin and Making Righteous

### 2.4.1 Convergence: The Raison d’Etre of Justification

Justification is God’s work for human salvation. Through this, the sinner is justified. This consists in the forgiveness of sins and making him/her righteous.<sup>90</sup> Because of sin, the human being was imprisoned and enslaved by the power of darkness. But then, washed and cleansed from sins, the human being receives the gift of new life in Christ by the pouring on of the Holy Spirit that effects in the active love. In his/her new life and through the spirit, the justified person is united with Christ and Christ becomes his/her righteousness (1Cor 1:3).

---

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>87</sup> O’Callaghan, P., *Op.cit.*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>88</sup> “Council of Trent,” in Tanner, N. P., *Op.cit.*, p. 679.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 679.

If the righteousness of Christ becomes also ours after being justified, it then follows that we share in God's righteousness as justified. For, the Lutherans state "the sinner is granted righteousness before God in Christ through the declaration of forgiveness and that only in union with Christ is one's life renewed."<sup>91</sup> In the same way, they "express that justification remains free from human cooperation and does not depend on life renewing effects of grace in human beings."<sup>92</sup>

As Lutherans emphasize the fact of being righteous as stemming from that of Christ, Catholics stress the renewal of life that result from the forgiveness of sins. What follows justification is an interior transformation of the person through the reception of grace. With one voice, they both agree that through justification our sins are forgiven. We are made righteous and undergo an interior renewal. Through the Holy Spirit the gift of new life becomes effective in active love. Consequently, justification remains independent of human cooperation.

## **2.5 Justification by Faith and Through Grace**

Together, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation confess "that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life."<sup>93</sup>

The two confessions have no problem to state that it is by faith that the sinner is saved through Christ. At baptism, the human being's sins are forgiven so that receiving the Holy Spirit s/he may lead a Christian life. After being justified and born to new life, the justified

---

<sup>90</sup> J. D, *Op.cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

must bear fruits as a consequence of the gift granted to him/her through faith. But the works produced before and after the reception of the gift of faith cannot be considered as the basis of justification.

In other words, a human being cannot merit justification on the basis of his/her good works.<sup>94</sup> It is in faith alone that the justified establishes a communal relationship with God and his/her savior. As s/he receives faith as God's gift, the human person undergoes a spiritual transformation that generates a new hope and love. The justification and renewal that the justified enjoys are both joined in Christ who is present in faith. Without faith, justification cannot take place. And, it is also good to keep in mind that "persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the word and believers in it."<sup>95</sup>

When a person is made righteous, s/he enters into communion with Christ. Let us keep in mind that despite being justified and made righteous, the human being must continuously rely on God's gift. There is no way that s/he can do to contribute to this justifying grace despite the renewal in faith.

## 2.6 The Justified as Sinner

### 2.6.1 *Convergence: The State of a Human Being after Justification*

In the above paragraph, we understand that it is through faith and grace that we are justified. Through baptism, we receive the justifying grace. Then, we are made righteous and share in Christ's righteousness. But since the journey on this earth has not yet ended, we must always lean on God's justifying grace in order to escape from the daily struggle that can lead us to a separation with God and to the loss of grace. Henceforth, "the justified also must ask

---

<sup>94</sup> O'Callaghan, P., *Op.cit.*, p.19.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

God daily for forgiveness, as in the Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:12; Jn 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness."<sup>96</sup>

### **2.6.2 Remaining Difference: Simul iustus et Peccator and Concupiscence**

The theme of concupiscence drew considerable attention from the reformists. At the Council of Trent, during the 5<sup>th</sup> session, the Council Fathers defined concupiscence as "a result of sin and inclination to sin. As an inclination, it is not sin. It is only a tendency to sin that remains in the justified after sins have been washed away through baptism."<sup>97</sup> Since it is not sin, and "since this is left as a form of testing, it cannot harm those who do not give consent but, by the grace of Christ, offer strong resistance."<sup>98</sup>

Lutherans on the other side have a different opinion about this. This is not a simple inclination. It is sin in a proper sense. This explains and support their claim of the justified as *Simul iustus et Peccator*. As a sin, concupiscence stands in opposition to God. Concupiscence is considered by Lutherans as a true opposition to God.

Catholics do not share this theological elaboration because they believe that through baptism, our sins are washed away and we become justified and share in the righteousness of Christ.

## **2.7 The Law and Gospel**

### **2.7.1 Convergence: Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law**

According to the Jewish tradition, salvation was achieved through the observance of the Mosaic the Law.<sup>99</sup> It is against this statement that the two rivals answer in stating that the

---

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>97</sup> Tanner, N. P. (ed)., *Op.cit.*, p. 667.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 667.

<sup>99</sup> J. D., *Op.cit.*, p. 35.

law is no longer a way to salvation. This is because “Christ has fulfilled the law and by his death and resurrection has overcome it as a way to salvation.”<sup>100</sup> Though Christ has fulfilled the law, it would be a great mistake to overlook God’s commandments. In other words, God’s commandments remain valid for the life of the justified. In the end, Lutherans and Catholics have no problem in confessing together “persons are justified by faith in the Gospel.”<sup>101</sup>

### ***2.7.2 Remaining Difference: On the Validity of the Law/God’s Commandments***

Despite the agreement, the Lutherans think that, in its theological understanding, “the law is demand and accusation.”<sup>102</sup> As sinners, all human beings are subjected to this kind of accusation. Being an accusation, the law “uncovers their sins so that, in faith in the Gospel, they will turn unreservedly to the mercy of God in Christ, which alone justifies them.”<sup>103</sup> It helps the sinner to discover his/her sins.

While the Protestants underline the necessity of the Gospel alone they diminish the role of the law/commandments. On the other side, the Catholics think that keeping the commandments is of great importance. “The righteous is bound to observe the law.”<sup>104</sup> But they understand this law as being completely different from the Mosaic Law.

## **2.8 The Assurance of Salvation**

### ***2.8.1 Convergence: Is a Total submission to God the only Condition for the Assurance of Salvation?***

On the basis of the doctrine of justification as defined in the text, there is a possibility for one to be assured of his justification. One may ask how? From both confessions we learn

---

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

that it is by “relying on the mercy and promises of God,”<sup>105</sup> that a person can be assured of his/her salvation. The assurance of this grace is only possible if, conscious of his/her fragility, a person builds his/her trust on “the effective promise of God’s grace in word and sacrament.”<sup>106</sup>

Trusting oneself completely to Christ alone will mean that in times of distress, the faithful should only look to Christ, because, in turning to herself/himself, the faithful will never be secured. The Catholics have no problem with this statement. They abide by this opinion.

### **2.8.2 Remaining Difference: The Problematic of Created Mediations**

Although both confessions agree that, a person must totally turn and rely on God for the assurance of salvation, opinions differ on the role played by what is called ‘created mediations’. From created mediations we understand the preaching and sacraments of the Church plus the interior or exterior personal experience of God’s gifts.<sup>107</sup>

On the one hand, without denying the significance of Faith and turning to God, Catholics think that it is important to stress the role of created mediations. Through these created mediations, a human being overcomes the doubt of a real divine forgiveness. As Paul O’Callaghan would argue, “without such mediations, the word of God and his saving power would be like a sealed fountain, and of little human relevance to believers.”<sup>108</sup>

On the other hand, Lutherans do not agree with the above elaboration on the necessity of the created mediations. For them, faith alone is enough. Whenever a Christian is tempted, he/she only has to turn to Christ and place his/her hope in Him alone. The Lutherans state, “A

---

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. O’Callaghan, P., *Op.cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

person tempted should not look at himself, his sins and his doubt. He should look to Christ and his fellowship with him, founded on baptism and continually promised anew repentance.”<sup>109</sup>

Such an exclusive theology of created mediations can be located from the origin of Lutheran teaching about justification. Luther himself had already objected to this practice in the early period of reformation. All in all, Lutherans fear the danger that might lead a Christian to self-complacency and independence from God. According to Paul O’Callaghan, “Lutherans tend to fear that such created mediations may become, perhaps partially, perhaps unwittingly, object of the confidence the Christian wishes to direct entirely to God.”<sup>110</sup>

## **2.9 The Good Works of the Justified**

### **2.9.1 Convergence: Good Works as Fruits and Signs of Justification**

What the Lutherans and Catholics call good works is nothing else than the fruits of justification, “when the justified live in Christ and act in the grace they receive, they bring forth in biblical terms, good fruit.”<sup>111</sup> Bringing forth good works is a way through which the justified can fight temptations of all kind. But these works must bear the characteristic of love.

### **2.9.2 Remaining Difference: Good Works vis-à-vis Justification**

On the point of view of the Catholics, good works are necessary for growth in grace. In doing so, the “righteousness that comes from God is preserved and communion with Christ is deepened.”<sup>112</sup> The meritorious character attributed to them is to be understood in the sense that God will never forget such works. But all in all, the intention was to make man

---

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>111</sup> J. D, *Op.cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

responsible of his works as a gift. As to justification, they still hold that “it remains the unmerited gift of grace.”<sup>113</sup>

The difference is marked by the insertion of the language of merit and reward attached to the good works of the justified by Catholics. Being truthful to themselves, there is no way that Lutherans can comprehend the good works as one’s own merits. What they think is that what we call good work is nothing but fruits and signs of justification. The only thing that faithful can merit is eternal life since this is something not owed but given to us.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

## Chapter Three

### **3.0 Significance of the Different Emphases in the Joint Declaration for the Life of the Church's Mission**

We have seen the biblico-historical background of the doctrine of justification and have analyzed its Joint Declaration by both the Roman Catholics and the Lutheran World Federation. Now it is time to reflect on the significance of the different emphases for the life of the church's mission in Africa and especially in the Congolese context.

### **3.1 Significance of the Lutheran emphasis for the Church's Life and Mission**

#### **3.1.1 The Significance of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith**

In the whole debate, the preoccupying question was about the justification of a sinner. It is generally known that prior to the reformation era, the doctrine of Justification stood in relation with other criteria. But, because of many abuses of which we can name the 'medieval penitentialism' and 'authoritarianism', the reformers came up with a new way of considering the above article.<sup>115</sup> The theology of the time emphasized so much sin and preparation through indulgence, pilgrimage, sacrifice, purgatory and hell.

This new way gave rise to fearful consciences for Christians who could not meet the preconditions set for one to be justified. It is this same despair that led the reformers to declare: "The traditional practices of Christian piety and ecclesiastical institution could not be looked to for the assurance, support and consolation."<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Bertram R. W., "Recent Lutheran Theology on Justification by Faith: A Sampling" in By Anderson, H. G. ed., and others, Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), p. 241.

<sup>116</sup> Peter, C. J., "Justification by Faith and the Need of Another Critical Principle" in Andersons, H. G. and others, eds, Op.cit., p. 307.

Hence, it is through faith alone in Christ that a person can be justified. From that time on, this doctrine was to serve as “the criterion for testing the Church’s preaching, teaching, witness, liturgy, ministry and sacramental life.”<sup>117</sup>

What then can we learn from this new way of pointing at the justification of a human being? Despite the fact that years have passed, can we really defend and affirm that what the reformers and especially Luther accused the Catholic Church of, has stopped existing? Even if we do not fully agree with making this doctrine the only one, there is a lot to learn from it for the life of the Church’s mission in Africa and especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our opinion is that the abuses that led to such a conclusion are still present in our religious environment.

However, we would not say that these abuses are only present in the Catholic Church. Our brothers, the Protestants themselves, are also victims of such deviations. With the growing number of Church denominations, there is a real need to emphasize the element of faith in Christ. Although we do not intend to advocate for the doctrinal position of the article of justification as ‘judge and ruler’ of other articles, our conviction is that there is a need to challenge many of our institutions.

In this line, we would suggest that considering the importance of each criterion, the element of faith should take whole of our minds as Christians. In our Congolese context, a holistic attitude towards different articles would help to avoid the category of the “*bakristu ya sobasoba*.”<sup>118</sup> These are Christians who move from one Church to the other Church in quest

---

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>118</sup> In *Lingala* (one of the four national languages spoken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), a Christian is called *Mukristu* (Pl. *Bakristu*). *Soba-soba* means, “changing”. Hence, *Bakristu ya soba-soba* refers to those Christians who keep on moving from one church to the other in order to find the so-called hidden truth and the real message of salvation that the Catholic Church does not reveal to them. This phenomenon is frequent nowadays because they accuse bishops, priest and their followers of hiding the truth. Another point leading to this is the fact that our Catholic Church is full of sacraments that frustrate their conscience. Their basic attack

for the truth and above all for justification. These are people who at night offer sacrifices to their gods and receive the Holy Eucharist on Sunday. Such people “pray the rosary in the morning and take to witchcraft in the afternoon.”<sup>119</sup> Stressing the necessity of faith as a justifying factor or element would also keep the Church and its members from the danger of idolatry and blasphemy.<sup>120</sup>

To sum up, there is really a need of considering the relationship and interdependence of those elements of faith. In itself, the doctrine of justification might not achieve much. It might land on a fideism ground that will have to overlook other aspects of Christian life. Another danger could be a creation of an individualist aspect of salvation, which can only overshadow the idea of an eschatological community as willed by God.

### **3.1.2 Human passivity and Simul iustus et Peccator**

The concept of passivity stands in opposition to that of cooperation. As explained in the Lutheran theology, we think that this terminology does not fit in our African/Congolese religious situation. If at the intellectual level it has not caused damages, it has done so at the grassroots level of the Church life. This attitude has led many Christians to remain passive to the real sense of the expression. For instance some expressions such as “*Nzambe ye moko ayebi*”, “*tosala nini*”, “*tozelakaka ye moko nkolo Nzambe*” have become a current currency.<sup>121</sup> All these expressions reflect human passivity in front of day-to-day life such

---

goes mostly to Roman Pontiff. He is the prince of the evil forces. Why confess to a priest? They have developed a negative attitude towards the ritual of cleansing. The water sprinkled by a priest has been given another meaning. For them, this ritual is superstitious. This might sound a laughing matter. But it carries heavy implication in the life of people.

<sup>119</sup> AMECEA, *The African Synod Comes Home as Simplified Text* (Nairobi: Pauline publications, 1995), p. 2

<sup>120</sup> Peter, C. J., “Justification by Faith and the Need of Another Critical Principle” in Andersons, H. G., others, *Op.cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>121</sup> *Nzambe ye moko ayebi* (God alone knows), *Tosala nini* (what can we do), *Tozela kaka yemoko Nkolo Nzambe* (Let us wait for God, the almighty Father alone). People express their passivity in such words meaning that there is nothing that can be done.

social, political, religious and even economical life. As Christians think that there is nothing that they can do to be justified, they also carry with them the guilt that they are still sinners and consequently incapacitated.

As pastors, we would prefer to talk of concupiscence rather than of *Simul Iustus et peccator*. The theology of *simul iustus et peccator* diminishes the efficacy of the sacrament of baptism and the transforming power of the gift of grace. Even if the remaining sin does not rule because it is under the rule of Jesus, this terminology gives a negative connotation to human nature and the whole work of creation. Our people might see in all that exists an evil side. A concrete example is that even some “children” are suspected and declared witches by their relatives and neighbors in spite of baptism. Such children are persecuted in families. Also, this theology can only reinforce the dualistic state of a human being. The consequence will be the tendency of always seeing the negative or evil side in all that exists.

On the other hand, the Lutheran theology does not only have bad impact on Christian life. At least, we learn also from it that the sin that remains is not harmful because it is under the rule of Christ.

Our difficulty lies in the terminology used by theological experts to articulate such insights. In our opinion, we think that our people will understand better the concept of concupiscence rather than that of *simul iustus et peccator*.<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Whenever my grandfather is very annoyed with one of us, he looks for something closer to him and throws to the person as he says ‘mutafwa nge’ (I’ll kill you). But some other times, he takes a stick or a stone and gets hold of it. He then says, ‘nge kele na chance mono mene zola kufwa nge’ (You are lucky I could have killed you). In our opinion, this tension expressed in his second statement (You are lucky I could have killed you) is what can be called concupiscence. My grandfather then knows how to control this proneness so that he might not commit any sin. The only thing then that my grandfather needs to know in this context is the theological language of ‘concupiscence.’

### ***3.1.3 The Problematic of Created Mediations and the Good Works of the Justified***

Where is the problem to be situated? Is it in the created mediations, in the good works or in their abuse by human beings? For sure, Catholic means do not carry any bad influence. They prove to be useful for the Christian life in the Church as the body of Christ.

Does this mean that Lutheran's rejection of the created mediations and of good works was without significance? Certainly no. Although they prove to be useful to the Christian life it seems that at a certain time, they lost their meaning, as it might be the case today. Their manipulation in favour of the individuals and some particular interests has caused much harm to the spiritual growth and life of the Church. One of the consequences is that the abuses have produced a shift. Instead of being helpful for salvation, they have created guilty consciences.

In our opinion, we think that it would be wiser on our part not to forget the above teaching but learn from them. For sure, forgetting the created mediations can only lead to a distortion of the mission of the Church.

On the other hand, sometimes our good works do not reflect our justified state although it is said that good works are fruits and signs of justification. In fact, good works should be a reflection of an interior transformation. But the way in which we sometimes perform these works, we can discover certain hypocrisy behind our motives. It is not enough to donate a hundred bags of maize and beans during lent to people under the umbrella of charitable action in order to make a name and think of being justified. If these actions are not founded on a living faith in Christ, there is a need to challenge them and find another way of doing that.

## **3.2 Significance of the Catholic Position for the Church's Life and Mission**

As far as the justification of a person is concerned, the Catholics think that the doctrine of justification should not be considered as the only criterion. Hence, they see themselves as bound by several criteria without denying the special function of the message of justification.<sup>123</sup> In their mind, the other criteria such as ministry and sacrament are to be taken into consideration. They find their origin in the salvific plan of God and Christ himself initiated them. By the calling of the disciples and the commissioning of Peter to take care of the sheep, Jesus Christ created what can be called today the ecclesial authority. He sent the disciples to preach, baptize, and forgive sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Christ's mission intended to bring the lost sheep to God. Called to continue this work, there is no way that we can overlook other criteria despite the abuses that they were subjected to. We think that these criteria still maintain their validity. In today's world of frustrations on the political level, social and economical unrest, it will be a crime to forget the other criteria as they contribute to the justification of humanity. We need to have a holistic view of criteria and see them as complementary. The pilgrim Church still needs guidance. To speak of them will also help to boost the community aspect of Christian life.

### ***3.2.1 Cooperation and Concupiscence***

A tree that does not bear fruits has to be cut. But, it needs to be given time to see how it reacts and cooperates with the manure. Its verdict and fate depends on its ability to respond positively to the care being given to it. Such an analogy can help us understand the cooperative role of man in the process of justification. It is not for nothing that Catholics

---

<sup>123</sup> Cf. J. D, p. 16.

speak of cooperation. They would like to call the person to responsibility for his/her acts. This aspect can help us also to overcome the determinism that can be seen in the theory of passivity advocated by Lutherans. It would help us not to think of being predestined to something. There is no way that God can help us without our own participation. That is why he poured in us the gift of grace so that our human free will might say yes to faith.

After the reception of grace, through the sacrament of baptism, we are cleansed from our sins. All our sins are forgiven and we become a new creation in Christ Jesus. However, there remains in us what the Church calls concupiscence. Concupiscence stands in contradiction with God, it is not a sin and nobody is punished because of it. This helps to remove the bad and negative way of looking at a human being.

### ***3.2.2 Created Mediation and Good Works***

The created mediations give us an identity as the people of God. They create in us a sense of belonging. But the problem lies much more in the consideration given to works vis-à-vis justification. What is true is that there has been an overemphasis put on works to the detriment of faith. The Church seems to have become more sacramental than evangelized. After the genocide in Rwanda and the repeated tribal confrontations in many countries of Africa, people wondered if such countries were really evangelized. Among the people living in Rwanda 80% were or are Catholics. These are people who have gone through the Christian rites of initiation. Among those accused of committing the genocide are, priests, sisters and seminarians.

One could really think and question the need of producing many Christians whose faith in Christ is not strong enough. As we can presume, being Christians, these people participated daily in the divine offices and celebrations. They frequently went for confession

If this is true, can we really advocate today and say that they went through a renewal of the life letting Christ live in them?

Another point that needs to be mentioned is that in emphasizing too much on the created mediations and good works, we are slowly losing the significance of the *duo* 'grace and faith' as a gift that we receive through Jesus-Christ. From this loss, can result a cult of works that does not need to be encouraged in the process of justification.

### **3.3 New Perspective for Church's Life and Mission**

#### ***3.3.1 Justification as Universal Call***

Through our first parents, humanity has sinned and stands in need of justification. No one can claim to be without sins. To make such a claim is to be a liar. So, a call to justification has a universal character. It is for this purpose that Christ came so that all might be justified, share in God's righteousness and have life in fullness.

#### ***3.3.2 A Transition from a Criterion to Criteria***

We hold that justification is a life long process. It is not a one-day affair. Henceforth it calls to a diversity of criteria as way of helping a person in order to enable her/him to stand in the right before God. We fear that to think of the article on justification by faith alone would limit the chances and possibilities of a person to be justified and share in God's life. When we hold this perspective, we look at a person in his/her relational aspect rather than as an individual.

#### ***3.3.3 Necessity of Created Mediations***

Among many others, we would like to talk more of the necessity of ministries (specially ecclesiastical authority), sacraments and the role of the Church in its sacramental aspect. For we believe that besides the role played by faith in human's justification, the

above-mentioned mediations are of great importance in shepherding Christ's flock. By the way, was Christ not moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mk. 6:34)?

### **3.3.3.1 Ecclesiastical Authority**

Justification is the work of the Triune God. The Father sent his Son as a sacrificial lamb for the forgiveness of our sins. The role of the Spirit consisted in strengthening those who believed and put their trust in the Triune God. Through the Holy Spirit, the life of a Christian is renewed. It is in order to continue the salvific work that Christ instituted different ministries. He called disciples and sent them in mission to preach and forgive sins. Above this mission, he gave to Peter the responsibility over this community of believers: the Church.

It is on this tradition that we should base the necessity and importance of the ecclesiastical authority. As Peter and his friends, the Church authorities or better again servants are called to lead Christ's flock in their pilgrimage towards being justified. On this level, the danger can lie on the consideration given to the magisterium. We have to look at it as servant of the word rather than as its superior.<sup>124</sup>

### **3.3.3.2 Sacraments: Baptism and Repentance**

We consider the sacraments to be a walking stick. One can argue that many do not have a clear and direct scriptural foundation.

This can be true in a way. But nobody can prove the opposite about the sacrament of baptism. Because, after the call of the disciples, we see that Jesus sent his disciples to preach the forgiveness of sins calling the converts to a renewal of life and good works (Mt.14:1-12; Mk.6:14-29; Jn.20:22-23; Mt.16:19; Mt.18:18).

### 3.3.4 The Church as a Sacrament vis-à-vis Justification

Vatican II documents present the Church as the people of God. The Church is a sacrament of Christ and of unity of the Triune God who is present within the Church. Its intention is that “the kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished.”<sup>125</sup> According to Henri de Lubac, the Church is the sacrament of Christ.<sup>126</sup> Bearing this sacramental aspect in mind, we believe that through the Church we are united with God and all people. Therefore, the Church is “a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men.”<sup>127</sup> It has the responsibility of working for the benefit of its members. It is “in that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ.”<sup>128</sup>

After a look at the created mediations, it is important to hold that their importance is great for one’s justification. By saying so, we do not overlook the element of faith. However, we take the courage to argue that faith alone is not enough because, what is faith without works? Any faith without works of love and charity is a dead one.

There is a need to emphasize the ecclesiastical dimension of the Church so that the communal character may find a room in our people’s life. Is there really any need of celebrating the cult of African unity and hospitality when we notice that our people are on the way towards losing these great values? In countries where people have experienced tragic acts of barbarism, we are shocked to know that even those who went to hide in Church buildings found death there at the cross of the crucified Jesus. In Rwanda alone, it was reported that in

---

<sup>124</sup> Cf. “Dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*,” para. 10. In: Flannery, A. ed., Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (Bombay: St. Pauls, 1997), p. 667.

<sup>125</sup> “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*,” para. 45. in Flannery, A., Op.cit., p. 832.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. McBrien, R. P., Catholicism (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1994), p. 66.

<sup>127</sup> “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*,” para. 1. in Flannery, A., Op.cit., p. 320

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 320. para 7.

some places, members of the clergy could not provide shelter and security to the fugitive. Hatred has so filled our 'sacramentalized Church' to the extent that no unity is possible among its members.

The Church as willed by God should take its responsibility and lead people to unity anticipating the Kingdom of God. In doing so, it will avoid the abuses of the pre-reformation era of which some are still threatening the life and mission of the Church.

### **3.3.4 Faith, Grace and Good Works**

Faith and works have to go hand in hand. From James 3:17 we read, "... Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." It is God who gives grace to a person and prepares him/herself to be disposed to the reception of faith.

Hence, "faith is not just a matter of doctrine; it is a response to God's grace which engages one's whole existence and in which one commits one's entire self to God in acceptance and trust."<sup>129</sup> And when one hears the word, believes in it and is justified, he must produce works of love and charity. For sure, we should be careful in tackling the question of faith and works in order to make it intelligible for the mission of the Church. If one is not careful, s/he might fall in the trap of the old ages.

In our opinion, the Catholic Church might have gone very far in overemphasizing good works to the expense of faith. On the other hand the protestant's emphasis on faith alone diminished the effects of grace. What we think is that faith, grace and works should be stressed in our ministry. To consider the interrelationship between faith, grace and works is a better way of inviting our Christian to a better understanding of the exercise justification.

---

<sup>129</sup> Henn, W., "Ut Unum Sint and Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism" in Ecumenical Review: Vol. 52, No. 2., p. 236.

It is by clarifying the implications of grace that one can also understand the notion of cooperation. When God, through faith in Christ declares one to be righteous, He gives her/him the grace needed to help him/her in times of distress and temptations. The situation in which Africa is, needs men and women of active faith. We mean by this a faith that produces fruits. A faith that fights tribalism, corruption, selfishness, barbarism, nepotism and the politics of exclusion in order to promote unity.

It is by promoting unity that we can hope to see the kingdom of the justified ones, the eschatological community. Any disunity and division is like a virus to the life of the Church's mission. We maintain this because "division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature."<sup>130</sup> We should then avoid being passive where we need to act. We have to show our faith in being salt and light of the world through actions or good works.

---

<sup>130</sup> "Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*," para. 1. in Flannery, A., Op.cit. p. 408

## Conclusion

My grandfather Mwatshiyonga Philip used to tell me that 'whenever two elephants fight, the grass suffers more than the two giants.' We make reference to this popular saying to show how the debate on the Doctrine of Justification has affected the lives of thousands of Christians in the past as well as in the recent years. This conflict in the articulation of the doctrine has led to a division of the people of God in their way of grasping the Divine. As a result, different theological inputs have been produced. While some of these theological elaborations have been of benefit in guiding the flock of Christ, some others were misleading. Consequently, positive and mostly negative impact can be felt in the religious, social, economical and political sphere of human life.

During the troubled period, some points were and are still overemphasized to the expense of other elements. This happened as a consequence of the divided and conflicting understanding of the doctrine of justification from both sides. On the one hand, when we look at the Roman Catholic Church, we notice that there was a lot of exaggeration in the consideration given to 'works' besides many other abuses such as that of magisterium. There was a tendency of seeing the magisterium as superior to the work than being its servant.

What we have noticed in our reflective investigation is that, the remaining differences carry a greater influence on the life of Christians than the agreements reached in basic truths. That is why we judged it important to create space for complementarity. We believe that both sides have a nice way of articulating the theological message for the life of the Church's mission. That is why some further ecumenical dialogues in this field are important in order to address the differences. There is really a lot to gain from both confessions if the complementarity for which we advocate is given room. For we are convinced that forgetting the other articles and stressing that of faith alone won't be of much help. This is the same

when we overemphasize good works and forget the elements of grace and faith as being primordial in our spiritual journey. So we suggest that all the elements and articles should go hand in hand. Even if justification is first of all by faith, a Christian needs guidance and help throughout his/her spiritual struggle.

# Bibliography

## A. Books

BONNER, G., Saint Augustine of Hippo. Life and Controversies,  
London: The Canterbury Press Norwich, 1986.

BOURKE, V. J. ed., Saint Augustine. The City of God, With a foreword by GILSON,  
E., New York: Image Books, 1958.

DEFERRARI, R. J. ed., The Fathers of the Church. Saint Augustine.  
The Retractation, Vol.60, Washington: Catholic University of America  
Press, 1968.

DUNN, J. D. G., The Theology of Paul, Edinbrugh : T&T Clark, 1998.

FITZGERALD, A. D., Augustine Through the Ages. An Encyclopedia, Michigan:  
William B Eedmans, 1999.

.McGRATH, A. E., Studies in Doctrine, With a foreword by PACKER, J. I.,  
Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.

ROTELLE, J. e. ed., The Works of Saint Augustine, New York: New City Press,  
1990.

SCHAFF, F. ed., A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the  
Christian Church, Vol. 5, Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings,  
Michigan: T & T Clark, 1997

TANNER, N. P. ed., Decrees of the Ecumenical Council, Vol.2, Trent – Vatican II,  
London: Sheed and Ward, 1990.

WAINWRIGHT, G. ed., Keeping the Faith, London: Anchor Press, 1989.

WATSON, P. S., Martin Luther. Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to Galatians,  
Cambridge: James Clarke & co, 1978.

## Reference Books

BROWN, R. E. and others, eds., The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000.

HAWTHORNE, G. F. ed., Dictionary of Paul and his Letters, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993.

## B. Articles and Periodicals

AMECEA, The African Synod Comes home as simplified text, Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1995,

BERTAM, R. W., "Recent Lutheran Theology on Justification by Faith: A Sampling" in ANDERSON, H. G., Justification by Faith. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985, (pp. 241-255).

CLIFFORD, R. J., "The Introduction and comment on Genesis 1-11," in BROWN, R. E. and others, eds., The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000, (pp. 8-29).

FITZMYER, J.A., "The Letter to the Romans" in BROWN, R. E. and others., The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000, (pp. 830-868)

HENN, W., "*Ut Unum Sint* a Catholic Involvement in Ecumenism" in Ecumenical Review, Vol.52, No.2, 2000, (PP. 234-245).

MARTENSEN, H. L., "The Joint Declaration on Justification: A Nordic Perspective." in Ecumenical Review, Vol.52. No.2, 2000, (204-210).

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English. 8 July, 1998.

MURRAY, J. C., "admonition and Grace" in SCHOPP, L., The Fathers of the Church. Writings of Saint Augustine, Vol.4, New York: CIMA Publishing co. INC, 1947, (239-305).

PETER, C. J., "Justification by Faith and the Need of Another Critical Principle" in ANDERSON, H. G. E. ed., Justification by Faith. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985, (pp. 304-315).

### **C. Ecclesiastical Teaching**

FLANNERY, A. ed., Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post- Conciliar Documents, Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1997.

JOHN PAUL II, *A Call For Christian Unity. On Commitment to Ecumenism: "Ut Unum Sint."* Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1995.

Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. Joint declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, Michigan: William B Eedmans Publishing company, 2000

McBRIEN, R. P., Catholicism, New York: Harpens San Francisco, 1994