

**A Critical Analysis of the interpretation of the Doctrine of Justification by  
Faith Alone by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, Gongola Diocese**

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis, unless specifically indicated in the text, is my own original work which has not been submitted in any university.

**James Jemeyira Reynolds**



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As Supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission to be examined.

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As Co-Supervisor, I hereby approve this thesis for submission to be examined.

## Abstract

This study examined the issues of the interpretation, transmission and appropriation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* within the context of the Lutheran Church in Nigeria, Gongola Diocese. Using contextualization as my main tool in this exploration, I argue that intercultural communication holds the key to unlocking how effectively and appropriately these three engagements with theology are executed within the context of this study. The Lutheran church and indeed most Protestant denominations assert that justification by faith alone is the cardinal doctrine of Christianity. Scholars are however concerned that there is great level of ignorance among members and misappropriation of *justification by faith alone* in the lives of members of these denominations. Many reasons were advanced as being responsible for this, some of which include: its absence from the preaching agenda of Protestant pulpits, and inadequate teaching from the church, its clergy and theological educators. Other reasons are its failure to be shown to be clearly applicable to lived experiences of the people in their contemporary challenges. The message of *justification by faith alone* has not been adequately translated into people's social, and religious-cultural world views.

The LCCN as an institution subscribes to Luther's teachings as expressed in his writings and taught by the Lutheran Church globally. However, the LCCN is faced with the problem of how to transmit the meaning of justification by faith alone to its members. This study therefore sought to investigate the underlying factors for this development. The question that the study wished to answer was: How does the interpretation of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (as an institution) enhance its understanding and appropriation by members and serves as a guide in this study? In attempting to answer this question three theories were used as framework with which to test the church's interpretation of this doctrine. These theories are: 1) gospel and culture in dialogue; 2) translatability, and 3) contextual theological education programmes for the training of both clergy and laity.

This is an empirical qualitative study and was structured into eight chapters. Participants in this study were categorized into five groups: church leaders, seminary lecturers, clergy, seminary students, and lay members. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with participants, relevant data was generated and analysed manually.

The study found that the LCCN's interpretation of justification by faith alone is detached from the religious and cultural world view of its members; this has in turn created a conflict in how it is understood and appropriated in their lived experiences. The message of justification by faith (the gospel) has not been allowed to engage in dialogue with the culture of the people, rather culture is perceived as evil or something to be avoided. Thus, I argue that this failure on the part of the missionaries and the indigenous leadership of the LCCN to employ intercultural communication in transmitting the message of *justification by faith alone* is the major cause of the problem. Most of the participants including the leaders of the church acknowledged that the church, the seminary and the clergy have not been faithful in transmitting the appropriate message of *justification by faith alone*. The conclusion of this study therefore, is that the LCCN's interpretation of *justification by faith alone* does not enhance its understanding and appropriation by members. This thesis proposes that the Lunguda practice of *ntsandah* provides an entry point for a proper informed interpretation of *justification by faith alone*. For this to be possible, the gospel and culture must engage in dialogue through viable a contextual theological education programme for the training of both clergy and the laity.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my wife and children for their sacrifice and to all those who desire to understand and properly appropriate the true meaning of justification by faith alone in their lived experiences.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ACTS: African Christian Textbooks

BC: Book of Concord (of the Evangelical Lutheran Church)

BLS: Brønnum Lutheran Seminary

BME: Babbar Majalisar Ekklesiyar

CAN: Christian Association of Nigeria

CCN: Christian Council of Nigeria

CNCEIR: Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations,

EATWOT: Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians

EC: Executive Council

ELCA: Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

ELCSA: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa

FG: Focus Group

GCC: General Church Council

GCE: General Certificate of Education

ISPCK: International Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge

JETS: Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

JSSCE: Junior Secondary School Certificate of Education

JTSA: Journal of Theology for Southern Africa

LCCN: Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria

LW: Luther's Works

LC: Luther's Catechism

NCE: National Certificate of Education

SA: Smalcald Article

SORAT: School of Religion and Theology

SPCK: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge

SIM: Sudan Interior Mission

SSCE: Senior School Certificate of Education

SUM: Sudan United Mission

SUM (D): Sudan Unite Mission- Danish Branch

TEKAN: Tarrayar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi A Nigeria (Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria)

TCNN: Theological College of Northern Nigeria

TEE: Theological Education by Extension

UKZN: University of KwaZulu-Natal

WAEC: West African Examination Council

WARC: World Alliance of Reformed Churches

WCC: World Council of Churches

WCRC: World Communion of Reformed Churches

WOCATI: World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions

# CHAPTER ONE

## General Introduction and Background of Study

The doctrine of justification, by grace through faith in Christ is the old doctrine of the Reformation... yet the vivid apprehension of its meaning, and the cordial reception of its truth, must be a new thing in the experience of every one ... (Buchanan 1984: 3).

### 1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to examine the translation and interpretation of the doctrine<sup>1</sup> of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN)<sup>2</sup>, Gongola Diocese. *Justification by faith alone* looks at how a person receives or appropriates God's gift of grace by faith rather than through personal merit. *Justification by faith alone* is a cardinal doctrine of the Lutheran Church and indeed the whole of Evangelical Christianity. The study attempts to examine how the doctrine has been appropriated by the church members of this diocese in relation to the religious, cultural and social context of the people. To achieve this, the possibility of using contextual theological education as a tool to help understand the church's interpretation of this doctrine will be explored. In addition the translatability theory of Kwame Bediako will be utilized to assess the effect of the worldview of the congregants on their interpretation of the doctrine. Three criteria for judging the LCCN's interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* will be used. These are scripture, past confessional documents, and how the doctrine facilitates Christian spirituality in the present.

This chapter provides an overview of the study structured around the following sub topics: a) the background of study which includes the historical background of the study and motivations for the study; b) research problem and objectives; c) principal theories undergirding the study; d) research methodology and design; and e) conclusion and structure of the thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> By doctrine I mean teachings or religious beliefs upheld and expressed by the adherents of that religion or particular religious tradition. In this study the term is used in the context of the Lutheran tradition in connection to *justification by faith alone* as expressed by adherents of this tradition.

<sup>2</sup> LCCN is the abbreviation for the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. In this research from time to time I will be using it interchangeably with the full rendering.

## **1.2 Historical and socio-cultural background of the study**

### **1.2.1 Brief historical background of LCCN**

The Lutheran Church is the product of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation by Martin Luther when he restored the gospel of salvation-*justification by faith alone* to a central position in the Christian faith. Luther also exposed the lack of proper understanding of this biblical teaching in the church which in his view had resulted in the church mal-forming its members. He thus set his mind to restore the church to a biblical understanding of *justification by faith alone* apart from works (Luther LW 31, 1979: 297-306). Luther's controversial theological perspective caused an upheaval that eventually resulted in him and his supporters being excommunicated from the Catholic Church. Luther's intention was not to form a new church but to reform the Catholic Church. However, the latter's uncompromising attitude resulted in the formation of the Protestant movement out of which the Lutheran Church was formed (Thompson 1976: 31-34).

The Protestant missionary movement saw the planting of churches throughout Europe and the Americas. In particular the Lutheran church grew and spread to other parts of the world including Africa. Margaret Nissen (1968: 17) reports that the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria was formed through the effort of a prayer group in Denmark. The vision of this group to get involved in mission work was ignited by a speech delivered by Dr. Karl Kumm at the first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910 on the need to "stem the tide of Mohammedan penetration into the Sudan."

Dr. Niels Hoegh Brønnum, Dr. Margaret Young and Miss Rose Dagmar were the first missionaries of the Sudan United Mission Danish branch, the founding mission body of the LCCN. They were first sent to England in 1912 to study Hausa, the language of communication in Northern Nigeria, after which they were commissioned and sent out for Mission work in Yola Province in Nigeria on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1913 (1968: 22). The headquarters of the LCCN is in Numan Adamawa state in Nigeria but it is found predominantly in the north eastern region of the country (Adamawa, Taraba, Borno, Gombe, Yobe and Bauchi states) and in a few other states such as Plateau, Lagos, Kaduna, Benin, Niger and Abuja. The church in Nigeria started as a single congregation after the first baptisms were recorded in 1916 (Jensen 1992:187 and Pweddson 2005: 56). From its beginnings in 1913 up to 2010, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria underwent different

stages of developments in various aspects, ranging from nomenclature, structure and the creation of dioceses.

First, in terms of nomenclature, the church started as the Lutheran Church of Christ in the Sudan (LCCS). However, this caused confusion when Sudan became an independent nation. In 1975, the church decided to replace the term Sudan with Nigeria and it then became known as the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (Pweddson 2005: 121). The other change in terms of nomenclature had to do with the title of the leader of the church. The title of Field Superintendent was the first title given to the leader of the church. But in 1954 when the Mission Board in Denmark decided to make the church independent, it also changed the title of the leader to that of President. Thereafter in 1973 it was again changed to Bishop, and with this change the church became Episcopal in operation. As the challenge associated with growth increased, the General Church Council decided in 1995 to create more Dioceses which saw the election of bishops to oversee those dioceses and the then Bishop became the Presiding Bishop for a transition period of one year. In November 1996 there was an election for the office of the Archbishop (Pweddson 2005: 156).

Second, structurally, there are two main structures in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria namely: leadership structure and organisational structure. The leadership structure consists of the following in descending order: Trustees; Archbishop, Vice Chairman, Secretary to the Archbishop, Bishops, Diocesan Vice Chairman, Secretary to the Bishop, Dean, Pastor, Catechist, Evangelist, Chairman of the Local Congregation and elected representatives.<sup>3</sup> The organisational structure of the church refers to the various levels of administration and councils of the church. The different levels of administration in the church are: National, Diocese, Division, District, Sub-District, and Local Congregation.<sup>4</sup> The councils on the other hand are as follows in descending order: General Church Council, Executive Council, Diocesan Synod, Divisional Council, District Council, Sub-District Council and Local Congregation Council. Presently, the statistics of the church are as follows: there are 2021 local congregations; 255 Districts; 39 Divisions; 7 Dioceses and 1 mission field. It has a total membership of 2, 000, 000 (LCCN Pocket Diary 2012: 10-11).

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<sup>3</sup> LCCN Constitution and By-Laws, as amended in 1995, Numan: The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, 1995, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup>The Constitution, 1995, p. 102.

Third, as regards the creation of dioceses, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria became a diocese in 1973 when the church changed the title of its leader from President to Bishop. The decision for this change was taken during the General Church Council meeting of 11–14 November 1970 which laid the ground for the election of the Bishop. One of the reasons for the change was to enable the LCCN to operate as an Episcopal system of church polity “because this is in accordance with the biblical use of ecclesiastic titles” as found in other Lutheran churches.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, Rev. Akila Todi who was the President, was elected Bishop of the LCCN and was consecrated on 7th October 1973.<sup>6</sup> In 1985 there was a motion for the creation of three more bishoprics for easy administration of the church owing to its growth in population. However, there was no follow up on this until the election of Rev. David L. Windibiziri as the second Bishop of LCCN in 1987.

In his welcome speech to the General Church Council of December 1991 sitting in Numan, Windibiziri drew the attention of members to this issue making reference to the Executive Council Minutes of May 1982 (99/82) and September 1982 (210/82). He stated that:

There was a thought that LCCN should have 3 bishops and a 4th as presiding bishop, but afterwards the idea died again. However, if we consider that within the next 10 years we expect to have about 500, 000 members or more, if the growth rate continues as it is now, it is necessary to consider how we can divide the Church into more dioceses so that we shall have may be 4 bishops with the presiding bishop as the fifth. If we consider the structure of other Lutheran Churches in Africa, it is not unusual that there is a bishop for 125,000–130, 000 members. This will also make the work much easier and also create closer contact between the bishops and the districts in the diocese<sup>7</sup>.

The General Church Council (GCC) accepted the Bishop’s speech for further consideration. This was followed up by the constitution of a committee for the creation of more dioceses in LCCN by the Executive Council in February 1992, which was ratified by the General Church

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<sup>5</sup> LCCN General Church Council Minutes of November 1970, Ref. 36/70, Yola: LCCN Archives.

<sup>6</sup> LCCN General Church Council Minutes of November 1973, Ref. 65/73, Yola: LCCN Archives

<sup>7</sup> David L. Windibiziri, Bishop’s Speech to the LCCN General Church Council sitting in Numan, December 1991. See also Andrew Kalang, A Brief description of the development concerning the creation of Diocese in LCCN, Numan, 1996, Pp. 1 - 2.

Council in May the same year.<sup>8</sup> The committee, submitting its report to the GCC in November 1994, proposed the creation of five more dioceses with a 6th presiding bishop. They also proposed the names and headquarters of the five Dioceses as follows:

| <b>Name of Diocese:</b>    | <b>Headquarters:</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Gongola                 | Kem                  |
| 2. Kudu (Southern Diocese) | Ganye                |
| 3. Shall Holma             | Gombi                |
| 4. Todi                    | Bali                 |
| 5. Yola                    | Yola. <sup>9</sup>   |

The council deliberated on the report and after a heated discussion it was put to a vote. Those in support of the move for the amendment of the constitution and the creation of more dioceses won with 198 votes against 2 votes. The bone of contention was on whether to have three or five dioceses, not on whether to create more dioceses or not.<sup>10</sup> This event marked the first presentation of the motion for the amendment of the constitution and creation of more dioceses in LCCN.<sup>11</sup> Three more dioceses were later created in 2007, 2009, and 2011 respectively, to cater for the growing population of church members in these areas.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Executive Council Minutes of February 1992 Ref. 18/92 and General Church Council Minutes of May 1982, Ref. 8/92, Numan: LCCN Archives

<sup>9</sup> Report of the Committee for the Creation of more Dioceses in LCCN, 1994, p. 3

<sup>10</sup> General Church Council Minutes of November 1994, Ref. 32/94, Numan: LCCN Archives

<sup>11</sup> The Constitution of the Church states that any amendment to any section of the Constitution must be discussed in two successive General Church Councils. Therefore, the matter was discussed for the second time at the General Church Council's sitting of May 1995 in Bali where it was again put to vote. Those who voted in support of the motion for the amendment of the Constitution and creation of more Dioceses were 233, while 3 were against it and 1 abstained. (The Constitution of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, Section 34, "Amendment" as amended in 1988, P. 110. See General Church Council Minutes of May 1995, Ref. 8/95, Numan: LCCN Archives).

<sup>12</sup> The three dioceses are: the Arewa (Northern) Diocese with headquarters at Kala'a, the Diocese of Abuja with its headquarters in Nyanya and Mayo- Belwa Diocese with headquarters in Mayo- Belwa.

### 1.2.2 The general cultural, social and economic background of Gongola Diocese

LCCN Gongola Diocese was created in 1995 along with four other dioceses and was instituted officially in January 1996 as mentioned above. Gongola is the name of a river that flows from Borno state into the Benue River at Numan in Adamawa state.<sup>13</sup> Gongola Diocese is one of the eight Dioceses<sup>14</sup><sup>15</sup> in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. The Diocese comprises three Divisions namely: Guyuk, Lamurde and Shelleng. Most members of the Diocese are rural people and the majority are farmers and fishermen. Hausa is the language of communication in most parts of northern Nigeria and the Diocese too is located in this part of the country.

Gongola Diocese has about fourteen ethnic groups, the three major ones being the Bachama, Lunguda, and Kanakuru. All the three groups practice communal labour on their farms to sustain themselves. All the three major religions in Nigeria, namely African traditional religion, Christianity and Islam, have adherents in the region under study.

The Hausa are one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are predominantly traders and this leads them to travel all over the Northern parts of Nigeria and to other African countries. They are also culturally close to the Fulani, who through the Islamic Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio, settled in many parts of Northern Nigeria. In the course of time, Hausa language became the language of trade and communication between the Hausas and other ethnic groups of the north. Hausa language and culture has influenced the Northern part of Nigeria to the extent that most churches have adopted Hausa as their official language of communication (Andrawus 2012: 6). Another aspect of Hausa culture that has influenced the people is the “idea of reward for services whether religious or personal and giving of alms to cleanse one’s sins.”<sup>16</sup> This study seeks to find out whether this cultural practice has had an impact on the Gongola Diocese members’ understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

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<sup>13</sup> However, it became fully operational in March 1996 after the consecration and induction of the first bishop Rt. Rev. Asriel S.T. Myatafadi. After serving for two terms of five years each, Rt. Rev. John Sarauta Kenan was elected Bishop of the Diocese in October 2005 (Ebal Yerima, Diocesan Secretary, Gongola Diocese Statistics as of May, 2010, Diocese Archives at Kem; accessed on 2/7/2010). The Diocese comprises of 3 Divisions with 33 Districts and 185 Local Congregations. The administrative headquarters of the Diocese is Kem in Shelleng Division. The Diocese has a total of 46 ordained pastors, 63 Catechists and 185 Evangelists.

<sup>15</sup> The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria has eight Dioceses namely: Abuja, Arewa, Bonetem, Gongola, Mayo-Belwa, Shall-Holma, Todi and Yola.

<sup>16</sup> Hausa People <http://www.uiowa.edu/~afriart/toc/people/Hausa.htm> accessed 21/03/2009.

The levels of economic activity of the people are relatively low as they are mostly subsistence farmers and small scale fishermen. They do not have good storage facilities; therefore even if they get a good harvest or a large catch of fish, they tend to sell it at a low price to Hausa middle men traders. Is it possible under such difficult conditions for the church to provide a life –giving interpretation of the doctrine that addresses their specific life situations including their cultural, religious and economic life?

The social location of the people including their religious-cultural world view is tied to their lived experiences. Faith is viewed as a community affair rather than an aspect of individualized life, hence removing new converts from their kinsmen tends to destroy this communal aspect of the people’s cultural values. An important question that this social location raises is: has the Church’s interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* paid enough attention to the communal life of the people and their lived experiences?

### **1.2.3 An overview of the training of clergy in Gongola Diocese**

The translation of the central Lutheran doctrine of *justification by faith alone* into the Nigerian context cannot be fully assessed without an overview of how the clergy was trained in the Diocese to communicate this statement of faith

After getting the permission to start mission work, Brønnum used two tools - education and medical services - to enhance his work of evangelisation. As he alone could not do the work, local evangelists were enrolled and taught how to read and write, using Bible stories. These people were later sent out to evangelise and lead their people. Nissen in *An African Church is Born* says that as the work was expanding, these local evangelists “discovered, however, that after a short time they had taught their people all they knew themselves” (1968: 243). The first pastors’ training started in Numan in 1945 and the first set of indigenous pastors were ordained in February 1948. The Hausa pastors’ training was faced with the challenge of a lack of theological resources in the Hausa language. The first set of English trained pastors was enrolled in 1954, starting their training work at Dashen, then proceeding to Lamurde and later to Gindiri in Plateau state, which later became the site of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (1968: 247). The English training was much longer and broader in content, lasting for six years (1954-1961). Currently, the LCCN has one seminary that offers a diploma and in 2008 it started a degree programme in theology. How this training programme

has evolved over the years and how it has translated the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* will be examined later in the study.

### **1.3 Motivations for the study**

This study is informed by two types of motivations: personal experience and academic motivations. Three personal experiences serve as my motivations for this study. Academically, my two earlier theses, which were submitted for a B.Th. and an M.Th., examined the practice of infant baptism in the Lutheran tradition (Reynolds 2000) and Luther's and Calvin's views on the Law (Reynolds 2003) respectively. I embraced the present study as an African theological educator and a member of the clergy in the Lutheran tradition. On the one hand, as an African theological educator I am required to provide my students with a relevant theological perspective that will equip them for contemporary challenges. On the other hand, as a professional in the ministry, it is part of my responsibility as a member of the clergy to provide my congregants with relevant and life giving knowledge of the Christian faith and the practices of the church in order to appropriate them in their lived experiences.

#### **1.3.1 My personal motivation**

Before I went to the seminary I served as the secretary of the local congregation of LCCN in Purokayo. Looking back at the society I was working with, I recognised that converts to Christianity, in an effort to part with their past, had left their relatives to form Christian communities, taking literally the phrases, "be separated ye from them" (2 Corinth. 6; 17) and "what relationship is there between light and darkness" (2 Corinth. 6; 14). Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1986: 40) refers to these communities as "Christian villages" and points out that this action goes against the socio-cultural context of the people. The implication of this policy of separation can be observed in the attitude of the LCCN towards members of the African initiated churches who are treated as unbelievers because they drink beer and practice polygamy. In 1986, the chairman of our local church congregation and I were questioned and were about to be placed under church discipline simply for allowing a neighboring African initiated church to use our church bell. I consider this to be at variance with what the biblical perspectives on justification by faith teaches. The concept of justification implies that we should humbly and willingly share God's love in Christ with other people regardless of their identity. Christians are expected to demonstrate Christ's love and concern to all, irrespective

of denomination or creed. It was questionable whether this was also the understanding of justification of those who wished to sanction me. Furthermore, both the LCCN and the African Church belong to one national body, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) whose motto is, “That they all may be one”. Where then, given the tendency of separation described above, is the spirit of oneness?

After the completion of my Bachelor of Divinity programme in 2000, I was posted to serve as the principal of a local Bible school that trains evangelists. Our Bishop organised a seminar for Pastors and Catechists within the Diocese, where I presented a paper on justification by faith. My interaction with the participants opened my eyes to the need for adequate teaching in the church and its schools on this subject. Some of the participants in their responses to my presentation stated that if they contributed nothing to their salvation, this called into question their motivation to spending time doing God’s work. Others argued that nobody will go to hell since salvation is free. There was also the feeling that justification by faith makes the Christian superior to non-Christians. My overall impression was that instead of viewing justification by faith as God’s gift of grace to humankind, it is being held as something that is strictly Lutheran (that is for Lutherans only). After my studies for Master’s Degree in Theology in 2003, I was seconded to teach in my *Alma Mater*. In the course of managing the Lutheran denominational instruction there, I discovered that many of our pastors in other Dioceses also lacked a proper understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. They too saw the doctrine as a prized possession of the Lutheran denomination as a whole, and tended therefore to idolize it as a reality that must be earned on merit. This ecclesial perspective was again exposed during a presentation that I gave in February 2008 when I spoke at the Gongola Diocese’s Annual Convention on the topic, “The difference between traditional culture and witchcraft”. During the question and answer session after the presentation, I discovered that most of the participants were very dismissive of anything related to their traditional culture; they regarded it as evil and saw themselves as “new creatures” cut off from this traditional culture. The uniting and reconciling aspect of justification was not understood holistically in terms of both human and divine relationship. Edward Ishaya in his Masters of Theology dissertation commented on the training of pastors in the LCCN by saying that, “they are ill equipped and the training is not adequate for a Lutheran Church or theology” (1984: 45). The situation described in 1984 seems not to have changed significantly in the following decades. If the teachers are so ill-equipped in this

important area of church teaching, what then will become of the learners (church members)? These various developments constitute the driving force behind this research from a personal perspective.

### **1.3.2 Academic motivation**

Apart from my personal experience, this study is also motivated by academic intentions. My Masters' research revealed a great depth of ignorance in the LCCN on the use of the Law in the life of a Christian. Since Luther seems to contrast the Law and the Gospel in most of his discussions (Luther 1963, LW 26: 126; 208 and LW 27: 355-356), the desire to know how the gospel of justification is understood and interpreted then became for me an attractive area for in-depth research.

Furthermore, in order to make a meaningful contribution to my academic development as a lecturer, there is a need to engage in such research. One aspect of this is the need to discover how to do theology contextually. The need for critical theological reflection on issues of how faith is lived out in contemporary culture makes it pertinent for theological educators to embrace the contextual approach in their theological engagement. This is what the present study also aims to do in terms of its examination of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

### **1.4 Rationale or purpose of the study**

Literature on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is abundant. However, most literature on the subject comes from Europe and North America and focuses on the classical presentation of the doctrine. The global south has not engaged in much discussion on the subject. The present study examines how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* has been transmitted from the north to the south, and how it has been interpreted and appropriated in the context of the people of LCCN Gongola Diocese. In this study, I argue that the interpretation of *justification by faith alone* by the LCCN is problematic. One of the reasons for this is linked to the way the missionaries transmitted the Christian faith did not facilitate dialogue between the gospel and the religious-cultural world views of the people. This in turn became a hindrance to the proper assimilation of the Christian faith by the indigenes. Even after the LCCN became self-governing, nothing was done to correct the situation. Consequently, this has also affected the Church's interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* and how the people are appropriating this doctrine in their practical life

experiences. Therefore, with my experience as a pastor for eighteen years and as a theological educator, I stand on solid ground to undertake an empirical analytical research of this problem in order to achieve more clarity that will lead me to draw a valid conclusion on the issue and to offer an informed option on the way forward. Furthermore, the church is located within a given context; it is therefore appropriate to also examine other factors within that broader context and their possible effect on the church's interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

## **1.5 Research problem and research objectives**

### **1.5.1 Research problem and questions**

This study deals with the issue of doctrine which falls under the discipline of systematic theology. Therefore, the study will approach the doctrine from a systematic theological perspective. However, systematic theology is not done in a vacuum but in a given context as it “reflects on the meaning and relevance of the word of God for us and our world today” (Nürnberg 2006: 4). This reflection within a given context in relation to the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is what I find missing in LCCN's interpretation of that doctrine.

The research problem which this study attempts to address is the lack of an informed understanding of and a life affirming appropriation of *justification by faith alone* in the LCCN. The doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is a cardinal doctrine of the Lutheran Church. However, the understanding and appropriation of the doctrine varies from outright misunderstanding to intentional religio-cultural and contextually biased understanding. In the LCCN both abstractionism and lack of proper understanding are present. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the research question: How does the interpretation of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (as an institution) enhance its understanding and appropriation by members? The following sub-questions are essential for addressing this key question:

1. What was the worldview which gave rise to the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
2. What are the means and methods used to transmit the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to members of the LCCN?

3. How has the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria understood and interpreted the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
4. Are there adequate resources to elicit informed knowledge of this doctrine among the laity?
5. How do pastors and members appropriate the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in their own cultural world view?
6. How has the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* impacted on the day to day life of members in the whole society?

According to Uwe Flick (2002: 51), “Research questions are like a door to the research field under study. Whether empirical activities investigated produce answers or not depends on the formulation of such questions.” Flick’s statement forms the bedrock for how the sub-questions, as well as the interview and focus group discussion questions were formulated, in order to achieve the objectives of this study.

### **1.5.2 Research objectives**

In order to answer the key question and the sub-questions presented above, the following objectives guided the study:

1. To examine the role of culture, translation, and theological education in informing how Martin Luther understood the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* and transmitted this to his audience.
2. To evaluate the means and methods by which the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is transmitted to the LCCN.
3. To analyse how the doctrine is understood and interpreted by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria.
4. To assess the knowledge of the congregants of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* that makes them unique as Lutherans.
5. To find out how pastors and members appropriate the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in their own cultural world view.
6. To evaluate the impact of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* on the day to day life of the people.

## **1.6 Scope of study**

The scope of this study revolves around three issues namely: the transmission, interpretation and appropriation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

First, with regards to transmission, the focus is centered on how the doctrine has journeyed from St. Paul through different conduits - in particular St. Augustine and Luther - and eventually, via the Danish missionaries to the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. The aim is not to present a historical survey of this transition, but to comprehend how St. Paul, St. Augustine and Luther understood the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* and to examine how they argued their positions on this doctrine. It is not my intention to approach this study from a strict historical study perspective or a narrow biblical criticism study perspective, although the doctrine has its basis in the scriptures. Rather, I approach it from a theological perspective.

Second, I examine how the doctrine was interpreted by the founding missionaries of the LCCN and how the LCCN faith community interprets this doctrine today. Furthermore it is not my intention to give a detailed discussion on *justification by faith alone*, but rather to examine the position of three church fathers in order to identify how the doctrine developed and journeyed to the contemporary context of the LCCN (see chapter 3). The aim was to use this as a lens with which to analyse the factors behind the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the LCCN (see chapter 7). Within the LCCN the focus is on one diocese out of seven, due to space and time constraints.

Third, an evaluation is made on how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* has impacted on the lives of the members of LCCN by assessing the practical application of this doctrine within the religious and cultural world view of the congregants (see chapter 6).

## **1.7 Principal theoretical assumptions or theoretical framework**

This study is undergirded by three existing theoretical assumptions namely: 1) gospel and culture in dialogue; 2) translatability, and 3) contextual theological education. These theoretical assumptions fall under the sociology of religion discipline and its perspectives on contextualization; an approach in theological exercise which seeks to address local situations without suppressing other voices from other contexts (Patte 2010: 277). According to Flick

(2002: 43), “Theoretical assumptions become relevant as preliminary versions of the understanding of and the perspective on the subject being studied, which are formulated and above all are further elaborated in the course of the research process.” It is in this regard that the thesis argues that contextualization is a vital tool for creating an informed understanding of *justification by faith alone*. Consequently, the church’s interpretation will be well guided and this will in turn elicit proper appropriation of the doctrine in the lives of members (See chapter two).

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

The essence of most academic study is to make new discoveries in order to add to the body of knowledge and or to help improve on existing knowledge (Dahlberg and McCaig 2010: 6). The motivations for this study and the reasons for choosing the topic point to the exigencies for a study that will investigate the causes of the problem in order to address them.

First, the study will examine how theological students think about their identity as Lutherans and their understanding of *justification by faith alone*. This knowledge gained is expected to better facilitate a more relevant and practical approach to teaching and theological discussions within the church and in the seminary where I teach (Fox et al. in Dahlberg and McCaig 2010: 6).

Second, the study will help the LCCN to be better informed about how perspectives of faith shape members’ lives and impact on society. This approach will enable the church to engage with the issue of culture and people’s lived experiences with more determined effort, and enable it to develop an effective policy on theological education for all.

Third, academically, the study will empower the LCCN’s seminary to review its curriculum in order to make it broad in perspective, contextual in approach, and viable and relevant in helping address contemporary issues. The findings of this study will also serve as an entry point for further research on related issues in this field and other academic disciplines (Hofstee 2009: 27).

### **1.9 Research design and methodology**

The study is a qualitative empirical research which seeks to present the people’s spoken or written words as the researcher interacts with them through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Qualitative study allows participants to speak for themselves in their own

words as against quantitative study which tries “to describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences in human terms” through figures (Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim 2010: 272). Qualitative research also allows for new theological integrations that can help the researcher to go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks. It also helps one to present the “explanation of the process occurring in local contexts...chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanation” (Smith, 1984: 15). Unlike quantitative research which is linear in outlook, qualitative research is circular, which enhances mutual participation in the process. Flick (2002: 40) says, “In qualitative research ... there is mutual interdependence of the single parts of the research process and this has to be taken into account much more.” It is this understanding of mutual interdependence that makes qualitative research most suitable for my study.

The research methodology of this study is qualitative in nature and seeks to investigate the lived experiences of the people through an interpretive approach. Under the sub-headings of design and methodology the following aspects will be covered: the research design and methods; research question; methods of collecting data such as analysis of existing literature, archival research and field research; scope of study; process of data collection; interview data and focus group discussion; data analysis and interpretation, limitations and ethical considerations (See chapter five).

### **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter sought to provide background information on the study including the methodology that will be employed. First, background and motivations for the study were discussed. Second, the research problem and the objectives of the study were described as follows: (a) to examine the role of culture, translation, and theological education in informing how Martin Luther understood the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* and how he transmitted this to his audience; (b) to analyse how the doctrine is understood and interpreted by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria; (c) to assess the knowledge of the congregants of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* that makes them unique as Lutherans; (d) to find out how pastors and members appropriate the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in their own cultural world view; and (e) to evaluate the impact of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* on the day to day life of the people. Third, the theories upon which this study hinges were highlighted. Fourth, under methodology, the process and tools by which data was

collected, namely in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and how it was processed, analysed and interpreted were described. Lastly, the structure of the thesis showing the content of the chapters is outlined. A detailed discussion of the main aspects of the study in addressing the research question is provided in subsequent chapters as the study unfolds.

### **1.11 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis comprises eight chapters that are divided into two main sections. The first section comprises chapters one to five, and deals with the contextual, theoretical and methodological framing of the study. The second section consists of chapters six to eight, dealing with the presentation, discussion and interpretation of the research findings. A brief chapter by chapter description of the structure of the thesis is given below.

Chapter One serves as an introduction by briefly discussing the overall background of the study. The discussion is with respect to the following themes: motivations for the study; historical and cultural background of the area of study; research problem and objectives; principal theories that undergird the study; significance of the study; research methodology and design; concluding remarks and overview of the thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on the theoretical framework through a critical study of three existing theories: that of gospel and culture in dialogue; translatability and the contextual theological education programme. According to David Silverman (2010: 110), "... theory provides both a framework for critically understanding phenomena and a basis for considering how what is unknown might be organized". The three underpinning theoretical assumption of this study enabled me to gain an insight into how the unknown (in this case the understanding and subsequent impact of the church's teaching on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*) might be organized into knowledge that can be of use to the future work of the LCCN.

Chapter Three examines the views of three church fathers on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. These church fathers are St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther. In this chapter, I explore what they taught about the doctrine and how each used intercultural communication to reach their audience within their various contexts. In this chapter I also argue that Luther's socio-political and religious development is important to this study, because it provides one of the foundations on which to base my analysis of LCCN's interpretation of what Luther believed and taught. The positions of these church fathers on justification by faith were interpretations and translations of earlier positions in their various

cultural contexts. The conclusion drawn from this chapter is that, for the LCCN to arrive at an interpretation that is relevant, it must be translated into the language that is accessible to the audience and must be communicated to them in their cultural context.

Chapter Four presents discussions on how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* was transmitted from Luther to the LCCN in Nigeria by the missionaries. Using both local and international resources, first, the method, motive and some positions of the missionaries that were instrumental in founding LCCN are critiqued. Second, the role of the indigenous church leaders in transmitting the knowledge of this doctrine to church members is assessed. Third, it is argued that the negative attitude of the local people towards their culture is largely due to the way in which the missionaries viewed these cultures. This has in turn affected the LCCN's interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* as well as its appropriation in the lives of its members (see chapters six and seven).

Chapter Five presents the research design, methodology and methods used in the study. It foregrounds a general qualitative empirical research perspective, discussing first the data-production process and then progressing to the data-analysis process. The discussion is divided into the following sections: qualitative empirical research; research instruments; research participants; procedure for collection, production and analysis of data; limitations of the study and ethical considerations (see chapter five for a detailed discussion).

Chapters Six presents the outcome of the field work. The discussion is based on the findings from the five categories of in-depth interviews with 8 church leaders; 6 seminary lecturers; 12 clergy; 10 seminary students and 8 lay people. Also, six focus group discussions were conducted with the following groups: Women Fellowship; Men Fellowship; Youth Fellowship; Boys/Girls Brigade; TCNN students and BLS students. The responses were presented, coded into categories, interpreted and analysed. Both the data interpretation and the analysis were integrated for the sake of the effective flow of the discussion. The data revealed that many factors are responsible for how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is treated in the LCCN. However, most of the factors are inter-related and can be grouped into six major categories (see chapter seven).

Chapter Seven discusses the problems that emerged from the interpretation and analysis of the data as presented in chapter six. Even though there is a lack of attention from the church, in this chapter it is argued that the laity have demonstrated some level of understanding of the

doctrine under study in their oral expression through locally composed songs. The discussion focuses on the implications of these issues for a contextual theological education programme in view of creating an informed interpretation of *justification by faith alone* by the LCCN. Central to discussions in this chapter is the Lunguda cultural practice of *ntsandah* as a tool for creating an informed understanding of *justification by faith alone*.

Chapter Eight brings the study to a conclusion and provides a summary of the major points discussed in each chapter. It also highlights on the conclusions drawn from the study and then concludes with proposals on the way forward as well as further research on other related areas not covered by this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Contextualization: a vital tool for creating an informed interpretation and appropriation of *justification by faith alone***

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter the general background of the study was introduced and discussed. The motivations for and rationale of the study were given along with the research question and objectives. The overview of the thesis was also presented. The current chapter attempts to examine how contextualization can be used as a tool for creating an informed understanding and interpretation of *justification by faith alone*. This is done through a review of literature that deals with the three theoretical assumptions that undergird this study.

Contextualization is built on the assumption that consciously or not, all theologies are born out of a social condition and the needs of a particular context (Patte 2010: 277). It was Shoki Coe who under the auspices of the World Council of Churches Theological Education Fund programme that gave the term a new impetus in 1972 (Shenk 2005: 192-193 and Patte 2010: 277). However, it is pertinent to mention here that theologians need to use “the critical lens of a hermeneutics of suspicion” in their contextual theological exercise so that it does not enslave rather than liberate (Nadar 2005: 17, Pui-kan 2005: 60).

The doctrine of *justification by faith alone* was borne out of a historical context within a given culture in order to help people appropriate it in their day to day life experiences (Nörnberger 2005:15-17). The background study showed that though the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is a cardinal doctrine of the Lutheran Church, it has not been given the commensurate attention it deserves by many branches of the Lutheran churches including the LCCN. Consequently, the understanding of *justification by faith alone* is inadequate, and conversely too its interpretation by the LCCN is adversely impacted by such an understanding. For a deeper and fuller understanding of the doctrine within the LCCN to be achieved, its translation into the local languages is required, in order for it to be comprehended by the recipients in their local dialects. For the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to maintain its relevance in all ages and cultures, there is need for it to form part of contextual theological education for the training of both clergy and laity.

The current chapter is concerned with how the LCCN's interpretation can be enhanced through contextualization, taking into consideration the following reasons: the dialectic relationship between text and context in expressing the Christian faith; the role of environment in developing theologies and the incarnational nature of God as the foundation of Christian theology (Patte 2010:277). Also commenting on the interaction between the Word and world, Dean S. Gilliland (1989: 10) says: "The issue at hand is the way in which the Word, as Scripture and the Word as revealed in the truths of culture interact in determining Christian truth for a given people and place."

The above mentioned factors correspond with my reasons for choosing the three theories employed in this study. The objective of this chapter is to examine the role of culture, translation, and theological education on Martin Luther's position on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* and how he transmitted this to his audience. To achieve this objective, the three theoretical assumptions namely, gospel and culture in dialogue theory; translatability theory; and contextual theological education theory are discussed.

Research has been done with regards to gospel and culture in dialogue and contextualization and reactions to missionary activities and colonialism. However, the focus of this study is not in that direction but rather on what role can these theories play in the understanding, interpretation and appropriation of *justification by faith alone* by the LCCN's Gongola Diocese. Contextualization in theology has its limitations, and therefore, as mentioned above, a hermeneutic of suspicion is also required (2010: 277). Uwe Flick (2002: 43) describes theories as "versions of the world which undergo additional interpretations of new materials. The starting point is a pre-understanding of the subject or field under study." It is this understanding of theories as described by Flick that will guide the discussion which follows.

## **2.2 Gospel and culture in dialogue theory**

Before discussing the issue of gospel and culture in dialogue, it is necessary to give a working definition of some concepts such as gospel, culture, intercultural communication and inculturation.

Scholars have argued that the term culture has no single definition, and as such Robert J. Schreier describes culture as "a notoriously slippery concept with no agreed upon definition" (2000: 29; see also Hewitt 2002: 40). According to Luzbetak, early definitions of culture though useful, were descriptive rather than essential in nature (1988: 134). In a later attempt

to define culture, Schreiter uses a semiotic definition as developed by Jens Loenhoff to describe the tripartite dimensions of culture. According to this definition, culture is ideational, performance and material. Schreiter maintains that:

First of all, culture is ideational- it provides systems or frameworks of meaning which serve both to interpret the world and to provide guidance for living in the world. Culture in this dimension embodies beliefs, values, attitudes, and rules of behaviour. Second, culture is performance - rituals that bind a culture's members together to provide them with a participatory way of embodying and enhancing their histories and values. .... Third, culture is material - the artifacts and symbolizations that become a source for identity: language, food, clothing, music and the organization of space (2000: 29).

Central to Schreiter's definition of culture is the idea of communication in that all the three dimensions outlined communicate a statement about the distinctive features of a group. Newbigin for his part defines culture as "the sum total of ways of living developed by a group of human beings and handed on from generation to generation" (1990: 3). Hewitt sees culture as "the totality of what constitutes life and gives people their identity within a community" (2002: 41).

What then is the gospel? According to Lesslie Newbigin, the gospel means the proclamation of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and this is culture embodied (1990: 3-4). Edmund Schlink defines the gospel as "the word of Christ's work, the assurance of forgiveness, the means by which faith is created, and, beyond this, the power which renews the old man and produces new obedience out of corruption" (1961: 104).

From the above definitions of culture and the gospel, it is, evident that the two are related especially in the way the latter is lived and communicated culturally.

### **2.2.1 The historical background of the gospel and culture debate**

Mike Goheen (2000: 1) asserts that, "the relationship between the gospel and culture is not a new subject." He mentions the work of H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) *Christ and Culture* as a classical text that gave fresh impetus to the debate. Another work that addressed the issue of gospel and culture is by Paul Tillich titled *Theology of Culture* (1959). Goheen observes that despite these efforts, mainstream western scholarship has not appropriated this tradition "to shed light on the subject of gospel and culture" (2000:1). Goheen posits that Lesslie

Newbigin's (1986) work made a major contribution in addressing the relationship between gospel and culture. According to Roderick Hewitt, the dialogue between gospel and culture owes its origin to "the encounter between traditional Judaic Christianity and Hellenist Christians and their culture (Acts 6)" (Hewitt 2002: 36). Hewitt goes on to argue that since that encounter, this issue "has always been with the life and work of the church" (2002: 35). The argument of Goheen and Hewitt is that discussion on the relationship between gospel and culture is not a new development, indeed it has a long-standing history going back to the beginning of Christianity. Most of these on-going discussions have tended to take place in the Europe and North America, while the global south has not been very actively involved in this matter.

However, more recent developments show that the issue of gospel and culture has attracted the attention of scholars from the south as well. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)<sup>17</sup> in its contribution to the debate at its 1997 meeting in Debrecen made the following statement:

Today a theological shift has taken place. Western theology is no longer the universal norm for understanding the gospel. Particular interpretations of the gospels are emerging from cultures or subcultures employing their own distinctive images and experience, e.g. Minjung theology from Korea, Dalit theology from India, feminist theology, Afro-American womanist theology, coconut theology from the Pacific, bamboo theology in Asia and among Asian expatriates, liberation theologies from Latin America, and mango tree theology from Bali. These theologies are redefining the relationship between gospel and cultures.<sup>18</sup>

This theological shift places a burden on the church in every culture to reinterpret the gospel in its own particular context. In this study I am going to examine voices on this issue from both the north and the south, but using the works of Kwame Bediako and Lamin Sanneh as my foundation for this exercise.

### **2.2.2 Gospel and culture in dialogue**

Martin Luther saw the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* as a summary of the gospel (good news). The gospel is also seen as another culture – the gospel culture, or the gospel

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<sup>17</sup> WARC is now known as World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

<sup>18</sup> WARC, Gospel and cultures Study texts Debrecen 1997 <http://www.warc.ch/where/23gc/study/stud12.html> accessed 20/04/2012.

way of life. However, added to this, to be effective, the gospel and culture also needs to engage each other meaningfully in each cultural context. Therefore, to arrive at a proper interpretation of the doctrine of justification the role of both gospel and culture is very crucial. This is because it facilitates understanding as the two engage each other in a dialogue. This engagement will afford the recipient culture to see and appreciate the gospel as truly the good news that addresses them in their specific cultural life experiences. The main thrust of gospel and culture theory is dialogue, where the areas of apparent divergence and suspicion are addressed with the aim of creating understanding and accommodation. Similarly, dialogue aims at communicating one's position to the other person, once there is a barrier to this communication either as a result of contempt or lack of attention there will be no progress. As one party becomes assertive, dialogue can turn out to be imbalanced and the result will be lack of understanding, more resentment and resistance (Mbillah 2010:112). However, it is pertinent to state that the gospel and culture in dialogue theory does not claim to provide all the answers to the question of how to arrive at a perfect interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. This dialogue though plausible has its own challenges and limitations too, but generally, it gives us an insight into the real situation and confirms the statement that:

All theological understanding of the Bible must be seen as an interpretation that uses cultural categories and meanings in a particular context to give expression to the gospel of God. To continue to improve our theological understanding, we need to work at letting the Bible's story, which is mediated from within diverse cultural perspectives speak to us on its terms, while also taking into account the potentially limiting character of our own cultural perspective (Hunsberger and Van Gelder 1996: 173).

The above statement acknowledges two things relating to cultural context: on one hand it should not be ignored because of its significance; on the other hand, its limitations should also not be overlooked. I am aware that this dialogue can be used negatively because one cultural interpretation can come to dominate another, and because in each culture there are elements that may be limiting or even in opposition with the gospel. However in this study dialogue is employed as a theory to create an enabling environment for proper engagement between gospel and culture that will lead to right interpretation and understanding of the doctrine of justification.

Despite the above mentioned emphasis on the need for dialogue between gospel and culture, the Lutheran mission to Nigeria did not take into account the cultural context of its target audience seriously. According to Mogens Jensen (1992):

He [Brønnum] regarded them [the indigenous people] as being of a lower cultural state, making even greater demands on missionaries' tact and intellectual superiority. He described them as being ignorant in the religious sphere and stupid in their assessment of the power structure in their country (1992: 125).

Brønnum's position as expressed above has blocked the chances of any acculturative process within the Nigerian context. It therefore means that the missionary did not employ intercultural communication in transmitting the gospel to the people. Brønnum's failure to see the similarities between the cultural practices of this people with European cultures (1992: 125) suggests two things: that he was either ignorant of such commonalities or that he was being true to his feelings of disdain for the culture of the people. According to Imasogie, "Lack of sensitivity to the dynamic nature of theological enterprise made most missionaries unresponsive to the world view and self-understanding of the Africans they encountered, as well as the role of culture in perception that results from that world view" (1983: 23). How then could an informed understanding and interpretation of *justification by faith alone* emerge under such circumstances?

#### **2.2.2.1 Bediako on the gospel and culture**

Bediako (2006) in his work on the relationship between the gospel and culture begins by defining what the terms gospel and culture mean and follows on by saying that scripture is about God's activity among human beings in their culture. Scripture tells us "about God's engagement with culture and serves as our model for subsequent engagements of [g]ospel and culture in the continuing divine-human encounter that characterizes our faith" (2006: 3).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Bediako posits that,

We are not going to find once and for all the biblical answers to a particular cultural problem. It does not work like that because gospel and culture engagement is not about the biblical 'answer' to issues. It is about how a community and people come to see themselves as called into the people of God and how they come to participate in that community (2001: 6).

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<sup>19</sup> See also John S. Mbiti, 1980. "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion" in *Christian Century*, <http://www.christiancentury.org> accessed 11/04/2009.

For people to appreciate the gospel properly, they should be allowed to understand and appropriate it in their cultural context. The gospel should be allowed to address people as they are, and should reach them only once they become different or once they conform (depending on one's perspective); only then can people hear the gospel speaking to them as it addresses their felt needs and engages with the values they hold.

Mugambi (1995) agrees with Bediako on the need for an engagement between gospel and culture. For him the gospel “becomes rooted when the converts live it in their lives with full appreciation of their cultural and religious heritage, not when they theorize about it” (1995: 66). However, Mugambi laments that the modern missionary enterprise in Africa attempted to assimilate African cultures into their own home cultures. This practice creates the sense of contempt toward the converts' culture and imposes the culture of the missionary on them; the result of such exercise is that, “African Christians have in fact adopted superficial norms and conventions to satisfy the missionaries' demands, while remaining deeply committed to their own cultural and religious heritage” (1995: 95-96).

The picture which Mugambi describes is the result of the absence of proper engagement between the gospel and culture. Therefore, during a situation of crisis, the converts will return to their former culture and will indeed come to resent the culture of the missionary since there was no genuine commitment to it from them. Mugambi further advocates for a harmony between the essentials of the gospel and various cultures. This way, “the tension between the universal appeal of the gospel and the particular cultural expressions of responses to its message” will be adequately addressed (1995: 100). Dialogue between the gospel as represented by the missionary and the culture of the people will create understanding that may lead to genuine conversion.

Mbiti (1980) in “The encounter of the Christian faith and the African religion” agrees with Bediako. He says that “African Traditional Religion has equipped people to listen to the gospel, discover meaningful passages in the Bible and to avoid unhealthy religious conflict”. This is because African traditional religious practices prepare people to accept the Christian faith within the ambit of their cultural life. He further opines that “no viable theology can grow in Africa without addressing itself to the interreligious phenomenon at work there.”<sup>20</sup> This implies that every genuine theological exercise must engage itself with the cultural

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<sup>20</sup> See also John S. Mbiti, 1980. “The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion” in *Christian Century*, <http://www.christiancentury.org> accessed 2009/04/11.

context in which it is developed. This approach will not only make theological exercise rich in content, but it will also be accessible, acceptable and allow it have an impact on the society. Most of the members of African churches were at one time or the other adherents of African Traditional Religion; hence, their religious background should be taken into consideration in any theological exercise.

Theology should not only be the property of the elites for academic exercise; rather, it should be embraced by the entire society and all should be made to see it as speaking to them as they are, in their cultural conditioning. Dialogue between the gospel and culture will help bring the two together and create a love for the gospel and the Christian faith because of this friendly atmosphere.

In her contribution to the discussion, Kanyoro (2002) focuses on religious experiences and advocates for making connections between faith and actions because theology is no longer an intellectual exercise; it also involves the expression of the religious experiences of the people. People tell about their experiences of God within their cultural context and these experiences form the bedrock of how they conceive of and relate with God. Therefore she says, “Analysing both the personal and communal experiences in religion and culture will help clear the African Christian’s dilemma on [g]ospel and culture” (2002:19). In Africa, people’s religious experiences cannot be separated from their life experiences, because who they are as a people is very much tied to their social history and the role of religion in that history.

Both Landman (2001) and Oduyoye (2002) in their separate works acknowledge the significance of dialogue between gospel and culture (2001: 90 and 2002: 18). In an earlier publication, Oduyoye argues that “the emphasis of the Evangelical missionaries was on the individual, the context from which people came did not matter and was not seriously studied” (1991: 40). The community life of the people was replaced by individualism, as new converts were set apart in “Christian villages” creating a divide between relations. Again, since the context of the people was not seriously studied, there was no dialogue and engagement between the culture of the people and the gospel proclaimed by the missionaries. Elsewhere Oduyoye (1995) contends that:

There is nowhere in the human community where Christ is completely at home, and human beings at home with having Christ as neighbour, kin and friend. When therefore we try to study Christianity and African cultures, we ought to do so

conscious that we study Christianity in human cultures. ... We are dealing with two living organisms - Christianity and culture. For both only an integrated approach will suffice (1995: 88).

Oduyoye's position is a challenge to those who believe that their culture is perfect and superior to other cultures and who therefore would like to impose their culture on others. It draws attention to the need to respect and appreciate the contributions that each culture brings to the growth of Christianity.

In the same vein, the Lausanne Movement after reviewing the work of evangelization saw the need for finding new means for conducting global evangelization. To that effect, the Lausanne Covenant in paragraph 10 states that:

The development of strategies for World Evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. ....<sup>21</sup>

The two sided nature of culture as good (liberating) and bad (oppressive)<sup>22</sup> makes it imperative to encourage dialogue between culture and the gospel, because the liberative elements will be sensitive to the gospel, opening up windows of opportunities for the transformation of the oppressive aspects of a given culture (Villa-Vicencio and Niehaus 1995: 73). The situation where in the course of transmitting the gospel people are expected to become detached from their culture or look down on their culture as inferior or evil, as discussed above, does no justice to the gospel. Therefore, Schreiter argues that, "the message cannot be considered transmitted until a good deal of give-and-take between the hearer and

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<sup>21</sup> Lausanne Movement, "Lausanne Covenant 1974, Paragraph 10". <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant.html> accessed 8/9/2009.

<sup>22</sup> Cole Fischer expresses concern about how culture is sometimes used as a pretext for the continued subservience of women, hence it becomes oppressive than liberating. Fischer argues that for "culture to be liberating, it must be rooted in the real lives of women, and both women and men's experiences must be seen as an integral part of local culture". Be that as it may, the fact remains that culture – whether liberative or oppressive – is for men and women an essential theological source, an inescapable medium for gospel expression. Cole Fischer, "A decade of discovery" in Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, (ed.), *In search of a round table: Gender, Theology and Church leadership*, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1997, p. 160.

speaker has occurred in a hospitable, non-dominating kind of way” (2000: 35-36). Schreiter’s assertion challenges both the transmitter of the gospel and the recipient to accept and respect each other, in order for an effective intercultural communication to take place.

According to Leslie Newbigin (1989) religions are multicultural; therefore cultural variations in the way that people express the Christian faith are inevitable (1989: 184). To judge other people’s culture using one’s culture suggests a lack of understanding of culture and Newbigin refers to such an attitude as cultural imperialism, which was the approach of the early missionaries (1989: 197). According to Newbigin, “the African world view and pattern of living is nearer to the biblical model than the European or Western” (1989: 188). If this is the case, why did the missionaries fail to use the scripture in their judgement of African cultures; and why did they rather use their own culture as a measurement or standard by which to condemn these African cultures? Elsewhere Newbigin states that, “Western missionaries have confused culturally conditioned perceptions with the substance of the gospel and thus wrongfully claimed divine authority for the relativities of one culture” (1990: 2). The implication of what Newbigin describes is that Christianity becomes synonymous with Western culture, and that this interpretation of the Christian faith must be embraced universally. However, Newbigin describes modern Western culture as a pagan society which is far more resistant to the gospel than the pre-Christian paganism with which the cross-cultural missions have been familiar (1990: 20). Indeed, according to Newbigin, “the Bible and the church are desacralized in modern Western culture” (1990: 42-43). This further calls to question the position of authority which missionaries ascribe to Western culture, and also emphasises the need for the dialogue of the gospel with all cultures while highlighting that intercultural communication is imperative. If Christianity were to assume one ‘universal culture’ namely the European culture, what will become of Christianity now that Western culture is – as described by Newbigin - bankrupt (1989: 191)? Therefore, Newbigin advocates for a practical approach in addressing the relationship between the gospel and human cultures rather than the more theoretical stance that is in place. He argues that, “It is only by being faithful participants in a supranational, multicultural family of churches that we can find the resources to be at the same time faithful sustainers and cherishers of our respective cultures and also faithful critics of them” (1989: 197). This perspective of seeing both the missionary and the converts as faithful participants in the missio-cultural work of the Lutheran mission to Nigeria is missing. Had the Lutheran missionaries viewed their converts

as faithful participants, would that have affected their appropriation of the Christian faith in their cultural context? (See chapters six and seven for discussions on this).

### **2.2.2.2 Sanneh on the gospel and culture**

Sanneh (1995) asserts that though the gospel has its own intrinsic power, it cannot be stripped of all cultural entanglements. According to Sanneh (1995: 47), “a central and obvious fact of the gospel is that we cannot separate it from culture.... The pure gospel, stripped of all cultural entanglements, would evaporate in a vague abstraction.” He further opines that what people need to wrestle with is how to identify this intrinsic power of the gospel, while at the same time taking note of the necessary cultural factor. According to him, this can only be made possible if one understands Christianity as a force for cultural integration (1995: 47).

Another important aspect of dialogue is that it helps identify areas of difference which prepares the ground for accepting the other person as they are. According to Sanneh (2003), “Without difference dialogue would be moot. If you feel the need to conceal what you believe for fear of difference, then dialogue becomes just a show and agreement an illusion” (2003: 6). That is to say, people should be open in dialogue; likewise, there should be openness in the dialogue between the gospel and culture. When the gospel and the culture of the people are engaged in dialogue, the differences between the two can be addressed, thereby creating room for a proper understanding and appropriation of the gospel and doctrines by the people in their context. There should be room for change and for the accommodation of new ideas and practices.

Sanneh contends that the central issue concerning the relationship between the gospel and culture lies in these factors of paradox (Sanneh 1995: 47). By paradox he means that culture is both a natural ally and a natural foe for the gospel. Culture is a natural ally to the gospel because of their same origin - God; yet, it is a natural foe because of conflict in interest due to the fall of humanity since concepts of sin are culturally, but also scripturally and theologically determined and there can be conflict in the designation, from the viewpoint of the gospel, of some cultural practices as “good” or “bad”. One can infer here that these factors of paradox are a consequence of the fall referred to by Bediako, Mbiti and in the Lausanne Covenant above. Sanneh uses the language of dualism to describe the relationship between culture and gospel, viewing the two as separate entities which in some cases may

conflict with one another, while Newbigin and other scholars see the two as one inseparable unit. Two steps may be taken with regard to dealing with these paradoxes; first, identify them and second, engage with them in both the transmission of the gospel and in theological exercise.

Writing on the issue of African theology, Pobee (1997) identifies the biblical tradition and African traditional religions as the two major sources of African theology. According to Pobee the two should be closely studied to draw out their similarities and differences in order to serve the needs of the Christian community (1997: 23). Pobee posits that African culture does not only refer to past traditions, but also to what is happening now. He says that theology aims at interpreting the Christian faith in the present context through dialogue between the Christian faith and African culture. According to Pobee, “African theology is concerned to interpret essential Christian faith in authentic African language in the flux and turmoil of our time, so that there may be genuine dialogue between the Christian faith and African cultures” (1997: 27).

If African culture is accepted as one of the sources of African theology as proposed by Pobee and his colleagues, then dialogue between the gospel (Christian faith) and the African culture is not an option but a necessity. However, Sanneh’s (1993) admonition on sensibility, meaning that blind acceptance should not be the order of the day, is important as a guide in this dialogue. He states, “It is thus pertinent to observe that it is not only religious sensibility which leads Christians to distinguish between Christ and culture, it is sensibility also for what promotes authentic culture” (1993:149; see also Niebuhr 1956: 190-192).<sup>23</sup>

Charles Kraft (1984) corroborates Sanneh and adds that “God the author of reality exists outside any culture” (1984: 300). Human beings are bound by cultural conditioning to perceive and interpret what they see of reality in ways appropriate to these conditionings. Since human beings differ culturally and otherwise, their perceptions of this reality also differ from culture to culture in keeping with their cultural conditioning (1984:301). Therefore, it is not fair to impose a theological system from one culture on another culture without giving the

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<sup>23</sup> See also Angus J. L. Menuge, “Niebuhr’s Christ and Culture Re-examined” from *Christ and Culture in Dialogue, Issues, Etc.* <http://www.issuesetc.org/> accessed 4/3/2010; D.J. Chuang, “Embodying Christianity beyond Cultures” <http://www.djchuang.com/doc/embodychrist.htm> accessed 13/3/2010; and Lausanne Movement, “Lausanne Covenant 1974, Paragraph 10” <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant.htmln> accessed 8/8/2009.

recipient culture the opportunity to express their own perceptions of reality (including the interpretation of justification) in ways appropriate to their cultural conditioning.

Triebel (1992) agrees that the gospel has cultural wrappings or cultural clothes. Therefore, wherever it is preached, the recipients understand it better within their culture because it addresses them directly. Consequently, he asserts that,

The Gospel has and had to be received in a cultural system and in cultural patterns. It had to be integrated somehow into an existing „design for living’ in order to be understood by the people and then had to change or modify that design from inside and by that to make it more open for a better, deeper, and clearer understanding of the Gospel (1992: 233-235).

Triebel joins other scholars in criticizing the way theology is done in the Western cultural framework and advocates for a theological exercise that reflects the theologian’s own cultural context. To shed more light on his position, Triebel quotes Padilla who says, “It is only as the word of God becomes flesh in the people of God that the [g]ospel takes shape within culture...the [g]ospel is never to be merely a message in words but a message incarnate in his church and through it, in culture” (Padilla in Triebel 1992: 239). This position poses a challenge to the West who sees their culture as superior to other cultures on one hand and a call to Africans to appreciate their own culture on the other hand. Furthermore, it calls on African theologians to do theology in African cultural framework. Osadolor Imasogie (1983) shares the same concern and posits that “Even the best Western theological thinking has been found by non-Westerners to be answering questions that they are simply not asking, while completely ignoring questions about which they are desperately concerned” (1983: 8-9; see also Ukpong 1995: 3-4). Imasogie’s assertion implies two things, on one hand; there is no room for dialogue in this kind of situation; on the other hand, an absence of intercultural communication.

The gospel and culture theory approach advocates for a dialogue between the two. Hastings as quoted by Ross (2002) says that “theology is essentially a dialogue between the biblical text and the vernacular and culture has been the primary dialogue partner for theology” (Hastings in Ross 2002: 3). Dialogue will enable the community to integrate the past and the present, as well as where they are coming from and where they are today, not cutting them off from their past history. Dialogue also helps the Christian scholar to be sensitive to cultural

realities. Ross cautions however that a “faith and culture approach tends to posit an engagement between a static religious entity and a timeless sphere of culture” (2002: 3 and Theissen 2007: 11-13). Where there is insensitivity to cultural realities which are not timeless but which change over time, there can be no fruitful intercultural engagement. This will in turn affect how the message of the gospel is translated, interpreted and communicated. The strength of the dialogue between gospel and culture is in how the message is allowed to become incarnated and translated into the people’s language and culture. This leads to the question, what role can translation play in the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?

### **2.3 Translatability theory**

Translation is always done with the aim of enhancing communication and comprehension of the message by the targeted audience. The translation could be that of a written document from one language to the recipient’s language, or of an idea from one culture into its equivalent in another culture, or indeed another religious faith. The theory of the translatability of both the scripture and the message of the Christian faith into the vernacular language of the people aims at communicating the Christian faith to the recipients in a familiar language.

Sanneh (2003) posits that translation is not an option for Christianity; this is because translation is the foundation of the Christian faith as, “the New Testament gospel is a translated version of the message of Jesus” (2003: 97). He argues that without translation there will be no Christianity or Christians, because translation is what makes Christianity a dynamic organ that touches the life and experiences of people. Sanneh argues that the reality of Jesus Christ being a universal figure and his message of good news to the world is only made practical through the medium of translation. Thus, translation places the Christian faith and the gospel within reach to all people as they hear it expressed in ordinary everyday language (2003: 97-98). Translation creates an open atmosphere between the gospel message and the recipients, removing that which makes it secretive. According to Sanneh, “Traditionally the hallowed language of religion is designed to mystify, to incriminate, to overwhelm, and to induce a mood of guilt and moral peril” (2003: 100). Religion viewed from such perspectives is no longer a bearer of good news that liberates, but that which enslaves and dominates and cannot be reflected upon because it has not been adequately understood or comprehended. However, through translation into everyday language, the

Christian faith and the gospel have been liberated from the monopoly of a particular language and culture.

Elsewhere Sanneh (1990) further states that language plays a vital role in defining who we are as a people. As he puts it, “language is the soul of a people; it is also the garment that gives shape, decorum, and vitality to conscious life, enabling us to appreciate the visible texture of life in its subtle, intricate variety and possibility” (1990: 200). To maximally utilize the role of language in communicating the Christian faith, translation plays a significant role. Translatability also serves as an agent of change, equipping “persons and societies with the reason for change and the language with which to effect it” (1990: 207).

Central to Sanneh’s theory of translatability is the idea of local (dynamic) equivalents, adaptation and incarnation of the word. Sanneh (1990: 3) says, “When the missionaries adopted the vernacular, it meant adopting indigenous cultural criteria for the message. It meant respect for the people’s culture and integrity.” This is because language and culture are the roots of the people. To quote Sanneh:

Concerning the role of language, it is important to hold in our mind that in traditional societies, language and culture are closely intertwined and that in religion both are promoted in an integrated, dynamic way. Therefore missionary translations appealed to the very roots of these societies, touching the springs of life and imagination in real, enduring ways (1993: 141).

The sole aim of translation is to optimally reach out to the target audience in a way that will have a lasting effect on their life. The most effective way to do that is to use that upon which the audience’s life revolves, in this case, language and culture. With regards to the connection between language, culture and the mental composition of people, the three are inseparable and together they determine the action and responses of people to issues. In this respect, the transmission of the Christian faith will suffer a huge set back if it neglects the language, culture and mental construction of its target audience. To buttress on this point, Sanneh quotes Westermann thus:

Language and the mental life are so closely connected that any educational work which does not take into consideration the inseparable unity between African language and African thinking is based on false principles and must lead to an alienation of the individual

from his (sic) own self, his (sic) past, his (sic) traditions and his (sic) people (Westermann in Sanneh 1993: 107).

From the above statement it is apparent that the impartation of education itself happens through the process of translation and that translation is an important tool in enhancing inter- and intra-human cultural relationships. Translation helps us to identify and appreciate the diverse nature and richness of various cultures. It also helps us to be more critical of ourselves as we see both limitations and progress in our various cultures. It further enhances our commitment to the particular and specific aspects of our own cultural elements and heritage.

Sanneh enumerates some benefits of translation as he concludes his discussion on the value of culture and language in transmitting and appropriating the message. First according to Sanneh, language is instrumental in function and contextual in character and this has encouraged the role of recipient cultures as decisive for the final appropriation of the message. Second, translation makes religious faith and organization open and public by enabling pluralism in language and culture, granting a free and equal access to the things of God to all. Third, translation creates an inclusive principle whereby no culture is excluded from the Christian dispensation or judged solely by Western cultural criteria (1990: 208).

What Sanneh outlines as the benefits of translation adequately highlights on some of the crucial issues related to my study. First, his points on translation will help to enhance interpretation and appropriation of the doctrine of justification. Second, his portrayal of translation as the best means to address the challenges of pluralism of religions and cultures in the 21st century is useful as a tool which can hold together a doctrine as an entity, but in an entirely inclusive way. This is because by nature translation is pluralistic and that notion can help create the spirit of unity in diversity, but without losing the essence of the message, whilst simultaneously promoting justice and equality. This is relevant to the present study because the context is pluralistic and because justification is also itself linked to justice and equality.

Collaborating on this Kraft (1984) argues that, “this way of doing theology with an eye on translating the Christian message into ever changing and always particular contexts is no more than a recovery of the original spirit of Christian theologizing” (1984: 295-296). In other words, before the Greek language enslaved the Christian message, it was accessible to

its host culture in the local language through translation by formal correspondence, and not word for word.

Satari (1996) corroborates Kraft where he says, “It is not a translation of mere words but rather the translation of concepts and meanings in such a way that the message takes up residence in a new culture or different meaning structure” (1996: 271). Translatability in this respect affords the recipient a new meaning of the message and gives them the sense of “self-realization and cultural fulfilment” (1996: 275). Translation bridges the gap between academic language and the ordinary everyday language of the people as religious truths are made accessible to all. Translation and translatability gives life to the dynamic relationship between gospel and culture, while at the same time affirming that no single culture has the exclusive right to truth. However, Satari contends that “genuine translation requires an on-going critical interaction between the gospel and culture” (1996: 275) with openness from both. Translation requires caution, openness, participation, adaptability, positive critical attitude and affirmation so that there will be no room for suspicion (1996: 275).

Bediako (1995) agrees with both Sanneh and Kraft on translation. He says, “The ability to hear and to express in one’s own language one’s response to the message which one receives, must lie at the heart of all religious encounters with the divine realm” (1995: 60). Translatability theory takes translation to the next level, from scripture to the message of the Christian faith (and doctrine) into the vernacular. Bediako describes translatability as “the capacity of the essential impulses of the Christian religion to be transmitted and assimilated in a different culture so that these impulses create dynamically equivalent responses in the course of such transmission” (1995: 119).

Translatability theory makes the message of the gospel accessible to the local people as it removes the language barrier in expressing vital aspects of the gospel truth including doctrinal concepts. To this end, Bediako argues that, “the translatability of the Christian religion signifies its fundamental relevance and accessibility to persons in any culture within which the Christian faith is transmitted and assimilated” (1995: 109). Furthermore, he argues that translatability conforms to the Christian “doctrine of the [i]ncarnation, by which the fullest divine communication has reached beyond human words into the human form itself”. The idea of the incarnation serves as a major motivation for the translation of the Christian faith and the Christian message into vernacular languages, since God indeed can be said to

have “translated” Godself into Jesus through the incarnation, making God accessible to human kind.

Bediako contends that for African theology to have a meaningful impact in the African context, it must be done in or translated into the vernacular languages of the people. In keeping with his idea of indigeneity, he says that a truly indigenous church should be a translating church so as to appeal “to the heart of the culture of its context”. He agrees with John Pobee who argues that theology in the vernacular serves as “the means for assuming the weight of a culture” in addition to enhancing communication. This according to him should not only be seen as a cultural issue but a theological necessity as well. Being a theological necessity makes translation and translatability a vital tool for creating an informed interpretation of *justification by faith alone*. Viewed from this perspective, this will make African theology both ecumenical and relevant in addressing the real needs of Christianity in African life (1995: 72-73 and Pobee 1979: 24-52).

Translatability is a vital element in helping the church offer an adequate interpretation of the Christian faith that will elicit genuine and correct response. It makes the Christian faith a truly universal and incarnational faith that is at home in every human culture. It gives people the feeling that God speaks their local language and in this way they will be motivated to pay more attention to the message of the Christian faith.

Another scholar who has commented on the translatability theory is Iser, who identified two levels of translation, namely language translation and cultural translation. The major focus of his paper is on cultural translation which he says aims to create “mutual understanding of the culture and the specificity of the culture encountered”. For cultural translation to be successful there have to be some adjustments in either of the cultures involved in order to accommodate what does not fit. Iser holds that cultural translation is required more in a multicultural society where there is a struggle for dominance, because it allows each culture a place in the sun. This is very relevant to my study as Nigeria is a multicultural society, as is the Diocese under study. To shed more light on what he means by translatability and encounter, Iser says:

Translatability aims at comprehension, whereas encounters between cultures or interactions between levels of culture involve either assimilation or appropriation by making inroads into one another, trying to get out of a different culture or the different

intra-cultural levels what seems attractive, useful or what has to be combated and suppressed for whatever reasons.<sup>24</sup>

Iser's position points towards the facilitation of intercultural communication since through translation the recipients' culture engages with the culture of the transmitter and that of the scripture.

According to Stephen Bevans (2003) the translation model is guided by the understanding that all cultures have the same basic structure although they have different ways of expression and modes of human behaviours that are unique. This understanding creates the desire to look for corresponding meanings of concepts in other cultures in order to get a message across. In this sense, the task of translation in theologizing is to translate the meaning of doctrines into another cultural context where they can be understood in terms of existing ideas or concepts. Bevans was quick to add that in the course of translation, those doctrines might "look and sound quite different from their original formulation" (2003: 39). Despite the appearance of difference, the context of contextual theology should be shaped and formed by the reality of the gospel message itself. The reality of the gospel should be allowed to engage with every culture it encounters in the course of the transmission of the gospel. According to Newbigin, "True contextualization accords the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol share some aspects of their structure..." (Newbigin in Bevans 2003:120). Therefore, the success of contextual theology to a large extent lies in a genuine analysis of the context and respect it for all its worth.

Since theology is meant to help people to understand the gospel of God's activity in the world and God's plan for human beings as recorded in the scriptures, through critical discernment; this approach will bring to fruition the essence of theology. Therefore, after a process of critically coming to understand with the text's inner meaning, there is need for its translation into the people's own cultural context.<sup>25</sup>

Maluleke (1996) evaluates Sanneh's and Bediako's writings on the theory of translatability and identifies some flaws in their position on un-ideological Christianity, which according to

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<sup>24</sup> Wolfgang Iser, "On Translatability" <http://www.pum.umontreal.ca/revues/surfaces/thematique/vol4/iser.html> accessed 27/2/2010

<sup>25</sup> Lausanne Movement, "The Willow Bank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture", 1978 (Lausanne Occasional Paper 2) <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant.html> accessed 8/8/2009.

him is extreme reductionism. The other flaw has to do with viewing culture and traditions as mere preparations for the gospel, as in Mbiti. He argues on regarding the first perceived flaw, that Christianity has always been appropriated ideologically; and as concerns the second flaw, he states that African culture and tradition deserve more respect than accorded it by these scholars (1996: 9-11). Bergmann (2003: 88) shares the same view with Maluleke. In spite of the above flaws and limitations of translatability highlighted by Maluleke, translatability theory remains relevant for my study because it creates a ground for comprehension. The aim of any theological exercise should be to create dynamic equivalent responses, not to replicate existing concepts without consideration to local cultures, and this is what the theory of translatability projects.

Edward Bolaji Idowu (1965), speaking in the context of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion, laments that translation into Nigerian languages has not been given adequate attention. Focusing on the translation of the Bible, Idowu argues that, “We find thus, that on the whole, translations of the Bible into Nigerian languages are translations of translations, products of round-about processes which, inevitably, often end either in linguistic or idiomatic confusion” (1965: 16). According to Idowu, most Bible translations in Nigerian languages are difficult for the local Christians to read as a result (1975: 14-16). What Idowu says of the Anglican Church and its Bible translation exercises applies to the LCCN as well. In the LCCN, only the Hausa and the English translations of the Bible are read, although the Bible or parts of thereof, has been translated into other languages<sup>26</sup>. He therefore calls for the involvement of specialists in biblical languages and scholarship. According to Idowu, these should be people who are familiar with local idioms and are “specialists in linguistics with particular reference to each Nigerian language into which the Bible is being translated” (1965: 17). What Idowu notes regarding Bible translation is applicable to the transmission of theological interpretations also. The latter should aim at communicating the meaning of theological perspectives to hearers in the most effective and appropriate ways. Idowu’s argument boils down to two issues. First, the question of how the church can effectively translate, interpret and communicate the gospel to hearers appropriately; and second, it points to the link between translation and requisite theological training. The kind of theological training that will be effective must be contextual, and this is what the next section seeks to examine.

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<sup>26</sup> An example is the Lunguda translation of the New Testament which people find it difficult to read and understand.

## **2.4 Contextual theological education for training of clergy and laity theory**

Theological education in Africa is first of all aimed at producing personnel for the church ministry or church leadership before any other thing else. The exercise of critical reflection, either on the theology itself or on the audience to whom this theology was to be transmitted, did not occupy a centre stage in early theological training. Therefore, Kanyoro (1997: 64) argues that for effective training of these personnel, the “leadership training needs a context to define its content” otherwise the leaders so trained will find it difficult to meet the needs of their members, including their need for sound yet accessible theological interpretation. Contextualization is a way of giving the Christian faith and doctrines a sense of belonging in God’s scheme of affairs. It helps keep people in touch with their real life experiences in a manner that is relevant to their context. Wan’s (1999) and Tienou’s (1982) definitions of contextualization are a good starting point for my discussion in this section. Wan says that contextualization refers to “the effort of formulating, presenting and practising the Christian faith in such a way that it is relevant to the cultural context of the target group in terms of conceptualization, expression, and application; yet maintaining theological coherence, biblical integrity and theoretical consistency” (1999: 13). For the LCCN to arrive at an informed interpretation of *justification by faith alone*, these elements highlighted by Wan are crucial so that teachings can be “packaged” and “received” effectively, yet also remain authentic biblically and theologically. Tienou sees contextualization not as a process of borrowing from existing theologies to fit them into various contexts, but rather argues that it involves “capturing the meaning of the gospel in such a way that a given society communicates with God” (1982: 51). Central in Tienou’s definition is the desire to accord people the right to hear God speak to them as they are in their own peculiar cultural context. From the statements of these two scholars, one can deduce that contextualization is concerned with making theological exercise and theology relevant and accessible to people in their local contexts, and yet maintaining the original message at its core.

Thus the renewed emphasis for contextualization confirms the desire to communicate the Christian faith interculturally, and by extension this applies to the whole theological exercise too, since theology has always been done contextually. Therefore, in order to engage in contextual theologizing, there is need for contextual theological education programmes for the training of clergy and laity. Through the contextual theological exercise, people are connected to the cultural realities of particular social and cultural contexts. Yet, it is also

important to take into account the fact that context is not passive, but has its own biases too which may resist any counter claim to its own stances. Therefore, Sanneh (2003) advises that, “a context- sensitive approach should be responsive without being naïve” (2003: 4). Dean Flemming (2005: 297) corroborates Sanneh and adds that, “This pattern of context-sensitive theologizing legitimates – even mandates – appropriate theological diversity in our own time.” Lack of contextual theological education will not allow the interpretation of theological concepts to be made appealing to the immediate audience. Therefore, through the process of contextualization the gospel truth and theological concepts assume relevance to the receiving culture. Hence, Flemming (2005: 297) further posits that, “The multitextured gospel story must be told and lived out in flexible forms as it engages new contexts”. This idea of flexibility is the strength of Christianity since flexibility affords the Christian faith the power to adapt itself to any culture it encounters. It also helps people to embrace and appropriate the message of the gospel in their lived experiences.

The World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI) aims at “Relating theological education to the realities of particular social and cultural contexts, liberating theological education from any captivity of certain social milieus, cultural one-sidedness and spiritual blindness existing in certain indigenous traditions” (Werner 2009: 162). The imbalance experienced today in theologizing is partly due to the failure in providing a theological education that is contextual. The cultural one-sidedness and spiritual blindness critiqued by WOCATI are the manifestations of the result of this failure.

Both Ortega (2009) and Mugambi (1995) agree with WOCATI’s position on contextual theological education. Ortega contributing to the discussion on the role and goal of WOCATI and the World Council of Churches in providing a contextual and ecumenical theological education says “contextual theological education is driven by the quest to provide quality theological education” (2009: 25). Its quality lies in its depth and relevance. It is relevant because it is practical, addressing the hard realities of people’s daily life experiences (2009: 26-36).

Also stressing the importance of contextual theology, Mugambi gives a working definition of theology as, “the systematic articulation of human response to revelation within a particular situation and context” (1995: 19), that is to say theological formulations have always been contextual in nature. He further contends that, “A theologian cannot theologize in a cultural

vacuum. Theology is always articulated in a particular cultural context, responding to questions which are always culturally conditioned” (1995:20). Mugambi emphasises the need for theological institutions to take into consideration the cultural and religious background of their students in their educational programmes. The situation in which students are out of touch with their cultural and religious heritage makes them strangers in their society. He puts it thus:

One of the fundamental principles of education is the incorporation, in every programme, of the cultural as well as religious heritage of the people for whom the educational system is intended. In fact, the imposition of a foreign culture and religious heritage can only alienate students from the education process. Thus, an educational system which takes into account the cultural and religious heritage of the students for whom it is intended, can help them reconcile the past with the present in their effort to establish new patterns for the future. ... It follows, therefore, that African theological institutions ought to have the African cultural and religious heritage as the foundation of the curriculum (Mugambi 1995: 102-103).

The above statement is made in support of the fact that education by nature is aimed at having a holistic impact on the individual as well as the community life of its immediate environment. As such, keeping students in touch with their roots will give them a sense of belonging as they will be interacting with that which is part of their life background. Contextual theological education is relevant, because it is practical rather than abstract. It is concerned with the felt needs of the people in their practical life situations and issues, be they cultural, social, political or religious. Not only that, but contextualization will also give them the confidence with which to approach their people as these students employ concepts that are both culturally and religiously familiar to them.

Ishmael Noko (1999) the former General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation in his report mentioned four theological challenges facing the body as regards “theology and the church” (1999: 87-88). The second of these challenges which concerns *justification by faith alone* is expressed as follows: “The relevance of the doctrine of justification in light of the fact that the truth of the gospel of justification concerns life and can therefore be communicated only if it is related to the world’s contexts” (1999: 87). Contextual theological education is therefore significant in communicating the message and meaning of *justification by faith alone*.

Feminist theologians are also concerned with the provision of contextual theology that will create space for equal participation. Their theological exercise of cultural hermeneutics focuses on people's experiences. According to Musimbi Kanyoro (2002) the contribution of feminist theologians through cultural hermeneutics is a "necessary tool for those who teach homiletics and pastoral work in seminaries and other clergy institutions" (Kanyoro 2002: 19). In light of this, it could be argued that for the church to interpret correctly the doctrine of justification there is need for a contextual theological education for the training of its clergy and laity in line with WOCATI's aim. This process directs theologians "to the fact that theology needs to interact and dialogue not only with traditional cultural value, but with social change, new ethnic realities and the conflicts that are present ..." (Bevans 2003: 27). Consequent upon that a genuine theological exercise that will elicit "informed and committed responses" will emerge. Though past theological exercises made important contributions to our body of understanding the work and will of God, they best served the needs of that time, while current needs and challenges require contemporary methods and approaches. Therefore, Kraft posits that:

The needs of today's peoples however are not best served by simply adopting the product of past efforts at interpretation. Rather, today's peoples, themselves must engage in the process of developing scriptural interpretations as valid for them in their contexts as past interpretations were for those who developed them in their contexts (1984: 389).

Through contextual theological education, the message of *justification by faith alone* will be enabled to address the issue of justice and equity in the church; for instance, by giving women theologians their rightful place alongside their male counterparts. Anna Mghwira calls on Lutheran women theologians in particular saying, "We must struggle to move beyond ourselves into a deeper examination and critique of our theology and of Luther's theology. ... The perspective we share should help reshape Lutheran theology" (1997: 133-134). The process of this deeper examination and critique of Lutheran theology cannot succeed without a well-articulated contextual theological education in our seminary curriculum.

In this regard, Phiri (2009) in her article "Major challenges for African women theologians in theological education (1989-2008)" identified four challenges facing women theologians in Africa with regards to theological education (2009: 113-115). Phiri shares similar concerns

with Mghwira and expresses the need for collaboration between women theologians and their male counterparts, rather than being seen as competitors against men. Of the four challenges she outlined, the one that is most relevant for this study is the third, „the inclusion of women’s theology in the theological curriculum’. This is because it advocates for a contextual approach to theological education that resonates with my study.

The historical contexts in which past theologies were developed are not the same as the present contexts neither in time nor place, therefore for theologians and theological educators to address their current contexts Kraft’s emphasis on the need to engage ourselves with the felt needs of our people must be taken seriously. This will help us see the dynamic nature of life and of all theological exercise. It will help us interact with our people as we try to understand and address their felt needs as both theological educators and theologians.

The Lutheran World Federation like WOCATI is concerned with the challenges facing African churches with regards to theological education and leadership development. To tackle these challenges, many consultations have been organized, one of which was held in Gaborone Botswana, October 1978. Delegates at that conference observed that current theological education lacks proper adaptation to African cultural heritage because it was imported from the West, and as such they concluded that there is a need to rethink and renew it in line with the African context. This was linked with the issue of how to develop an African approach to theological education “rooted in African forms of ministry and education” (Kinsler 1978: 69). Kinsler’s paper titled “Theological education in African context” tried to address some of the challenges that call for the development of a contextual theological education programme. He argues that there is need for a contextual theological education programme for the training of both clergy and laity because:

Most of the congregations and movements in Africa have been founded and led not by professional, highly educated clergy but by “ordinary” Christians. Both independent and mission churches continue to grow spontaneously through their witness and service. How can this dynamic indigenous leadership be strengthened and better prepared for the challenge of the future? (1978: 70).

To answer this question, Kinsler went on to advance reasons why such an exercise is worth embarking upon. According to Kinsler contextual theological education has the following four benefits. First, it will best stimulate and equip our people for ministry. Second, it will

provide a theological education that undertakes a critical analysis of what he calls “the gospel of African culture”. Third, it will provide a creative understanding of the church and of African society. Fourth, it will mobilize African Christians with a vision of God’s will for a new humanity built on peace, justice and equality of persons (1978: 70-71).

Mbiti (1998) corroborates Kinsler on contextual theology in Africa but dwells much more on the sources of African theology. He posits that African theology has four sources, namely the Bible, Christian heritage or tradition, African culture which includes African religion, world view and values, and African history (1998: 145). These sources have an impact on theological reflection and output in Africa. According to Mbiti, African theology operates on two premises: a critique of missionary theological and ecclesiological traditions and an attempt “to express the gospel in terms that are more relevant and meaningful in the African cultural and contemporary context” (1998: 145). The latter can best be carried out through the employment of contextual theological education. In this attempt, Mbiti posits that “Christians ask themselves what their faith means and try to explain or simply live it within the context of their historical, culture and contemporary issues” (1998: 144). Therefore, African theological exercise is an on-going exercise requiring the re-examination, re-interpretation and reconsideration of Christian concepts, by Christians both theologians and lay people (1998: 143-144). As African Christians endeavour to theologize on concepts of the Christian faith, they are being guided by their awareness that their African cultural context is rich in values which parallel the gospel. These values then help people to understand and appropriate the gospel in their lives. Mbiti added however that the task of developing African theology (contextual theology) is both difficult and exciting.

Moila (2002) shares similar concern in a series of essays on contextual theology, and after defining contextual theology he also stresses the need for contextual theological education in Africa. He classifies theology into three groups: abstract theology which reflects on biblical or doctrinal statements; ideological theology which reflects on biblical statements from an ideological point of view; and contextual theology which reflects on a living, historical content or situation (2002: 47). According to Moila, contextual theology is concerned with holistic salvation, which is salvation of both individual souls and social structures (2002: 23). It is pragmatic in its approach and enables the hearers of the gospel to engage with it in their life experiences. To elaborate further on contextual theological education, Moila says; “Contextual African theological education is moulded by African perceptions of religion and

African ways of maintaining and promoting religion. In other words, African religions' experience determines the nature of contextual African theological education" (2002: 114). Contextual theological education is informed by and is intended to serve a specific context. Contextual theological education is people centred rather than ideological because it seeks to address issues people are faced with in their specific life situations.

For Mbiti, the above mentioned objectives of contextual theological education determine what will form its content in line with its objectives. The content of contextual theological education should include: the Bible, Christian tradition and the context of the student. The significance of contextual theological education is manifested in how it is expressed or practiced in practical life in "the development of intellectual capacities, the refinement and development of Christian faith and stimulation of social action" (2002: 23). Therefore, for contextual theological education to be successful, theological educators must grapple with and understand the culture of the theologian, the Bible and the student and how the three interact with each other. This will not only make African contextual theological education relevant, but will also help transmit the Christian faith in the African way of transmitting religious values.

The Lausanne Covenant again echoes the need for an effective theological education programme like that of WOCATI. Paragraph 11 of the Covenant stresses the need for contextual theological education for the training of pastors and the laity. It states that,

We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training programme for pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training programmes should not rely on any stereotype methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to biblical standards.<sup>27</sup>

Contextual theological education will not only equip students for leadership and ministry in the church, it will also prepare them on how to deal with cultural issues and the pluralistic nature of the society in which they find themselves. Mugambi argues that this approach will help African theologians appraise "the universal relevance of dogma by discerning local applicability" (Mugambi 2003: 120). Therefore, it can be argued that understanding the context in which one lives and serves, makes one's services to the society more relevant,

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<sup>27</sup> Lausanne Movement, "The Willow bank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture", 1978 (Lausanne Occasional Paper 2) <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant.html> accessed 8/8/2009.

productive and appreciative. The question one is left with is whether or not the Lutheran mission in Nigeria and the indigenous church leadership have put in place a contextual theological education programme in their educational policy. The response to this question will be discussed in chapters six and seven.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the contextual approach in theological exercise through the theoretical assumptions of gospel and culture in dialogue, translation and contextual theological education. In this chapter it was argued that contextualization is a vital tool for creating an informed interpretation of the doctrine of justification.

First, the literature on the gospel and culture revealed that the gospel and culture are inseparable, since the gospel has always been presented from the cultural perspective of the communicator, after which it is received and appropriated by the recipients in their own culture. Therefore, it is wrong to impose one culture over others and to advocate for a universal Christian culture. Since every culture has its liberative and its oppressive aspects, which represent cultural limitations, and which Mugambi suggests can be resolved by reference to dogmatics (2003: 120). Thus for the LCCN to arrive at an informed interpretation of *justification by faith alone*, it must communicate the gospel interculturally, and added to that, the gospel message of justification must be allowed to address the people in their cultural context; only then they will be able to appropriate it in their lived experiences.

Second, this chapter revealed that translation helps people to comprehend that which is communicated as they decode it into concepts and language they are most familiar with. It was argued that translation is the continuation of the dialogue between gospel and culture, because both aim at reaching out to the target audience in everyday language in the simplest way possible. In addition, translation is dynamic and aims at communicating the meaning of expressions rather than word for word translation. This chapter also revealed that translation has many dimensions ranging from translation of texts, to translation of concepts, and translation of cultural world views as well as practices. As such, a good translation should be incarnational, adaptive, sincere, and sensitive to the historical heritage and the cultural as well as the religious world view of its target group. Sensitivity is an important element to consider when translating; it is also a crucial element to consider when giving an interpretation. Thus,

a dynamic translation is significant for a viable understanding, transmission and interpretation of concepts. The question then is, has the LCCN provided this kind of translation in order to arrive at an appropriate interpretation of *justification by faith alone*?

Third, the literature on contextual theological education revealed that it is not only relevant in preparing students to carry-out their pastoral function effectively; it also enhances the understanding of people's felt needs in order to communicate the message to them within their cultural world view. Therefore, this chapter argued that contextual theological education equips students to serve each people in their own specific context. Contextual theological education is also capable of helping the LCCN to aim at providing its members with an theological interpretation that is practical, relevant and accessible within their cultural context.

These three theoretical assumptions are relevant for this research because they will assist in investigating how the believing community receives and appropriates the Christian faith and its effect on their interpretation of the doctrine in their cultural context. Has the LCCN taken into account these three tools of contextualization in its interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?

Using these theoretical assumptions as guide, the next chapter examines how justification by faith journeyed from its biblical origin to Martin Luther. The views of three church fathers, namely St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther, on justification by faith and how they transmitted this doctrine to their audiences will be discussed. The discussion will consider the following questions and other issues related to *justification by faith alone*. How did they communicate the gospel to their audience; and was there an intercultural approach in the way they communicated the gospel? What was their view on the relationship between the gospel and culture? To what extent did they use translation in communicating the Christian faith to their generations? What was their stand on theological education and how did they approach it?

## CHAPTER THREE

### Missional journey of justification by faith alone from St. Paul to Martin Luther

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter three tools that could be used to create an informed interpretation and understanding of *justification by faith alone* were discussed. The theories are: gospel and culture in dialogue, translatability and contextual theological education. In the course of the discussion I found that these tools are not only capable of doing that, but that they can also enhance appropriation of the doctrine in the lived experiences of LCCN followers.

This chapter seeks to examine the missional journey of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. In this examination I focus on three key church fathers: St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther. These personalities were chosen based on the following reasons. First, St. Paul has discussed the issue of justification by faith more extensively in the Bible than any other biblical person or author. Second, St. Augustine's position on the doctrine of justification has played a significant role in the pre-Reformation Catholic Church and to some extent in the understanding of justification by Martin Luther. Third, Martin Luther is directly connected to the context of my study, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. The objective of the chapter is to explore the issue of justification<sup>28</sup> and *justification by faith alone* through the lenses of gospel and culture. The chapter also aims to see how the doctrine of justification evolved and took root within a particular culture. Since the doctrine has its foundation in the scriptures, to help me achieve this objective I have structured this chapter as follows: I will begin with the doctrine of justification by faith; next I will look at justification by faith in St. Paul; this will be followed by an examination of St. Augustine on the doctrine of justification; I will then also discuss Martin Luther on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. Each one of these three personalities came to a personal conviction of salvation by grace through faith alone through a crisis conversion. First, they each started with attempts at self justification, second, they and later discovered that this was not possible; third, when they embraced complete forgiveness by faith; they had a relief of an experience of salvation.

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<sup>28</sup> Whenever the expressions "justification" or "justification by faith" are used, I am not referring to Martin Luther's position but to views other than the Lutheran view. But when the phrase is expressed as "*justification by faith alone*," I am doing so within the context of this study, which is the Lutheran perspective.

And finally in this chapter, I will study how Luther transmitted the knowledge of this doctrine to those he taught.

### **3.2 Doctrine of justification by faith**

This section attempts to present a general background of the doctrine of Justification by faith. The aim of this section is to serve as foundation for the sections that follow. The terms justification and righteousness are related terms that played significant role in Luther's doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. What do these two terms mean? How were they used in discussions on this doctrine?

Dreyer and Weller say that "justification means „get right with God' or „made right with God'" (Dreyer and Weller 1960: 91). Justification by faith is "a statement of one's status, not of moral character before the court" (Ferguson 1998: 359 and Wright 1993: 449). Erickson (2000: 968) defines justification thus: "Justification is a forensic act imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer; it is not an actual infusing of holiness into the individual. It is a matter of declaring a person righteous ..." In other words, justification means God regarding a person as if they had never sinned. Eveson argues, "Justification is not a human idea which the church or an individual has invented in order to express something of God's saving activity. It is a truth revealed to us by God himself in the Bible. It is part of God's saving plan which has been disclosed in the gospel ..." (Eveson 2004: 12).

The term *„righteousness'* is of the same root with right, righteous, just, justice and justification (Ferguson 1998: 359). It means to make straight or right; that which is in accordance with the law or social norm. The verb means to do justice; to be just; to vindicate; to justify; declaring righteous or treating as just in forensic (legal) sense (Erickson 2000: 968). In the Old Testament, "a righteous person is one who has been declared by a judge to be free from guilt" (Erickson 2000: 968). In the New Testament it is used in connection with the redeeming and reconciling work of Christ whereby he imputes his righteousness to humankind by which God declares the believer as righteous (Erickson 2000: 969). Erickson (2000: 968) says to be righteous means to be in conformity to a given requirement, or "to conform to a given norm," The weight of the meaning of the concept hinges on the facts of acceptance by and reconciliation with God.

The above discussions point to the central thrust of the doctrine of justification namely God's saving activity for humankind. It also suggests that the doctrine of justification by faith is one

of the major pillars of the Christian faith and Christianity. The doctrine was proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles.

According to Eveson, both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ dealt with the subject of justification in their teaching in the New Testament (2004: 26- 27). The apostles, later in their accounts as recorded in both the gospels and epistles, also treated the theme of justification (Parker 1986: 61-63 and Eveson 2004: 26-35). The doctrine has its origin in the statement of the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk.<sup>29</sup> The statement in Habakkuk laid the foundation and gave impetus to St. Paul's discussion on the doctrine of justification by faith later in the New Testament. Though the two people were speaking from different contexts, Habakkuk focused on trust or confidence in God while St. Paul focused on faith in God (Butterworth 1986: 19 and Parker 1986: 66). When the Christian church came into being, St. Paul's discussion on the subject of justification by faith became the reference point of almost all who ventured to treat the subject.

### **3.3 Justification by faith in St. Paul**

Saul (who later became St. Paul) was first introduced to the idea of justification based on human effort of obedience to the law in keeping with the teachings of Judaism being a rabbi. He became a strict devout and obedient Judaiser (Parker 1986: 61).

With his background in Judaism as a Pharisee and Rabbi, he was very familiar with the three divisions of the Old Testament scriptures namely: the Law, Prophets and Writings. As a Pharisee, Saul understood justification from the perspective of obedience to the Mosaic Law; in that respect, "salvation by works of the law was a way of discipline, ethic and self-righteousness" (Parker 1986: 62). So the phrase in Habakkuk which says, "...but the righteous will live by his [sic] faith" to them meant faithfulness, personal effort, and something that is earned. Parker further maintained that Judaism interpreted Habakkuk and other similar texts to mean "trust expressed in fidelity ... it also meant righteousness by the law and its works. To keep the law was to lay hold of life; by such faith would the faithful live" (Parker 1986: 65).

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<sup>29</sup> Habakkuk 2:4 says, "... but the righteous will live by his [sic] faith" or faithfulness (NIV). Justification in the Old Testament was viewed from three main strands, all interrelated, which are: political, social (equity) and religious. But for Luther, the emphasis was more on the religious strand. Luther used the Psalms and the book of Isaiah in discussing the subject of justification by faith. The prophet Amos also talked about justification in relation to justice and fear of God.

However, when St. Paul was converted, he encountered a new dimension to justification, one that was based on faith rather than human effort. With this new understanding, he saw two radically distinct doctrines of salvation in conflict, and decided to help spread this new gained insight. Hence, we could say that St. Paul came to conviction of salvation by grace alone after a personal spiritual struggle culminating in a dramatic encounter (vision) on his way to Damascus.

St. Paul's treatment of the topic of justification by faith as against justification by works of the law runs through all his epistles. However, his more thorough presentation on the subject is contained in three epistles namely: Romans, Galatians and Ephesians. Out of these three epistles, St. Paul gave his most detailed presentation of the theme of justification in Romans.

In these epistles, St. Paul's focus is on salvation, how one is accepted by God. For instance, to the Galatians (5:4) he says, "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace." Similarly to the Romans (10: 3) he says, "Being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish your own, you did not submit to God's righteousness." These two examples cited above give a picture of St. Paul's concern in the two epistles. For St. Paul when it comes to the issue of justification before God and one's salvation, works of merit play no role. Associating justification and salvation with works of merit, means contempt for the work of Christ and rules out grace as the basis for justification; as he states elsewhere: "if it is by works, it is no longer on the basis of grace"( Romans 11: 6).

Johnson in his discussion of St. Paul's treatment of the subject of justification asserts that the Epistle to the Romans was written to address two issues. The first eight chapters "were written as an exposition of *justification by faith alone*, while chapters 9-16 as a response" to questions on the gospel and election. "Galatians on the other hand was a polemic in defence of the doctrine of justification" (Johnson 2004: 79). Manz (1966: 33) agrees that Galatians was written to oppose a Judaic legalistic type of work righteousness.

Eveson and Parker assert that St. Paul understood "justification as God's declaration that sinners who believe in Christ are fully pardoned, acquitted of all guilt and are in a right legal standing before him, on the basis of what God has done in Jesus Christ" (Eveson 2004: 13

and Parker 1986: 90). It is on the basis of this understanding that St. Paul referred in Galatians to justification by works as another gospel (Eveson, 2004: 14).<sup>30</sup>

In Galatians St. Paul contends that those who rely on the works of the law are under a curse (Manz 1966: 33).<sup>31</sup> The true gospel is one that stresses on faith in the saving act of Christ which alone justifies. St. Paul argues that “faith characterises the justified person not ‘works of the law’... However, the faith which justifies is living, expressing itself in love” (Eveson 2004: 18). From this statement, it could be argued that St. Paul is not totally against the idea of works; rather, he is against associating works of merit with salvation.

Furthermore, Parker (1986: 66-68) says that St. Paul contends that one “should be justified not by obedience to the law but by faith, trust, and confidence in God and his promises” since both justification and faith are gifts from God. Faith comes as a new self-understanding resulting from a personal encounter with God and removes all forms of self-confidence based on one’s effort (Parker 1986: 63). Based on this, St. Paul came to define justification in terms of faith in Christ rather than the law. Hence, Eveson says the expression in St. Paul ‘from faith to faith’ could mean “faith and nothing but faith” (Eveson 2004: 17). Collaborating on this, Johnson says, “The expression from ‘faith to faith’ means its reception begins and ends with faith” (2004: 81). It could also be inferred that this could be the possible reason why Luther added the word ‘alone’ to justification by faith.

Parker and his colleagues maintain that for St. Paul, “the phrase ‘justification by faith’ gives expression to what is essentially new and distinctive in Christianity, differentiating it not only from its historical origin, Judaism, but from all other religions of the world” (Parker 1986: 62).

St. Paul was a great contextual expositor. He made use of his multicultural background to engage in intercultural communication of the gospel in his missionary endeavour. St. Paul’s missionary strategy in communicating the gospel, including the doctrine of justification by faith, was cross-cultural and inclusive against the exclusivist approach of Judaism. According

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<sup>30</sup> Galatians 1: 6-7 says, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ” (NIV).

<sup>31</sup> Galatians (3: 10-11) says, “For it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them. Now it is evident that no man [sic] is justified before God by the law; for ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live’” (NIV).

to Osadolor Imasogie, Paul contextualized God's message for the people whom he wrote (1983: 6). He presented the gospel to his audience in their own cultural context. The following are a few examples that confirm this assertion. First, St. Paul in his own words states that,

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ... I have become all things to all people that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings (1 Corinthians 9: 19-23).

Second, when St. Paul was in Athens, he did not condemn the Athenians' religious zeal, instead, he commended them (Acts 17: 22-23). To prove that he was not only being rhetorical, St. Paul declared, "Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes of the Gentiles also" (Romans 3: 29). Added to this, he rebuked Peter for hypocrisy (Galatians 2:12); and he declared the gospel as the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, both Jews and Greeks (Romans 1: 16). St. Paul was culture sensitive too; he translated the message of the gospel according to the context of his audience.

Therefore, St. Paul is a good model for understanding and interpreting the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. When St. Augustine read St. Paul, how did he understand him and what lens(es) did he use in interpreting St. Paul's message of justification by faith?

### **3.4 St. Augustine's doctrine of justification by faith**

The position of St. Paul on justification has great influence on St. Augustine's position. This section examines St. Augustine's doctrine of justification by faith. First a brief background of St. Augustine is presented, thereafter, St. Augustine's view and his influence on both the pre-Reformation Catholic Church and post-Reformation Roman Catholic Church is discussed.

St. Augustine was a native of Thagaste in Numidia, North Africa who was influenced negatively by the type of friends he kept at school (St. Augustine 2009: viii and Pusey 1996: 7). However, he later became converted in a dramatic way where in a vision he was asked to read. He became an ascetic, then a priest and later Bishop of Hippo (Pusey 1996: 8). In the

latter position, one of his responsibilities was how to preserve correct teaching, and justification by faith was one of such teachings.

The position of St. Augustine on justification like that of St. Paul and Luther is borne out of his personal experience in life. He was also faced with the question of how to discover the truth until when he read in the scriptures about God's love and mercy. After his dramatic encounter, St. Augustine's personal spiritual struggle gained a different insight into the conviction of salvation by grace through faith alone. Therefore, his treatment of justification is viewed from the perspective of love (St. Augustine 2009: 147).

St. Augustine's first concern on the subject of justification was how to refute the heretical teaching of Pelagius (370 – 440AD), a British monk who “denied the doctrine of original sin and maintained man's [sic] freedom of the will in the doing of good” (Manz 1966: 36). St. Augustine saw this as an erroneous view of freedom of the will and its relation to God's grace. In response, St. Augustine said it is the grace of God by which a person is justified and made righteous, not on account of any human merit (Battenhouse 1956: 208-213 and Douglas 1992: 51). St. Augustine maintains: “By the law we fear God, by faith we hope in God. But to those who fear punishment grace is hidden; labouring under this fear, the soul by faith flees to the mercy of God, that he [sic] may give what he commands” (St. Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter*, 29: 51 in Tappert 1959: 122). St. Augustine saw justification as the impartation of God's righteousness to a believer.

Sproul says: “St. Augustine interpreted the verb ‘to justify’ in his Latin Bible as ‘to make righteous’ rather than ‘to declare’ (which) led him to believe that justification meant that God makes us inwardly righteous” (Sproul 2006:139).

Collaborating on this position, Parker (1986: 121) argues that St. Augustine sees justification as both an event and a process. As he puts it, “St. Augustine interpreted the verb ‘justificare’ as ‘to make righteous’ which includes both the event of justification (brought about by operating grace) and the process of justification (brought about by cooperating grace).” Here, there is a seemingly double position on the subject of justification in St. Augustine. But elsewhere, it seems he realizes the danger inherent in this position, therefore, he adds that “the supremacy of grace in human freedom did not crush our free self-offering” (Parker 1986: 121). This means that justification is the result of God's grace to humankind, and not of

human merit. Hence, for St. Augustine, “grace is operative rather than cooperative” (Sproul 2006: 139). What was his position on faith and works in relation to justification?

On the issue of faith and works in justification, St. Augustine opposed the form of work righteousness taught and propagated by Pelagius. He states that, “even the best works of sinners are tainted by sin and are therefore splendid vices” (St. Augustine on The merit of Sins and Rebuke and Grace in Sproul 2006: 148). To this end, St. Augustine declares that, “Having therefore considered and discussed these matters according to the ability that the Lord saw fit to grant us, we conclude that a man [sic] is not justified by the precepts of a good life, but through faith in Jesus Christ” (St. Augustine 13: 22 in Tappert 1959: 120).

For St. Augustine, the key to understanding justification is God’s grace that raises believers up before and beyond the exercise of human volition. Consequently, for him God’s grace is a mystery that only faith can open (Battenhouse 1956: 227-8). Commenting further on the idea of mystery, he posits that “all the Saints, both under the law and before it, were justified by faith in the mystery of Christ’s incarnation ... Before the law, God and angels were even then present as instructors” (St. Augustine 2009: 295). However, St. Augustine saw works as the fruit of a justified life; that is, “justification comes with a responsibility of being obedient to our calling,” which he refers to as “effectual calling” (Steinmetz 1986: 17).

From what has been discussed on St. Augustine’s view on the doctrine of Justification, it is clear that justification by God’s grace appropriated through faith was what he believed and taught. St. Augustine was against ascribing justification to works of merit, but he praised works of love as good virtue that are part of one’s responsibility as Christians, rather than as the means of justification.

Like St. Paul, St. Augustine departed from the traditional way of looking at the doctrine of justification; he located it in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. His position on this subject played a significant role in the life of the pre-Reformation Catholic Church while Thomas Aquinas had influence on the post-Reformation Roman Catholic Church.

The pre-Reformation Catholic Church’s treatment on the doctrine of justification was defined by the various challenges it faced from teachings such as Manichaeism and Pelagianism to mention but a few (Dods 2009: 402 and Sproul 2006: 135-137). Its position on justification was fashioned out in two Councils of the Church namely; the Council of Orange (529 AD)

and that of Trent (1546 AD). McBrien contends that St. Augustine was very influential in the decisions reached at Orange, while St. Thomas Aquinas influenced those of Trent (McBrien 1980: 42 and Sproul 2006: 121; 139).

The decision of the Council of Orange on justification lays emphasis on the fact that justification is by God's grace appropriated through faith. The decision was a response against the teaching of Pelagius. Pelikan in lending his support to this view says, "In the earliest days of Catholicism the biblical teaching of *justification by faith alone* has been one part of Catholic tradition" (Pelikan 1959: 37). In other words, the idea of viewing justification as a result of a synergy of faith and works of merit was not dominant or a popular view in the pre-Reformation Catholic Church which was guided by St. Augustine's position.

But in what looks like a reversal of the decisions of Orange, Trent says justification is not by faith alone. This Council argued that "faith is not exclusively about trust; it also includes some assent to revealed truths" (McBrien 1980: 43). This means, faith has both subjective (trust) and objective (assent) sides. Trent did not teach the doctrine of justification by the grace of God through faith alone. Trent agrees that justification begins with God's grace through Jesus Christ and that faith is necessary for justification and salvation; but it also maintained that faith should not be held as "simply a matter of intellectual acceptance of truth" (McBrien 1980: 43). Based on this understanding, the Council of Trent passed a number of Canons and Decrees on the doctrine of justification, denouncing the view of the reformers on *justification by faith alone*.

The Council of Trent made known its stand on the doctrine of justification in the following words, "After this Catholic doctrine on justification, which whosoever does not faithfully and firmly accepts cannot be justified, it seemed good to the holy Council to add these canons, that all may know not only what they must hold and follow, but also what to avoid and shun" (Sproul 2006:127). The Canons touched on other issues as well, but three Canons in particular stand out in condemnation of the reformers which are: Canons 9, 10 and 11 (Sproul, 2006, 127-129).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Sproul was citing Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Text with English Translation, Translated by H. J. Schroeder, London: Herder, 1941. They read thus: Canon 9: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema."

The essence of these three Canons is to refute the Protestants' exclusive emphasis on faith as the sole means of justification and the idea of imputation without change in state visible in works and formal justification. In other words, it rejects the idea of *Simul iustus et Peccator* (justified yet sinner). However, even the Roman Catholic Church agrees that no one is without sin, which in essence confirms the idea of *Simul iustus et Peccator*.

Commenting on this Manz says, "The official Roman Catholic teaching of Trent is semi-pelagian" (Manz 1966: 37). It is semi-pelagian in that it lays emphasis on cooperative justification; that is justification by grace through faith and works, while the pelagian position is justification by works of merit through human free will (Manz 1966: 36 and Celsor 2002: 211). The Roman Catholic Church advocates for a contextual approach to the Christian faith, but what informed their decision at Trent? Is it the drive to be contextual in approach? The Roman Catholic Church strongly believes in the power of councils, which is why from time to time councils were convened to take decisions on Church-wide matters.

After the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church held two other important Councils generally referred to as Vatican I and II. Despite the significance of these two councils in charting the future course of the church on other vital issues, there was no visible change on the doctrine of justification different from the one arrived at in Trent (Johnson 2004: 67).

Celsor (2002: 289) argues that in their treatment of the doctrine of justification, the Catholics did not dispute the fact that justification is by faith, rather they emphasize a "transformational model of justification which helps the believer to perform meritorious works" against Luther's emphasis on the declarative model of justification or forensic declaration. Also central to the Roman Catholic position on justification is the issue of cooperation through works on the part of human beings as against Luther's faith alone position.

One of the major areas of difference militating against complete agreement between the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans is Christology. The Catholics argue that Christ cannot be mediator and at the same time God.<sup>33</sup> This position is semi-Arian and is at variance with the

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Canon 10: "If anyone says that men [sic] are justified without the justice of Christ, (Gal. 2: 16) whereby He merited for us, or by that justice are formally just, let him be anathema."

Canon 11: "If anyone says that men [sic] are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost (Rom. 5: 5), and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema."

<sup>33</sup> However, the Catholic Encyclopedia presents a different Christology which states that it was Christ as both divine and human who serves as mediator. It states thus: "He who is the image of the invisible God (Colosians

Nicene and Athanasian creeds which hold that Christ is equal to the Father with regard to his divinity and less to the Father with regard to his humanity (Megivern 1977: 198).<sup>34</sup>

The above discussion of the position of the Roman Catholic Church on the doctrine of justification has revealed that contrary to the notion that the Roman Catholic Church advocates for a justification that is based on merit, in fact it accepts that justification is by God's grace appropriated by faith.

In the light of the foregoing, two questions come to mind. First, is it possible for the Roman Catholics and Lutherans to harmonize their position since they both agree that justification is appropriated by faith? Second, is there anything the two can learn from each other?

As a response to the second question, Megivern (1977: 206-7) posits that, "Surely, if Alexandria and Antioch can both be listened to by Rome for complementary Christologies, might not Wittenberg as well as Trent have insight to offer in Ecclesiology?" The on-going consultations between the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans are in my view one way of responding to Megivern's assertion. For both sides to succeed in their mission of communicating the gospel, certainly there is need for them to listen to each other. This is evidenced by the outcome of past consultations.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.5 Luther's doctrine of *justification by faith alone***

Martin Luther's doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is linked to both St. Paul through the reading of his Epistles especially Romans on one hand, and St. Augustine as an Augustinian

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1: 15), is Himself the perfect man [sic]. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to divine dignity in our respect too. For by his incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice, and loved with a human heart. Born of a virgin, Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things – except sin" (Robert C. Broderick (ed.), 1984. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, [Revised edition], Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, p. 111).

<sup>34</sup> The view expressed here is Bellarmine's response to the Book of Concord in his book titled "Judgment of the Book of Concord", Megivern sees it as speaking for the Catholic Church.

<sup>35</sup> The understanding arising from these consultations produced many documents, including "Catholic – Lutheran Joint Declaration on Justification." The Catholic Church in their official response to the Joint Declaration on Justification affirmed that a consensus had been reached on the basic truths of the doctrine. However, they identified a number of areas where further dialogue is needed in order to arrive at a proper consensus. They do not accept the Lutheran position on *Simul iustus et Peccator* (the justified at the same time sinner) and on the idea of passive righteousness instead of cooperating with grace. For their part, they want the issue of works to be incorporated in the discussion, because for them "eternal life is, at one and the same time, grace and reward given by God for good works and merits." They also want the sacrament of penance included in the discussion on justification. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents) accessed on 19/05/2010.

monk on the other. Concerning the Mosaic Law, Luther relied heavily on St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, though he also used some portions of the Old Testament and New Testament as well. The doctrine of *justification by faith alone* therefore, became the capstone of Luther's theology. Before discussing Luther's doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, it is important to present a brief background and development of his theology.

### **3. 5. 1 Historical background and development of Luther's theology**

Martin Hans Luder (Luther) was born of a peasant family on 10th November 1483 to Hans Luther and Margaret Lindermann in the little town of Eisleben, Germany. At the time he was born the Black Death plague was devastating Europe (Marius 2004: 16-7). The plague was seen a consequence of God's wrath on humankind, and as such, people invented ways by which they could assuage God (Marius 2004: 9-10). Due to high infant mortality at that time, Luther was baptised the day after his birth by Pastor Bartholomaeus Renebecker in the basement of St. Peter's Church (Dallman 1951: 2). Baptism as a sacrament was associated with eternal life and anyone who died without it was believed to face an uncertain fate in the afterlife.

The society Luther lived in taught him to value spiritual security more than economic security. The general concern dominant in the church of his day was life after death, and what it will look like. The church taught its members how "to spend their life on earth preparing for the day when God would judge them according to their works" (Robinson 2010: 5). Robinson also reports that Margareta diligently taught her children what the church expected of them, that is, to observe a life of piety by doing good works (Robinson 2010: 7).

The general understanding of God's judgment of the world as held by the church of Luther's time was that of fire and brimstone (Kittelson 1986: 41). Giving a vivid description of the picture, Kittelson says that Christ was pictured as seated on his throne, and that on one side of his head was a lily symbolising the resurrection while on the other was a sword. Therefore people grappled with the question of how to avoid the sword and get the lily. The answer was given in the words, "Do what is in your power ... use well your natural capabilities and whatever special gifts have been granted you. Then through the power of the church, God would add his grace and smile" (Kittelson 1986: 41).

Bainton says the church was the only solace for people in despair. The church taught that,

No sensible person would wait until his [sic] death bed to make an act of contrition and plead for grace. The only secure course was to lay hold of every help the church had to offer; sacraments, pilgrimage, indulgences, the intercession of the saints. Yet, foolish was the man [sic] who relied solely on the good offices of the heavenly intercessors if he [sic] had done nothing to secure their favour (Bainton 1950:32).

The church's position gave the priests authority over the lives of ordinary Christians to absolve sins. Because of the view the church held that the Priest communicated with God directly, they were instructed on how to guide people in their confession (Robinson 2010: 9). The practice of flagellation also became prominent as "some people supposed that if they could punish themselves, the wrath of God might be assuaged" (Marius 2004: 9-10).

While Luther was nursing this feeling and desire to please God, something tragic happened to him. As he was walking out in the field with a friend one day, he was struck down by a thunderstorm at Schlotterheim and narrowly escaped death but his friend was killed. Out of fear and anguish, Luther cried out to Saint Anne, the patroness of Miners, "help me St. Anne and I will become a monk" (Bromley 1992: 433- 437).

He was familiar with St. Anne for two reasons; his father was a miner, and St. Anne is the patron Saint of miners, so by extension, St. Anne was their family saint. Secondly, he was introduced to the worship service of St. Anne who was revered as the mother of Mary while he was studying in Eisenach (Robinson 2010: 7 and Lilje 1952: 60). Therefore, when Luther found himself in this terrifying situation he quickly remembered to call on St. Anne for protection, just as she is believed to protect miners. According to Robinson, Luther's feelings of fear concerning God's judgment preceded his vow to become a monk. He posits that most people during Luther's time viewed the monastery as a place of refuge from spiritual despair, hence "when Martin made the vow to become a monk he was probably pondering on the idea for some time" (Robinson 2010: 8). It should be noted that Luther's entry into the monastery was not the end of his spiritual struggle; it only marked the beginning of his intense spiritual quest.

In the monastery, Luther became very zealous in attempting to free himself from this stern God who dispenses his judgment with absolute justice. He began to contend for the faith from a human perspective, depending on his effort and good works. He strongly embraced the sacrament of penance, frequently confessing his sins in the Augustinian monastery. Luther

reports that at one time he spent six hours to confess all his sins in an effort to get rid of his sins and then please God (Robinson 1963: 23-26). Robinson further states that, “He performed his penance zealously; going far beyond what was actually required of him” (Robinson 2010: 10). Luther’s perspective about justification at this time was merit oriented. Yet he discovered that the more he did that, the more he thought about his sins, and his conscience kept on condemning him. Therefore, Luther hated the phrase, “the righteousness of God.” For him the righteousness of God meant God’s desire for perfect righteousness and that God, “will judge the world with righteousness and the people with truth.” Perfect righteousness for Luther meant good works and the keeping of the law, which he was unable to do; instead he saw in himself only sinning. He viewed God as a harsh and stern judge who requires complete obedience to the law and the law became the instrument of God’s wrath, a tyrant that always condemns him (Preus 1998: 11-16). According to Robinson (2010: 10) Luther’s sense of despair over his inability to do enough good works that could please God kept on haunting him, and he “referred to these attacks of doubts as *Anfechtungen* (the fear of God’s judgment, that one will be condemned to hell).”

Luther’s development passed through various stages all of which were influenced by his times and his experiences. Likewise his spiritual development was progressive, not instantaneous, focusing on the worlds beyond this life which are both hostile and friendly (Hoffman 1998: 43-44). Both the cultural context and Luther’s personal experience played a major role in his spiritual journey. Luther interpreted his spiritual struggle in the light of his cultural context and discovered that the structures of the church failed to provide a solution to this struggle.

### **3.5.2 The revelation of the gospel of *justification by faith alone* to Luther**

Luther continued with his struggle even after his study of theology and his appointment later as a professor of theology. He was troubled about the justice of God and was not sure of his salvation, since his efforts seemed unable to free him from condemnation. The solution came when he was lecturing on Romans at verse 17 of chapter 1, which says, “The one who is righteous through faith shall live.” The revelation he had was that of the gospel of the righteousness of faith as against the righteousness of work, and this led Luther to refer to the epistle to the Romans, “the purest gospel” (Preus 1998: 12 and Nichols 2002: 37).

Luther later commented on this experience saying,

I hated the term ‚Justice of God,‘ for I had been taught by the practice and disputations of the doctors to understand it philosophically as a formal or active justice by which God himself is righteous and punishes the sinner and unjust. ... I meditated day and night until I noticed the connection of the words: ‚For therein is the righteousness of God revealed as it is written: The just shall live by faith.‘ Then I began to understand the righteousness of God as a kind of righteousness which enables the just to live by the gift of God, i.e. ‚by faith.‘ ... “I felt like one who had been born again. The doors had swung open and I had entered paradise itself. At once the scriptures presented a different face to me. ... As I had hated the words ‚righteousness of God‘ with a deep hatred, I now favoured the same words with ardent love as something sweet and lovable. This passage of St. Paul became my *porta paradisi*, a real gateway to paradise (Bainton 1950: 49-51 and Lilje 1952: 66-67).

This revelation of the gospel of *justification by faith alone* changed Luther’s perspective about God and gave him both the burden and boldness with which to express it for the benefit of others. The first step Luther took was the writing and posting of his 95 Theses.

### **3.5.3 The posting of his 95 Theses and the Reformation**

The writing and posting of Luther’s 95 Theses was occasioned by John Tetzel’s preaching on indulgence and sale of indulgence certificates. Luther saw this as a direct contradiction of the word of God, which teaches that humankind cannot earn salvation by good works and that salvation is a gift from God. In protest against this indulgence teaching, he drew up 95 statements on indulgence, penance and other related issues and posted them on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. The posting of the 95 Theses by Luther marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. According to Sproul (2006: 21) the focus of the Reformation was to categorically debunk the teaching that salvation is by a synergy of works and faith by stressing that justification (salvation) is by faith alone (*Sola Fide*). How did the church come about the practice of indulgence? Of what benefit is the practice to the church and the individual’s salvation? To answer these questions, the subject of indulgence will be discussed.

### **3.5.4 Indulgences and its practice in the church**

Hendrix says “indulgences had to do with the sacrament of penance as touching on the matter of [works of] satisfaction which the penitent sinner was required to perform in order to pay the penalty of sin” (Hendrix 1981: 23). Through indulgences the church asserted to itself the right to release penitents from these works of satisfaction. The church hinged its claim for the

power to grant relaxation of the penitential obligation on the idea of “the treasure of the church.” According to Hendrix (1981: 24), “this treasure contained the accumulated merits of Christ and the Saints, which since they were superfluous for those who had originally acquired them, stood available for ordinary sinners in the church.” From Hendrix’s assertion, one could say that one of the reasons the practice of indulgence was introduced in the church was the desire for power and authority by church leaders. The question then is, was this practice in existence since the inception of the church or it was invented later? What were the reasons for such practice? What are the scriptural bases for this practice? To attempt to answer these questions, a brief development of the practice of indulgences in the church is presented below.

Though it is difficult to trace the origin of the practice of giving indulgences, Kawerau says it began in 853AD during the time of Pope Leo VI, who, in an attempt to repel the Arab raiding party from Italy, promised his own power to affect the afterlife by offering heavenly reward to those who availed themselves to fight this cause (Marius 2004: 131). With this beginning, other Popes followed suit modifying and expanding the concept. Explaining the reason for this modification and expansion of indulgences, Luther posits that Popes “declare previous indulgences void or abrogated in order to make room for the new ones” (Luther LW 34, 1979: 16). As the practice continued, the concept of works of satisfaction was introduced, this in turn opened door for payments of money as a substitute for these satisfactions. This practice was common among priests in the Barbarian kingdoms away from Rome, who received substitutions for satisfactions they had imposed (Marius 2004: 131-2). Gradually, satisfaction became a ritual part of penance which developed into indulgences. The practice is principally built on the power of the keys and Christ’s decent to hades.<sup>36</sup>

According to Marius “the Pope was considered the supreme priest who could summon Christians to special duties and promise special rewards” (Marius 2004: 132). Pope Urban in 1095, whilst pursuing a war against the Turks in Palestine, introduced the idea of crusade in which he used indulgences to reward the crusaders. Pope Boniface VIII developed his own brand of indulgences, called plenary indulgences, when he proclaimed a Jubilee in Rome in 1300AD. A plenary indulgence was meant to cancel all sins and even promised eternal life to

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<sup>36</sup> Matthew 16: 19 says, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven ....” and according to 1 Peter 3: 19, “... He also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison” (NIV).

the recipients, who for their part were expected to show true penitence by confessing their sins (Hendrix, 1981: 24).

Eventually the practice was abused on two levels: indulgences became quick-fix “patent medicines for the soul” and the emphasis fell on how much money the peddlers were able to bring to their superiors (Marius 2004: 133). As a result, true contrition for one’s sins was easily replaced by the purchase of letters of indulgences. People became less concerned about contrition as they were made to believe that forgiveness of sin was available for purchase.

Hendrix points to two major causes that aggravated the abuse of the practice of indulgences in the church. These were: (a) the extension of indulgences to souls in purgatory and (b) the availability of letters of indulgences through the contribution of money to a specific cause of the church (Hendrix 1981: 25.). The claim by Pope Sixtus IV that indulgence has the power of releasing the dead in purgatory in 1476 AD accorded the practice greater power as it claimed to replace prayer for dead relations. Marius adds that the death and despair of the great plague was also a major factor that contributed to the wide spread practice of indulgences (Marius 2004: 134). In the context of this study, this can be viewed as the impact of the cultural context on the life and practice of the church in Luther’s time.

The last stroke came during the leadership of Pope Leo X, who in a bid to build the St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, reduced indulgences to “a piece of paper that promised remission of all penances (assuming that the person had confessed to a priest) and that was offered for purchase”, the amount depending on one’s status in the society (Robinson 2010: 23). The Germans rejected the sale of indulgences in their land because it drained their economy. However, Albrecht in an attempt to occupy the Archbishopric of Mainz became involved in some deals which made him financially indebted. Therefore, he agreed to allow the sale of indulgences in his area of jurisdiction. This agreement opened way for John Tetzel and other indulgence vendors to move around in German territories where some of Luther’s supporters came across him and even bought the indulgences papers (Robinson 2010: 24 and Marius 2004:134).

It is evident from a religious point of view that the practice of indulgences did not benefit the church spiritually; rather a few people used it as a means of exploiting others. According to Kittleson the practice did not promote Christian spirituality but aggravated spiritual laxity (2003: 108). It is equally at variance with the confessions of the church and the conciliar

decisions regarding the Christian faith and salvation (Dowley 1990: 205). It violates the teachings of scripture, especially as expressed by Jesus thus “freely you received, freely you shall give” and that of Peter to Simon the magician, “May your silver perish with you, for you think the gift of God can be bought with money” (Matthew 10: 8 and Acts of the Apostles 8: 20 respectively). Consequently, one could say indulgence enslaved members rather than setting them free.

In as much as Luther’s position against the practice of indulgence was from religious perspective, it is likely that Luther got the support of the German authority as well as his kinspeople for two other politically and economically motivated reasons. Firstly, from the political point of view, both German leaders and ordinary citizens saw Luther as a political hero and his actions as a political move for the liberation and freedom of the German people from Roman control. This is evident from the support he received from the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise (Preus 1998: 34-42). Secondly, the economic dimension has two aspects, national and personal. On one hand, the German nation was not happy that funds that could be used internally were taken away to Rome at the expense of their development. On the other hand, individuals were forced to pay for themselves and their loved ones whether they had the means or not. Therefore, when Luther rose up to challenge the church, the people were willing to throw their weight behind him, a move which resulted in the Protestant Reformation.

### **3.5.5 Martin Luther’s Reformation**

Before and during Luther’s time there were unsuccessful attempts by individuals and groups to reform the church. Some perished in the cause such as John Huss, John Wycliffe and Johann Hilten, to mention just a few (Lohse 1999:14; 31). Therefore, when Luther initiated his reforming actions, the ground was fertile as people were ready for a reformation in the church. The reform already occurring in the Augustinian Order also gave impetus to Luther’s reforms. Something else that helped in facilitating Luther’s reforming initiatives; giving them wider acceptability and support, was their scope. What became the Lutheran Reformation addressed a wide range of issues from theological (indulgences, salvation and truth), political (power of the Pope and freedom from Roman domination „nationalism’) and social (corruption, care for the poor and needy) (Luther LW 34, 1960:16-18).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Emphasis in parenthesis mine.

Luther was concerned about the general state of the church, and as such in his sermons and lectures he tried to address some of these issues, touching on matters like the place of the word of God, the role of the clergy to members, the Christian faith and Christian responsibility among others. He says, “Preaching and teaching were in a lamentable and pitiful state. Still all bishops kept silence and saw nothing new ... the old doctrine of faith in Christ, of love, of prayer, of the cross, of comfort in affliction lay trodden under” (Luther LW 34, 1960: 28).

According to Hendrix (1981: 19) Luther’s early engagement saw “the feeding of the faithful with the word of God as the criterion for claiming legitimate authority in the church.” Luther accused the priests of having failed to live up to their responsibility of feeding the faithful with the word of God through preaching; therefore, for him, they could not claim authority over the souls they failed to feed properly (Hendrix 1981: 19-20). Luther also accused the church of disgracing the mass, disturbing the Christian faith, and silencing the word of God (Luther LW 34, 1979: 31). The situation of the church for him was one of total decay that required urgent action, namely reformation.

The church did not make any serious attempt to address the issues raised by Luther. The first attempt was made in August 1518 at Augsburg followed by other disputations (Lohse 1999: 110-116). After many efforts and threats by the church to silence or persuade Luther to recant his views failed, Pope Leo X placed Luther under a papal bull and eventually excommunicated him on January 3, 1521. The Emperor Charles V, in an effort to settle the squabble politically, invited Luther to appear at the Diet of Worms, giving him a safe conduit there (Robinson 2010: 44). At Worms however, Luther did not recant his writings and position as expected; rather, on he calmly told the council thus:

Unless I am convinced by scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of Pope and councils, for they have contradicted each other. My conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. God help me. Amen (Bainton 1950:144 and Robinson 2010: 45).

Following this development, the Emperor issued an edict which underpinned the Pope’s excommunication of Luther. With these two judgements passed, Luther’s life became increasingly under threat, but with the help of the Elector of Saxony, Fredrick the Wise,

Luther was protected in the Castle of Wartburg where he engaged in writing and translation of the Bible (Preus 1998: 34-42). Luther continued to express his theological position in his writings and disputations with other scholars. The central theme which occupied Luther's thought and time was the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. An examination of Luther's perspectives on this doctrine is presented in the next section.

### **3.5.6 Luther's doctrine of *justification by faith alone***

Martin Luther's treatment of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is found in almost all of his writings. The other document where the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is discussed that deserves mention is Luther's lectures on Galatians as contained in Luther's Works volumes 26 and 27. In these two works Luther argues that the thrust of Paul's discussion on justification was to challenge any presumption or confidence of justification through the law, not an outright condemnation of the law. In volume 26 Luther argues that, "to want to be justified by the works of the law is to nullify the grace of God" (Luther LW 26, 1963:179). Luther went on to further explain what he means by nullifying the grace of God thus; "Nullifying the grace of God is therefore, a very great and common sin, and one that all the self-righteous commit; for as long as they seek to be justified through the merit of congruity or through the law, they nullify the grace of God and Christ" (Luther LW 26, 1963:182). In volume 27 Luther continues the discussion stating that the desire to be justified through the law presents a picture that suggests that "Christ has not yet come", or as though, while present, He were not able to justify by Himself" (Luther LW 27, 1964:16). According to Luther, to ignore the sufficiency of Christ with regards to justification means, "being separated from Christ and for Him to become utterly useless to us."<sup>38</sup> The argument in Galatians is that justification is by faith in what Christ has done not in any works of merit for that amounts to denial of what Christ has accomplished for the atonement of humankind. However, his most elaborate discussion on the subject is found in two of his major writings titled: "Disputation concerning Justification" (in Luther's Works Vol. 34) and "Two Kinds of Righteousness" (in Luther's Works Vol. 31). Even in these two documents, Luther's presentation is not sequential, as he goes back and forth from time to time. Other key Lutheran documents where the doctrine of Justification by faith is discussed are: Luther's

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<sup>38</sup> The quotation is taken from the footnote on page 16 of Luther's Works volume 27 which is an updated version of what appeared in the text on the same page.

Smalcald Articles;<sup>39</sup> the Augsburg Confession<sup>40</sup> and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>41</sup> Though Luther treated the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* and the two kinds of righteousness separately, the two doctrines centre on the same issue, the state of humankind before God on account of Christ's work of redemption. My discussion of Luther's doctrine of *justification by faith alone* will rely heavily on the disputation concerning justification.

### 3.5.6.1 Disputation concerning Justification

In this disputation, Luther used the terms justification and righteousness interchangeably. His argument centres on the distinction between faith and the law or works and their place in God's scheme of salvation. According to Luther (LW 34, 1960: 153; 167), to be justified means "to be considered righteous on account of Christ." In line with this, he sees justification as a "healing for sin which slays the whole world externally and brings it to destruction with its infinite evils" (Luther LW 34, 1960: 156). Luther considers the subject of justification from two angles, namely: justification before God and before human beings. He then posits that the method of justifying humankind before God must be distinguished from the method of justifying one before human beings (Luther LW 34, 1960: 151). On one hand, when it comes to the issue of salvation, *justification is by faith alone*, while on the other, before humankind, works are the proof of a justified life.

According to Luther, the human nature only understands justification by works, because that is how far it can go. He argues that because of the effect of "original sin, (human nature) is

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<sup>39</sup> These articles were written by Luther in 1537 at the instance of the Elector of Saxony John Frederick for presentation to a council that was to meet at Matua. The document has three parts with 20 articles. The final copy of the articles was edited and signed by a group of Lutheran theologians, hence becoming the voice of the Lutheran church, and not Luther alone. The doctrine of justification by faith is discussed in part two, article 13. The central argument in article 13 on justification is "that by faith we get a new and clean heart and that God will and does account us altogether righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our mediator" (Tappert 1959: 297-328).

<sup>40</sup> The Augsburg Confession is a document presented by the Lutheran faction at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 as its confessional position in response to the request of Emperor Charles V (Tappert 1959: 27-105).

<sup>41</sup> Melancthon's apology of the Augsburg confession is a response to the Roman Catholic's refutation to the Augsburg Confession. The Apology argues that "without the righteousness of faith man [sic] can neither have nor understand the love of God" (Tappert 1959: 109). It concludes with a condemnation of the opponents "for teaching a righteousness of the law, instead of the righteousness of the Gospel, which proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ" (Tappert 1959: 113). Based on this, four conclusions were drawn up:

- i. Forgiveness of sins is the same as justification according to Psalm 32: 1
- ii. Sins are forgiven because of Christ the propitiator according to Romans 3: 35
- iii. We receive the forgiveness of sins through his name, that is for his sake
- iv. The forgiveness of sins is a thing promised for Christ's sake (Tappert 1959: 117-119).

not able to imagine or conceive of any justification above and beyond works” (Luther LW 34, 1960: 151). He says “works only reveal faith just as fruits only show the tree, whether it is a good tree.” On this ground he states:

I say, therefore, that works justify, that is they show that we have been justified. For the works indicate whether I have faith. I conclude, therefore, that he [sic] is righteous, when I see that he [sic] does good works. In God’s eyes that distinction is not necessary, for He is not deceived by hypocrisy. But it is necessary among men, [sic] so that they may correctly understand where faith is and where it is not (Luther LW 34, 1960: 161).

This distinction of God’s verdict and human judgment is very important whenever one is discussing the subject of justification. Since this will help differentiate between necessity and cause with regards to salvation, just as Luther argues that works are necessary to salvation but they do not cause salvation (Luther LW 34, 1960: 165). Luther argues further that,

It is ridiculous to boast of good works and the righteousness of the law in such a serious matter and still show no example of it... there has not been nor is there now an example of any saint who has fulfilled the law. That is why all the saints and the whole church confess that „if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us (Luther LW 34, 1960: 118-9; see also I John 1: 9-10).

This means that there is no place for work righteousness or active righteousness in the sight of God especially as it relates to the issue of salvation.

Furthermore, Luther says “to elevate works amounts to throwing the roof to the ground; upsetting the foundation; building salvation on mere water; hurling Christ from the throne completely, and putting up our own works in His place” (Luther LW 21, 1956: 288). Luther’s argument is based on his Christ centred approach to the subject; because, if one says Christ died for the salvation of humankind, but then turn to say, I can do something to save myself, this is contradictory. However, Luther was quick to mention that the story of redemption is incomplete without the presence of good works. For the philosophers, good works makes one righteous, but Luther says that in the Christian scheme of things, we must first be good or righteous in order to do good works. Without being justified first one’s works will not be performed with the right attitude and intent, for works follow justification as the sign or fruits of God’s blessing (Luther LW 31, 1979: 299-300). Therefore he says, “It is not works that we

must eliminate, but false presumptions about their usefulness for salvation” (Luther LW 31, 1979: 371).

Turning to *justification by faith alone*, Luther states that this doctrine shifts the focus on human merits to what God had done for humankind in Christ. Compared to the former, justification by faith is a positive reality, unlike justification by the law which is fictitious (Luther LW 34, 1960: 160).

The faith which justifies is poured into one from knowing Christ through the Holy Spirit and comprehending Christ and his work that justifies. According to Luther “Christ’s righteousness is without defect and serves us like an umbrella against the heat of God’s wrath, [and] does not allow our beginning righteousness to be condemned” (Luther LW 34, 1960: 153). From the perspective of God’s justice, human beings deserve God’s punishment because of their sin, but Christ paid the price and was punished on our behalf, and sets us aside from God’s condemnation. No further payment is required from us except to accept this payment as ours by faith. Therefore, Luther (LW 34, 1960: 168) argues that, “Faith purifies through the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit cleanses through the effect.” Therefore, justification is by faith, and through the help of the Holy Spirit, the justified person lives a sanctified life. This implies that faith and works have a role in the life of someone that is justified, one to believe its efficacy and the other to express its presence in one’s life.

To this end, Luther draws attention to how faith and works are related. Luther (LW 34, 1960: 176) explains, “Justification is effective without works, not that faith is not without works. For that faith which lacks fruit is not an efficacious but a feigned faith.” This means that works are the physical manifestations of faith. From this one could say Luther is not against good works; rather, he contends that faith must always be ascertained and recognized by its fruits of good works.

Since justification is not a change in state but status, Luther emphasized that the justified are at the same time sinners (*Simul iustus et Peccator*). This is because the righteousness they have is not personal righteousness, it is acquired externally. Therefore, if this external righteousness that covers them is removed; their real state of being as sinners is revealed. Hence, he argues,

Original sin remains up to the time of death, as far as the substance is concerned. But we have to cleanse it away from day to day and yet know that we live under the mercy

of God where we have peace of conscience. ... Accordingly, original sin remains as far as the substance is concerned; it is removed as far as imputation is concerned (Luther LW 31, 1979: 180).<sup>42</sup>

Luther's argument here is in line with what St. Paul says about the Christian life as a war between the old person and the new person, each fighting for dominance over one's life. Therefore as long as one lives, this struggle will continue. Elaborating further on what he means by that, he states that,

The imputation of God is greater than pure justification. For justification is the greatest, because it does not impute sin which remains in human nature, as if it did not exist, but rather it shows that righteousness exists on account of Christ. Faith perceives that the love of God conceals sins (Luther LW 34, 1960: 191).

This means that through the imputation of the righteousness of another (Christ), the condition of God's justice is satisfied and one becomes a beneficiary of that transaction by faith alone.

Luther's doctrine of justification centres on the word of God, the grace of God given in the obedience and merits of Christ, and faith that accepts God's gift. It is Christological and it draws on insights from St. Paul, St. Augustine and other church fathers.

Though Luther was against associating merit with humankind in relation to justification, his use of the term merit where he states, "We are justified by faith, we are exalted by faith, we merit being called sons (and daughters) of God by faith" may be misleading (Luther LW 34, 1960: 190). If he saw faith itself as a gift, how can a gift be associated with merit? Therefore, there are divergent views among Lutherans as to what is the real Lutheran understanding of *justification by faith alone* on one hand; and Luther's relation to Paul on the other. Luther's other discussions on the doctrine of justification by faith alone are his treatise on the two kinds of righteousness, namely alien righteousness and proper righteousness. While most of that discussion is similar to what has been discussed above, owing to the way justification and righteousness were sometimes used interchangeably, I will now give a brief highlights of what Luther says in this treatise on righteousness.

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<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere Luther says, "Not only are we *Simul justus et Peccator*, but we are also *simper Peccator, simper penitens, simper justus*," meaning, always a sinner, always penitent, and always righteous or justified (Luther L W46, 1967: 347).

### **3.5.6.2 Alien or faith righteousness**

According to Luther this “is the righteousness of another, instilled from without. ... It is given to people in baptism and whenever they are truly repentant” (Luther LW 31, 1979: 297). This is the righteousness of God which shows one God’s naked mercy toward sinners just as the power of God is a power that strengthens and empowers persons. This righteousness is God’s saving action on behalf of sinners where God lifts the fallen, restores the despairing and recovers the lost (Luther LW 31, 1979: 299).

Luther uses the court setting to press home his point on alien righteousness. He argues that humanity stands guilty before the divine court and must make payment for their guilt, but could not. Christ met the requirement of God’s justice by making the payment one could not afford. This action is in turn imputed to all who believe in him, that is why it is referred to as alien righteousness because it is freely given, not earned (Luther LW 31, 1979: 295). This righteousness does not depend on anything arising from human effort; hence, it is passive righteousness. Through it Christ’s merits become the believer’s merits, and his righteousness, the believer’s righteousness (Luther LW 31, 1979: 298). Moltmann (2011) summarizes it thus: “The death of Christ is the centre of all Christian theology. It is not the only theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth” (Moltmann 2011: 210). Luther’s theology revolves around, the person, life and work of Christ for humankind.

In essence, Luther is saying this is a borrowed righteousness, which gives one the identity of the owner. It is like someone borrowing attire and when those who are familiar with the owner see you in that attire they will conclude it is the owner wearing it. However, when they come closer or the attire is removed, the person’s real identity is revealed, which in the context of justification – a sinner. The other aspect of righteousness which Luther discussed is proper righteousness.

### **3.5.6.3 Merit or Works righteousness**

Works righteousness is the fruit and a consequence of alien righteousness (Luther LW 31, 1979: 300). According to Luther, works righteousness has three major elements, namely “love to one’s neighbour, meekness and fear toward God” (Luther LW 31, 1979: 299). Luther further opined that this righteousness follows the example of Christ who emptied and offered himself for humankind, and is transformed into his likeness as one serves the good of his/her neighbours. In his words, “It calls on us to forget ourselves and be emptied of God’s gifts,

conduct ourselves as if our neighbour's weakness, sin and foolishness were our very own" (Luther LW 31, 1979: 302). Luther argued that the righteousness of works cannot exist in the absence of alien righteousness, because the latter serves as its foundation as well as motivation. Suffice it to say that the righteousness of works is the physical expression of the effect of alien righteousness on one's life. This righteousness does not justify or save one before God except alien righteousness. This means that one needs faith or alien righteousness for salvation, and the righteousness of works to express one's honour for God in love for the neighbour. Works righteousness is a duty and result of the impact of faith righteousness on one's life. How Luther then did transmit his doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to his audience?

Luther used concepts from the local culture to transmit the knowledge of justification by faith alone to his audience. He was contextual in his approach, and in that way he was able to carry the ordinary people along. First, he identified the power of language in communication; to this end, he used the ordinary language of the people to translate the Bible, doctrines and practices of the church into German. Second, he used education to create an informed understanding of this doctrine and other basic tenets of the Christian faith. Luther's view on education is discussed at length in chapter seven under section 7.3. However, it should be noted that despite Luther's contextual approach, even during his time people found it difficult to comprehend the teaching of *justification by faith alone*. According to Frank:

The primitive religious sense made it difficult for people to cope with and understand the reality of a relationship between human beings and God based on grace. This was difficult to grasp intellectually. They wanted more tangible forms of mediation to which heavenly grace attached itself (Frank 1995: 15).

Though a contextual approach will not eliminate the problems associated with comprehending the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it will greatly enhance how people understand and appropriate it in their lived experiences.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter examined the views of St. Paul, St. Augustine and Luther on the doctrine of justification by faith. The study discovered the following.

First, as regards the contextualization of the doctrine, St. Paul was contextual in his presentation of this doctrine. He also employed intercultural communication in transmitting

the message of justification to his audience. St. Paul and Luther used the language of the people, using expressions the people are familiar with in interpreting the doctrine of justification by faith. They were not dismissive of the culture of their audience. Likewise any interpretation of this (or indeed any other) doctrine that does not address itself to its context will be less effective. According to Mildenerger, theological exercise should analyse the “material by asking whether and how it is based in the revelation of God through the Bible and whether or not it is meaningful in the context of the contemporary situation” (Mildenerger 1986: 3). Therefore the presentation of the doctrine of justification that these three church fathers shared, addressed the situation and context of their time, introducing something that was new, which Megivern and Althaus describe as pluralism in theological interpretation (Megivern 1977: 203 and Althaus 1966: 191).

Secondly, these church fathers were in agreement that justification is by faith in the redemptive death of Christ for humankind, rather than by works of merit. They all also agreed that good works are the fruits of a justified life, but not means of justification.

Thirdly, education played a key role in how these church fathers transmitted the knowledge of this doctrine as evidenced in their writings. They wanted those who read or heard their discussions to understand and “own” these teachings.

Therefore, the presentations of St. Paul, St. Augustine and Luther are very important in helping me answer my research question. They were contextual in their approach and paid attention to the worldview of their audience. Likewise for the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to be meaningful to us in the 21st century Africa, there is need for its application in our contemporary context rather than uncritically adopting it for our time.

Lastly, the study also discovered that despite the approach of these church fathers some people still could not fully comprehend the message of justification by faith. This situation is similar to this day in many churches. This raises the question of what the reaction of the first converts in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria was when they first heard about the gospel or doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. It also brings up the question of what the attitude of the present members of the LCCN is to this same doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. This is what the next chapter intends to examine.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **From Luther to the mission field: transmitting the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to the LCCN**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter the views of St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther on the doctrine of justification by faith were discussed. First, it was argued that they approached this doctrine from the context of their audience, in doing so; they departed from exclusionist religious practices of elevating doctrine above the heads of common people, keeping them at a distance from and at the mercy of the keepers of religious knowledge (the clergy). Instead, St. Paul, St. Augustine and Luther were concerned about the interests of their audiences; as such they addressed their lived experiences. Second, the chapter noted that their approach enhanced intercultural communication of the message of justification, especially in the case of St. Paul. Third, it was argued that they used translation to interpret and transmit the doctrine of justification by faith. In the current chapter an examination of the passing down of *justification by faith alone* from Luther to the LCCN Gongola Diocese will be explored.

The objective of this chapter is to analyse how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* was transmitted to the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, first, a brief background of the Protestant and Lutheran missions to Nigeria will be given. Second, an examination of how the missionaries transmitted this doctrine in the light of intercultural communication will be presented. Third, an examination of the efforts of the indigenous leadership in translating, interpreting and transmitting this doctrine to church members will be explored. Fourth, an examination of how members understand and appropriate the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* will be made.

#### **4.2 Brief background of Protestant and Lutheran missions**

The spread of Christianity and the Christian faith happened through the efforts of faithful witnesses through the ages. However, after the 16th century Protestant Reformation, Christian mission was always viewed from two vantage points: that of the Roman Catholic missions and that of the Protestant missions.<sup>43</sup> According to Kane, Justinian Von Weltz's call

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<sup>43</sup> There are two opinions regarding Protestant mission. One group sees continuity and argues that the "ideas of the reformers (Luther and Calvin) were spread first through their writings, taken from one part of Europe to

in 1664 on the church “to assume missionary responsibilities” marked the beginning of Protestant missionary work especially among the Lutherans (Kane 1993: 141). In response to this call, two related mission movements came into being - the Pietist movement and the Moravians.<sup>44</sup>

The Pietist movement was founded by Philip Jacob Spener to restore spirituality in the church. Pietism taught the message of justification but “focused more on the believer’s need of regeneration” as against the formalism witnessed in the state churches (Moreaul 2000: 337). The movement later built its own university at Halle out of which grew the first Protestant missionary movement - the Danish Halle Mission (Kane 1993: 143). The Danish Halle Mission sent out two missionaries, one of whom (Ziegenbalg) went to India. In his missionary work, Ziegenbalg made use of “Bible translation, an accurate understanding of local culture, definite and personal conversion, and development of indigenous clergy as his principles of good missionary work” (Stamoolis 2000: 444). He also used education to spread the gospel, arguing that education will enable new converts to be able to read the word of God.

Other events that enhanced Protestant Mission were: the evangelical revival of the 18th century and William Carey’s 1792 challenge to the churches take up mission.<sup>45</sup> However, it was in particular the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 which gave great impetus to modern Protestant missions including the Sudan United Mission (Bosh 1992: 238).

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another by scholars, merchants and tradesmen” (Paul E. Pierson, “The Reformation and Missions” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, A. Scott Moreaul (ed.), Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000, p. 813). Also, Former students at Wittenberg and Geneva also played a significant role, as they put it, “The most significant missionary activity of Lutherans and Calvinists took place through former students at Wittenberg or Geneva” (Pierson, in A. Scott Moreaul (ed.), 2000, p. 814). Another group argues that the Protestants were not very keen on mission in their formative years. This is because of many reasons, including their theology of God’s sovereignty and the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone. They argued, if God is sovereign over all of life and the destiny of humankind, why should Christians engage in missions? If salvation is the sole prerogative of God who freely offers it to all who believe, it then means people can be reached by God even without the involvement of humankind (David Bosh, *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992, p. 242).

<sup>44</sup> The Moravians were the second mission group among the Protestants. They were also related to the Halle school through their leader Nicolas Ludwig Zinzendorf, a disciple of Philipp Jacob Spener, leader of the Pietist movement (Kane, 1993, p. 144).

<sup>45</sup> Carey argued against the notion that “the missionary mandate had ceased with the apostles” (Stamoolis, in Moreaul (ed.), 2000, pp. 444 – 445). Thereafter, other missionary movements followed between the late 17th and 19th centuries. These movements opened the way for more Protestant engagement in mission work across the globe.

Before the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910, there were many missionary agencies operating across Europe, America and some parts of Asia.<sup>46</sup> Some of these missions disappeared with time while others changed their names and expanded their scope of operation. Also new missions emerged and one of these was the Sudan United Mission. This mission was directly or indirectly influenced by the speeches and outcome of the various missionary conferences held in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including Edinburgh 1910.

The Sudan United Mission was one of the mission agencies that predate Edinburgh 1910. The publication of a monthly journal in 1890 by Grattan Guinness titled “The Sudan and the Regions Beyond” was one of the motivations for the founding of this mission society.<sup>47</sup>

The Sudan United Mission sent out its first missionaries to Bilad-es-Sudan or “the land of the Blacks” in 1904 (Pweddton 2005: 1, Hastings 1979: 109).<sup>48</sup> The experience of the first party opened the eyes of the mission to the challenges out in the mission field, especially that of an inadequate number of Christian teachers and the need for more cooperation with other

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<sup>46</sup> The missionary agencies operating in Europe and America before Edinburgh 1910 include: the Danish Halle Mission, the Moravians, the London Missionary Society, the Scottish and Glasgow Mission Societies, the Netherlands Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Baptist Missionary Union, the Sudan United Mission ... (Kane, 1993: pp. 143 – 148).

<sup>47</sup> Nicholas Pweddton, *A History of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria*, Kaduna: Baraka Press and Publishers, 2005, pp. 1- 2. The mission started as the Sudan Pioneer Mission, an inter-denominational agency founded by Evangelical churches in Europe working alongside the Church Missionary Society and the Keswick Society or Movement (Mogen Jensen, *Two Men and their Mission*, Christiansfeld: Forlaget Savanne, 1992, p. 24). However, the movement got a new vision in 1904 during a meeting in Edinburgh, after Kumm in an effort to mobilize forces for mission, threw out a challenge to the churches on the need to take evangelization very seriously. Following this, the organization endorsed a plan to reach every large tribe within the continent of Africa (Sudan) with the gospel of Christ. They also decided to change the name of the organization from Sudan Pioneer Mission to Sudan United Mission. This they felt sounded more compelling “since the policy of the work is to unite in one effort all the churches which are at present doing nothing for the Evangelization of the Sudan.” (Jensen, 1992, p. 24). At that time the term Sudan referred to the whole of the central-western region of the continent of Africa, not the current Republic of Sudan. Kumm describes it as “that part of the land of the Blacks lying south of the Sahara and Egypt and stretching from the Gambia and Senegal in the west to Abyssinia in the east, while its southern borders run from Sierra Leone through Liberia, the southern halves of the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Dahomey (Benin), Northern Nigeria and Southern Cameroun, French Equatorial Africa to the Belgian Congo and Uganda” (Kumm in “The Sudan”, 1907, p. 15 as cited in Pweddton, 2005, p. 1). Another reason was that this mission was in fact not the first to engage in the field in Nigeria as the word pioneer seems to suggest.

<sup>48</sup> The primary aim of the mission was to stem the advance of Islam in the Sudan, which it was argued could only be achieved through a united force. The Sudan Pioneer Mission had been eyeing Yola province in Nigeria, thinking that this would be the right starting point for their missionary work (Jensen, 1992, p. 24 was quoting a letter dated 24/03/1904 in SUM/ARCH Box 1.2). Their reason for such a thought may not be unconnected to the fact that most of the inhabitants of that province are adherents of African traditional religion, unlike the core north where Islam is the predominant religion.

mission bodies (Jensen 1992: 25). The situation was simply described by Jensen (1992: 25) as “A Crisis in the Mission Field.” In response to this situation, many other Sudan United Mission branches emerged in America, Canada,<sup>49</sup> South Africa, Norway, Australia, New Zealand and Denmark. Apart from the desire to present a united force in evangelizing the Sudan, were there some concealed reasons for this development? How friendly were the missions’ strategies with regards to the cultures of their host communities? The next section attempts to answer these questions in the context of the LCCN.

#### **4. 3 The missionary church and intercultural communication: transmitting the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to LCCN**

The Danish branch of the Sudan United Mission is the mission body responsible for the birth of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria through the effort of a prayer group of the Aalborg Lutheran congregation in Denmark under the leadership of Pastor Anton Pedersen. The vision to get involved in mission work was ignited by a speech delivered by Dr. Karl Kumm at the first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910 (Nissen 1968: 17). Both Niels Brønnum and Pastor Pedersen were participants at the conference. Pastor Pedersen later said, “... That evening the Sudan United Mission of Denmark was born, and it is in turn this Mission, under God, which has been instrumental in bringing into being the ‘Lutheran Church of Christ’ in Northern Nigeria” (Nissen 1968: 18).

The coming into being of the LCCN was initiated when Niels Hoegh Brønnum availed himself to be sent as a missionary. He told Holger, “I’m going over to ask Pastor Pedersen whether he thinks I can be used as a missionary” (Nissen 1968: 19).<sup>50</sup> The group accepted: Dr Niels Hoegh Brønnum, Dr Margaret Young Brønnum, and Miss Dagmar Rose were accepted for mission work in the Sudan. The three were sent to England in 1912 to study Hausa, the language of communication in Northern Nigeria, after which they were commissioned and sent out for Mission work in Yola Province in Nigeria on the 8th of

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<sup>49</sup> In Canada the group started as Africa Evangelistic Mission which was later changed to Sudan Interior Mission, the parent mission body of the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) (see Jensen, 1992, p. 25).

<sup>50</sup> Brønnum thought that medical mission was a useful and necessary tool in the mission to the Muslims; hence he chose to study medicine rather than theology (Jensen, 1992, p. 57). He thus studied medicine in Edinburgh where he met with Margaret a medical student as well who later became his wife.

January, 1913 (Nissen, 1968: 22).<sup>51</sup> They arrived and settled in Rumasha for a while before proceeding to their station in Numan. From Rumasha, Brønnum continued his journey reaching Numan on 29th September, 1913 and proceeded to see the Resident in Yola, returning to Numan on 5th October, 1913. There Brønnum started work in earnest by starting clinic work and school work (Ishaya, 1984: 58).<sup>52</sup>

The missionaries focused on providing Christian services to the community with the aim of winning the confidence of the locals. The preaching of the gospel and teaching of the Christian faith followed a year later when they were granted formal permission to translate church doctrines and rituals into Bachama (Pweddton 2005:26).<sup>53</sup>

The first missionaries were medical personnel as part of the Danish Medical Mission. The three were lay people without formal theological education apart from a basic knowledge of the Christian faith and mission strategy gained at the Foreign Mission College in London (Pweddton 2005: 10). How could a group that wants to embark on mission send lay people as its missionaries rather than theologians? Was there a connection between trained ministers on the one hand, and the decision of the mission body to engage lay members as missionaries,

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<sup>51</sup> The missionaries arrived in Nigeria and settled in Rumasha for a while. Mrs. Brønnum bore a son in Rumasha on 11 June, 1913 and they named him Holger, but she died of malaria two days later (See Nissen, 1968, p. 41). Brønnum describes his wife's death thus: "... She opened her eyes and looked up, and never in my life have I dreamed of such a wealth of purity and saintliness as I was permitted to see on her face. I saw her soul as it left her body to meet her Bridegroom in Heaven.... What I saw at the moment of her death has taken the sorrow from my heart. ... She fell on the field of battle as a true soldier of Jesus Christ. She gave her life for the sake of His Blessed Name, so we buried her as a soldier of the Cross" (See Jensen, 1992, p. 113, and also in Sudan No. 4, 1913, pp. 57- 58). Rose Dagmar took the baby to Brønnum's mother in-law in Scotland. In a letter to his mother in-law, he states "... Do not feel sorry for me because I am truly happy, I have put my hand to the plough, and I do not intend to look back" (See Pweddton, 2005, p. 15). On one hand the challenges faced were clearly enormous, but on the other hand Brønnum's commitment to the call was deep and strong.

<sup>52</sup> As the work progressed, five other missionaries, namely Erland Kjaer, Petrine Erichsen, Alfred Tillich from Denmark and Alfred Thompson and Florence Gibson from the United States of America joined Brønnum in the field, marking the beginning of corporation between the Danish and American Lutheran missions (Pweddton, 2005, p. 19). The two mission bodies - Danish Sudan Mission (now Mission Africa) and the American Lutheran Church (now the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) later became mission partners with the Lutheran church of Christ in Nigeria.

<sup>53</sup> The permission granted marked the beginning of a holistic mission work. It gave the missionaries the drive to translate some portions of the New Testament (the Gospel according to St. Mark) and some aspects of the church rituals. Though it is mentioned that some church rituals were translated, I have not seen any documented record to show which of the doctrines the missionaries translated into the local languages during the first fifty years. The only translation related to doctrine that I know of is Margret Nissen's translation of the Augsburg Confession into Hausa in the late 1960s; and even this one is not widely known. It is pertinent to state here that I have not come across any document describing how the missionaries performed rites such as Baptism and Holy Communion, which are exclusively reserved for the ordained clergy, bearing in mind that Brønnum's ordination took place only in 1916.

and the view of Brønnum that claimed the local people have no religion on the other hand? Since they were not grounded in classical theology, how did these missionaries tackle theological issues such as doctrines, administration of sacraments, liturgy, etc.? Did their background affect the way they presented the gospel and the Christian faith in general to the locals?

According to Pweddton, though the first missionary was not a professional theologian, he lived out the faith which in turn attracted indigenous people to want to know more about the power behind this God that he worshipped. The provision of medical services attracted people of all religious persuasions (both Islam and traditional religion) closer to the missionary, as they saw people been healed of various ailments (Pweddton 2005: 37). In addition to medical services, Brønnum also utilized the power of the local language in communication by preaching to the Bachama in Bachama language and later to the Mohammedans in Hausa language (Jensen 1992: 120).<sup>54</sup> But the question is, what did Brønnum translate and communicate, given that he viewed the local culture with disdain? It is obvious that intercultural communication did not take place.

According to Nicholas Pweddton (2005) the work of the missionaries was not without controversial aspects, including deliberate attempts at exerting power and control over the locals; and dismissing local customs a result of their lack of knowledge of the African culture. Pweddton argues that, “Some missionaries, though a minority, either deliberately, or due to a limited knowledge of African social structure, failed to see anything good in African culture. As a result they indiscriminately encouraged the demise of our customs” (2005: 53). Furthermore, some of the values and practices of the missionaries were in contradiction of what they demand from their converts. The attitude described by Pweddton has serious consequences on the future of the message they claimed to preach. Indeed this attitude is contrary to the message of *justification by faith alone* which is the context of this study. The following examples indicate that the missionaries failed to translate adequately, interpret and transmit the message of *justification by faith alone* to the locals.

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<sup>54</sup> Also there was a long period of drought and despite the local people offering sacrifices, the dry weather persisted. The local converts then asked the missionary to come and pray, and after the prayer there was rain. Jensen reports that, “This created no little interest in the white man and his God” and opened up more opportunities for preaching of the gospel in other places (Jensen, 1992, p. 119). Also contributing to the reception of the gospel by the local population is the involvement of their neighbors in evangelizing their people.

Firstly, the main aim of Sudan United Mission which was that of Brønnum also, was to curb the spread of Islam, rather than to spread the message of *justification by faith alone*. From the on-set a seed of rivalry and suspicion was sown between the new converts and their fellow local people of other religious affiliations. This had a great effect on how the local people later viewed people of other faith, as mentioned in chapter one. It is also partly the reason for religious conflicts as both Christians and Muslims struggled to gain more converts and so increase their chances of dominance over each other.

Second, as the local people embraced the Christian faith some faced strong resistance from their relatives. They had to flee to the missionaries for refuge. Others did not face such persecutions but also joined the missionaries. In an attempt to stay away from their traditional way of life to avoid “being contaminated,” the new converts began to form their own settlements away from their relatives known as Christian settlements or “Christian villages” according to Oduyoye (1986: 40). This action is contrary to the African worldview regarding communal living. Therefore, this move by new converts whether voluntary or involuntary, will give the impression that the Christian faith is there to divide rather than unite peoples because this action does not consider the socio-cultural context of the people concerned.

Third, the missionary viewed the local culture with prejudice and this negative attitude created a barrier against intercultural communication. According to Van den Berg (2005: 51), Brønnum in a book entitled “Under the yoke of Demons”<sup>55</sup> expresses his disparaging views of the customs of the potential converts’ indigenous religious belief systems and “regarded them as being at a lower cultural stage ... and ignorant in the religious sphere” (Jensen 1992: 125). He failed to realize that these beliefs play a significant role in the people’s day to day activities.

From the above, one could say that Brønnum’s understanding and appreciation of different cultures was limited and as such he failed to see language as the essence of people’s cultures; that which distinguishes one people from other peoples. In addition, his presupposition that the people’s religion is more of a system of philosophy and that there is nothing spiritual about it,<sup>56</sup> represents a total disregard for the people and their belief systems. Brønnum’s position was thus an impediment to intercultural communication. Robert Schreiter (2000: 28)

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<sup>55</sup> Vanden Berg was quoting Niels H. Brønnum, *Under Daemoners Aag* (Under the Yoke of Demons), Kobenham: Dansk Forkenet Sudan Mission, 1956.

<sup>56</sup> Brønnum’s article in *Det morke Sudan*, Chapter 4, 1912 as cited in Jensen (1992:97).

posits that “Intercultural communication might be defined as the ability to speak and understand across cultural boundaries. It is a matter of speaking and hearing in a situation where a common world is not shared by speaker and hearer.”

According to Jensen (1992: 125), elsewhere, Brønnum showed concern for the future of African culture noting that “African culture was on the wane because the interior had been opened to Europeanism and its sources of production made available to the enterprising White man. The result would be moral and physical ruin for the people of Africa.”<sup>57</sup> This seems to me as a double standard, which could also have had a bearing on the attitude of the church and its members on how to practice their Christian faith in their cultural context. The question which this attitude raises is: in the light of these developments how has the church’s interpretation of justification dealt with the socio-cultural world of the people and their lived experiences?

Fourth, education was to make converts more civilized (rather than to produce critical thinkers) and to be civilized was tantamount to becoming westernized in all aspects of life including dress, eating and language. Idowu posits that “Western education enslaved the mind as it inculcated that the only way to human dignity and full grown personality was to be in everything like Europeans” (1965: 5). This perspective gave rise to two things, namely: first, theological education solely focused on producing clergy who were to set the “Europeanized example” while the lay people were not catered for; and second, the traditional system of education through story telling which brought the family together was not considered as a vital method for imparting knowledge.

Fifth, the missionaries also showed double standards in matters that concern them on one hand and those that concern their converts on the other. These double standards were evident in their condemnation of alcohol. However, the rule was only enforced on the indigenous people who were forbidden from drinking locally brewed beer, while the missionaries could drink gin and beer without consequence (2005: 54). Does this mean that there is a different Christian life style for missionaries from that for the converts? If the answer is yes, does it also mean there are two teachings regarding *justification by faith alone*? The second example concerns the aspect of dress. The converts, especially domestic workers to the missionaries were not allowed to wear trousers, a privilege reserved for the missionaries. According to

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<sup>57</sup> Jensen was quoting Brønnum in Breve fra Sudan 1, 1917, p. 36 and his letter to Pastor Pedersen in 1914, DFSM/RA 4/4.

Pweddson this was to protect the missionaries' self-ego. He stated that, "The missionaries assumed that their houseboys would become too proud if both were allowed to wear long trousers" (2005: 54).

The message of *justification by faith alone* is that Christ humbled himself by taking on the form of a slave. He identified himself with sinful humanity and offered himself on the cross and by that justifies the sinful. The missionaries seem to have set aside this message of humility that is an essential aspect of *justification by faith alone*? Under such a prevailing situation, how has the LCCN interpreted this doctrine?

#### **4.4 The LCCN interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone***

The official interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria can be described as falling within the classical approach. In its interpretation of the doctrine there is no straightforward explanation; as such its understanding by members is also problematic. The LCCN lays more emphasis on the means of grace such as the Scripture, and the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, rather than on the doctrine itself. Two of the church's theologians who made an attempt to discuss the doctrine both dwelt on the subject of the sacraments.<sup>58</sup>

The only locally produced document which discussed the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) teaching manual, which is also used in Bible schools as a textbook on Lutheran beliefs. This manual entitled "Koyarwar Ekklesiyar Lutheran" (Teachings of the Lutheran Church) is simply a translation of classical Lutheran theology. The original goal of the TEE programme, which according to Pweddson (2005:121) is "to broaden theological education" with "an ecumenical approach, respect and tolerance of other faiths and readiness to learn from foreign cultures", has not been adequately addressed in the material. The approach is not contextual, nor is the content of the material, hence making it difficult to achieve the set goal.

The authors of the material did not make use of the local cultural world view in discussing the doctrine of justification by faith (Kjaer and Risum 1982: 8-14). For instance the illustration used in describing faith, employs the image of a gift of a chest which contains one

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<sup>58</sup> The books are: *Alherin Ubangiji cikin Sakaramentai* (God's Grace in the Sacraments) by Phaniel B. Agongtara, Yola: Usaku Printing Press, 1995; and *Bari mu fahimci Sakaramentai* (Let us understand the Sacraments) by Astriel T. Sokushipe Myatafadi, Yola, Alvari Nigeria Enterprises, 1998.

hundred naira (#100) given to a person. It argues that if the recipient of the gift decides not to open the chest the money will be there, but that does not mean that the money has lost its value (Kjaer and Risum 1982:19). As long as the money remains locked in the chest it benefits no one, including even the person whom the gift is meant for. For one to benefit from the gift two things are crucial: it has to be opened and put to use. The illustration could be effective in some contexts, but does not address the primary audience or users of the material who are mostly farmers coming from rural areas, for whom different rural imagery or items of daily use by these people would have had a greater impact, making the understanding of the teaching much easier.

The church teaches that a person is justified by grace through faith in Christ Jesus not by works. However, this is only in theory; in practice, the church seems to lay more emphasis on works thereby pushing grace to the background. This confused position leaves members uncertain and unclear as to what the church's actual interpretation of the doctrine of justification is; is justification by faith alone or by a synergy of faith and works? As an example, let us consider the following examples that leave members confused about what the church really means by *justification by faith alone*; thereafter we will examine the three ways through which the church interprets this doctrine.

The first example concerns church discipline whereby erring members are ostracised and asked to sit on the back pews in the church. They are also banned from participating in discussions or making any meaningful contribution in the church. They are equally banned from attending Bible study and from partaking of the Holy Communion<sup>59</sup> which the church ironically claims is one of the means of grace. As if that is not enough, when a member under church discipline dies, the person is not given full Christian burial rites.<sup>60</sup> The question one is left with is then: what is grace and when is this grace exercised in the life and practice of the church? Though the church may argue that their effort is to maintain orderliness, these people will appreciate God's grace when they know that the church is there for them, making all efforts to restore them back to good standing through love rather than by ostracisation. This

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<sup>59</sup> "... The person that is under discipline will not receive Holy Communion or perform any service in the church, he will renew his membership card, and he cannot take part in elections." The Constitution, section 9: Church Discipline, sub section A 1 as amended in 1988, p. 123.

<sup>60</sup> "... there will be no church service ....., The coffin will not be brought to the church, because he/she was under discipline. Those who are taken to the church are those in good standing, and also their life story will not be given in the church ..." The Constitution, section 8: Funerals, sub sections 5 and 6 as amended in 1988, p. 119.

will justify the church's claim to uphold Scripture as the rule in matters of faith and practice. Furthermore, since the church holds strongly to the understanding that Scripture is one of the means of grace, this should be applied in dealing with the issue of disciplining erring members.<sup>61</sup> This does not in any way mean that lawlessness should be condoned by the church; rather, unacceptable behaviour should be reprovved in love with the aim of winning the erring member back to the fellowship.

The second example relates to the renewal of church membership cards. Any member in good standing who fails to renew their membership will not be allowed to partake of the Holy Communion; likewise if they die without renewing their cards they are not given full Christian burial rites. Because of these attitudes some members have come to associate being Christian to having a full Christian burial rite.<sup>62</sup> These and similar practices in the church give the impression that grace is not enough when it comes to the issue of justification. What is the solution to this problem? The solution lies with the church using teaching, preaching as well as listening to the silent voices of its members as tools by which to get across the right messages about doctrine and the essence of being Christian.

Though my focus is on one Diocese out of the eight Dioceses within the LCCN - namely Gongola Diocese, this section considers the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the LCCN in general. It examines the church's documents and the means it uses to interpret and transmit its beliefs and the Christian faith to its members. In the next chapter I intend to look at how Gongola Diocese reinterprets this doctrine and its impact on its members as I engage them in interviews and or focus group discussions.

#### **4.4.1 Means of interpretation**

##### **4.4.1.1 Interpretation in church documents**

The church's documents that contain its beliefs and practices are: Luther's Small Catechism, the Constitution of the church, the ordination vow for the clergy and a Theological Education

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<sup>61</sup> The scripture states "Brethren, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore such a person gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6: 1 – 2.

<sup>62</sup> It is pertinent to state here that this practice is gradually fading out especially in city congregations, but it still persists in some rural congregations.

by Extension (TEE) textbook on Lutheran teachings and beliefs. Of these four documents only the Small Catechism is accessible to all in terms of cost and availability.

The Constitution of the church under the sub-section titled “Doctrinal basis” states that, “The Bible is the foundation of this Church. The Church believes and teaches the following.”<sup>63</sup> The Constitution also states that the LCCN subscribes to Luther’s Catechism and the Augsburg Confessions.<sup>64</sup>

The challenge in reading the Constitution with the aim of gaining understanding of the church’s beliefs is that it is not explicit enough in making a contrast between faith and works. Also, being the chief article of faith of the church and “by which the church stands or falls (*articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*),” more clarification is needed (Luther, WA 40 III, 352, 1–3 in Lohse, 1999: 258; see also Helmer, 2009: 189).<sup>65</sup> When the church says “We believe and teach the salvation of sinners through faith in Christ alone” it implies that this position is in contrast to another one, namely salvation through works. This being the case, the church should have devoted considerably more time and space to elaborate on this doctrine, clearly stating what that expression “faith in Christ alone” means in contrast to human effort.

Similarly, what does the church mean when it proclaims subscription to the Augsburg Confession when the relevant documents are not available to be consulted and used by members? The number of people who are aware of the existence of this document is very marginal, let alone the number who can comprehend its content. To justify its claim for subscribing to the Augsburg Confession, the church needs to do more than mentioning it and the LCCN must try to make it available and accessible to members. There is equally the need for concerted effort to transmit what the church stands for using an appropriate medium of transfer of knowledge, such as teaching and preaching.

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<sup>63</sup> The Constitution of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria; Section 4, sub- section B, “Doctrinal Basis” as amended in 1988, p. 73. Thereafter, ten items are listed as what the church believes and teaches. The fifth item reads: “the salvation of sinners through faith in Christ alone [Rom.3:24 & 28; 1: 17]”. The others mention about the Bible as word of God and rule of faith and practice; the Trinity; the person of Christ; the work of the Holy Spirit; human depravity; resurrection and judgment; the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; and the three ecumenical creeds.

<sup>64</sup> The Constitution, 1988, pp. 73–74.

<sup>65</sup> Elaborating on this Parker adds, “Not politically or financially, but theologically and spiritually” (James Parker, “Justification in Protestant theology” in *Here we stand: Justification by Faith Today*, James I. Parker, et al (eds.), London: Hodder and Stoughton Publications, 1986, p. 84).

#### **4.4.1.2 Interpretation through teaching**

Martin Luther used and encouraged the church and clergy to preach to and teach church members about the gospel and the Christian faith. He himself also employed a third means, namely music, to transmit his theology. Subsequent generations later employed these avenues to educate their members on their particular doctrines and the Christian faith.

The LCCN uses baptism class (Catechism class), Theological Education by Extension (TEE), Bible schools, the Seminary, seminars and Bible studies as means of teaching. However, in most cases these efforts are either not properly coordinated, they are taught by unqualified people, or they are ineffective due to the lack of adequate and accessible teaching resources.

For instance, in baptism (Catechism) classes only the abridged version of Luther's Small Catechism is used as an instructional manual. Furthermore, the situation is made even worse as in most congregations these classes are given by people with little or no theological knowledge; hence the teaching is reduced to memorization for the purpose of getting baptized with hardly any lasting effect on the life of the learners (Lawrence 2004: 164). The situation is similar to the one described by Luther in the Large Catechism as follows: "Many regard the Catechism as a simple, silly teaching which they can absorb and master at one reading. After reading it once they toss the book into a corner as if they are ashamed to read it again..." (Luther 1967: 5). Furthermore, Luther says, "I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly" (Luther 1967:7). As a church which identifies itself with Luther, what has it learnt from its founder with regard to the catechism and baptismal instruction?

As for Bible studies, the participation and attendance in most of the congregations is below expectation. According to Safiratu in a paper delivered at a youth conference "the attendance of members during Bible studies is very poor in most congregations and the situation among our church groups too is not different either".<sup>66</sup> This statement describes the general situation of LCCN in the area of Bible study, which indicates a lack of inspiring teaching and materials.

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<sup>66</sup> Safiratu F. Titus, "Do not neglect your coming together" delivered at the Lutheran Youth Organizations Annual National Conference held in Guyuk, November, 2006.

The church thought this issue was due to a lack of Bible study resources,<sup>67</sup> therefore, a missionary Miss Lillian Risum was asked to develop Bible study material for the church in 1986. She developed four such study materials, but only the first two were put to use enthusiastically. Thereafter the zeal died down and no-one has subsequently been motivated to produce new Bible study material that will allow Bible studies to become more lively and interesting. Does this mean that the available material did not address the day to day challenges, needs and interests of the people or there is a lack of motivation from those who lead these Bible studies?<sup>68</sup> Above, the lack of TEE material on core doctrinal issues was mentioned also. Since the Bible studies and TEE do not meet the needs of members, what about preaching?

#### **4.4.1.3 Interpretation through preaching**

Martin Luther in his discussion on the law and the gospel urged preachers to always present the two in their sermons. He says “the first step in Christianity is the preaching of repentance and the knowledge of oneself. The second is to believe that God sent his only Son into the world that we might live through him. He was crucified and died for you, borne your sins in his own body” (Luther LW 26, 1963:126-7). First they should preach the law so that people will come to the realisation of their need and be driven to the point of asking, “What shall we do?” (Luther, LW 26, 1963: 125-127).<sup>69</sup> At this point the gospel should follow, which will provide them with the solution to their problem - faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is the good news of what Christ has done for humanity appropriated by faith. It offers God’s justifying grace to wretched sinners who by faith have come to rely not on their effort, but on the merit of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Furthermore, Luther states that the presentation of pure doctrine absolutely depends on the accurate theological statement of the nature of both the law and the gospel (Luther LW 27, 1963: 355-6 and Althaus 1966: 251). Unfortunately, it appears that preaching is also one of the avenues through which members of the LCCN become more confused, especially as some preachers tend to mix appeals for support towards

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<sup>67</sup> General Church Council Minutes of May 1986, Ref. 35/86, Numan: LCCN Archives. This resolution followed the report presented by the Director of the Theological Education by Extension to the General Church Council in which the need to develop a Bible study material was raised. The council deliberated on the issue and passed a resolution mandating the Assistant Director Miss Lillian Risum to work on the material.

<sup>68</sup> In my own view, based on my personal experience, much of the problem lies with how Bible study is conducted, because the approach is that of monologue rather than dialogue.

<sup>69</sup> See also Acts of the Apostles 2: 37-39 which records Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost and the people’s response to the message “Brethren, what must we do? ...” (NIV).

church projects with issues of reward, including eternal life. They tend to convince members to make sentimental commitments, expecting something in return as a reward for their services. In his admonition to preachers, Luther says “Both [law and gospel] must be preserved in their true nature and authentic function through being continually related to each other”; as Lohse (1999: 269) states, there is always the danger that both can be falsified, that a new law can be made of the gospel” and when this happens the gospel that is meant to liberate enslaves. These notions can also give the impression that our justification is a result of a synergy of faith and good works. This is in turn expressed unconsciously by some clergy in their preaching.

Commenting on this situation a former missionary stated that, “For the 15 years I had been in Nigeria most of the sermons I have heard were preaching about the law, [but] the gospel of God’s grace that justifies sinners is neglected.”<sup>70</sup> This attitude severely affects the understanding of church members who look up to the preachers for their spiritual nourishment.<sup>71</sup> At times the message becomes so distorted that it can be compared to that which provoked Martin Luther to call for the reformation of the Catholic Church.

It is important to note here though, that as much as one is expected to show some level of commitment, this should not be seen as a means to attract God’s reward for “services rendered”. On the contrary, good works flow as one’s mark of appreciation for what God has done; they are marks of a graceful living or the fruits of a justified life. This in turn helps one understand that whatever one has is a gracious gift from God as is sometimes expressed in songs by people of faith.

Earlier it was noted that the missionaries did not take time to teach their converts the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. Added to this, when the church became independent, the indigenous leader did not make any meaningful effort to correct the situation either. However, despite the lack of proper teaching from the church on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, there is evidence that the church members need to understand this doctrine as expressed through songs. In the next section I intend to give a few examples of a hymn and of

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<sup>70</sup> Gerald Hogeterp, Oral information, Jos, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Some complain openly, others withdraw, and others still stop being active members, as they consider themselves as having been abused by the church. Other members again use the situation to their advantage in silencing the church as they continue to indulge in wrong practices.

locally composed songs to examine the role in creating informed understanding to support this statement.

#### **4.5 How the church members express their understanding of justification by faith alone**

One of the means by which the doctrine of justification is expressed in the people's lived experience is through hymns and songs. According to Parratt (1987) hymns and songs are part of the sources of oral theology. He argues that oral theology "consists of theological reflection which takes place in sermons, addresses and hymns, and in personal discussions and reflections of Christian believers" (1987: 143). The LCCN uses the Hausa Hymnal and locally composed songs in its services. The local songs are mostly composed by lay members.<sup>72</sup> They are usually formulated in the everyday language and vocabulary of the people. The ambiguity found in the teaching and preaching of numerous theologians and church leaders is absent in most of these songs. However from the 1960s up to the 1990s, some of these members after receiving theological training and being ordained as catechists or pastors, were not permitted to continue to compose songs. According to Pweddou, composers and singers of traditional African songs were prohibited from continuing with their baptism classes; while those already baptised were placed under church discipline (2005: 68). This was in response to the tendency of some people to use songs to settle lingering personal or tribal feuds, leading to animosity in the church. Despite this explanation, I argue that there is more to this than meets the eye; this seems to me as another way of trying to cut the local Christians off from their culture. I now turn to examine some songs to support my position.

First, the Hausa Hymnal has songs that express the doctrine of justification clearly. For example, stanzas one and two of one of the songs are as follows:

*In zaka bi mai cetonmu; lura da wannan tun yanzu. Ba za ya karbi kome ba; in ba ka bashi ranka ba* (If you want to follow our saviour; take note of this right now. He will not receive anything from you; if you do not give him your life).

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<sup>72</sup> This is the case in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria.

*Aikinka kawai ba ya so; ba ya bukarar taimako. In ba ka kaunace shi ba; aikinka ba zai karba ba* (Your work alone he does not want; he does not need your work. If you do not love him; he will not receive your work).<sup>73</sup>

Second, I now present examples of locally composed songs by members which clearly demonstrated a good understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. Markus Isa Talum in his album titled *Ceto kyauta ne* composed a song, which runs thus: *Ceto bada kudi ba, ceton Allah ba da kudi, ka na so ka sami ceto sai ta wurin Yesu zaka samu, ceto ba da kudi*.<sup>74</sup> The song says: Salvation is not by money, God's salvation is not by money, if you want to be saved it is through Jesus you will get salvation, salvation is not by money.

What this implies is that both justification and salvation are based on God's gracious love to human kind and that these are not commodities for purchase with either money or works of merit.

In another song, Isa sings, *Gida mai daraja samaniya, sai dai masu bangaskiya kadai zasu shiga wannan gida mai daraja. Allah ya yi kaunar duniya shine ya aiko da Dansa Yesu domin masu bada gaskiya gare shi su shiga cikin gidan nan mai daraja kyauta*.<sup>75</sup> This translates as follows: There is a beautiful home in heaven, only by faith alone can one enter this beautiful home. God so loved the world and sent Jesus so that those who believe in him can enter this beautiful home freely.

Chila Gargati Cham in her album titled *Mulkin Sama, Vol. 1* (Kingdom of Heaven), one of the songs sings: "Halleluyah, halleluyah, *kaunar Allah ba iyaka [2x]. Yesu ya cece ni ban biya kome ba, Yesu ya cece ni daga zunubi [2x]*."<sup>76</sup> This song means: Halleluyah, halleluyah, God's love has no limit [2x]. Jesus saved me, I paid nothing, and Jesus saved me from sin [2x].

In another song Gargati Cham sings, *Allah da menene zan biya ka? Yesu da menene zan biya ka? Domin kai ka sha wahala sabili dani wannan shi kadai ma ba zan iya biya ba [2x]*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Hausa Hymnal, no. 143, stanzas 1 and 2, Numan: LCCN Bookshop, 1990.

<sup>74</sup> Markus Isa Talum, *Ceto Kyauta ne* an album released in 1995.

<sup>75</sup> Markus Isa Talum's album titled *Gida mai daraja* released in 1997.

<sup>76</sup> Chila Gargati Cham's album titled *Mulkin Sama Vol. 1* released in 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Chila Gargati Cham in her album titled *Mulkin Sama Vol. 2* released in 2006.

These lines are translated as: God with what can I pay you? Jesus with what can I pay you? Because you suffered for my sake, this alone I am unable to pay [2x].

In these songs both Isa and Gargati Cham express deep faith in what Christ has done for us, because of God's love and nothing else. For them justification and salvation are given by God's gracious love exercised in the life of Christ, completely apart from works of merit. This confirms Parratt's assertion that hymns and songs are oral theological reflections. Music also played a significant role in Luther's theology especially his "A Mighty Fortress is our God". Luther used songs to transmit his theology, but the LCNN has not properly utilized this means of transmission for its beliefs. If Luther used songs as one of the effective means of transmitting the message of *justification by faith alone*, why is the LCCN not utilizing songs in its interpretation of *justification by faith alone*? What does this say about the church and culture?

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the historical background of LCCN and its influence on the church's interpretation of doctrine. The study discovered the following. First, the attitude of Brønnum towards the local culture has negatively impacted on how indigenous people view the relationship between their new found faith and their cultural world view. This problem is further compounded by the denial of real life issues the people are faced with such as witchcraft, fear of harm by others, where to turn to in critical situations, etc. by the missionaries. When the church became self-governing it did not pay attention to these issues either, and as a result some Lunguda Christians tend to create a dichotomy between what to take to Jesus and when to turn to their traditional religious beliefs for answers (Vanden Berg 2005: 53).

Second, there is the issue of confusing faith and works in relation to salvation, justification and rewards whether physical or spiritual. In theory the position of the LCCN is that justification is by faith alone, but in practice, the reverse is the case, or at least there is serious ambiguity. This is evident in the operations of the church and in some of its documents such as the Constitution.

Third, it could be argued that there is evidence in songs that some church members do understand this doctrine despite the failure of both the missionaries and the indigenous church leadership to effectively transmit it.

As a consequence of the above, there is hardly a proper understanding and appropriation of justification by faith by church members. This situation leads one to ask the following questions: Is the church leadership aware of this situation and what efforts have they made to rectify it? Do the members who seem to understand what this doctrine means when they express it through songs, really understand what *justification by faith alone* entails? If they do, then how did these members come to understand this doctrine? Is what they express in songs reflected in practice or only in theory, as is the case with the church more generally? Answers to these questions are what the research intends to discover as the data generated through in-depth interviews and focus groups is discussed and analysed in chapter six.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Research design: methodology and methods

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters dealt with background information to the study as well as the relevant literature on the topic, especially that pertaining to the theories underpinning the study. The first chapter introduced the study and discussed the background and context of the study. It also presented the motivations and rationale of the study including the research question: How does the interpretation of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (as an institution) enhance its understanding and appropriation by its members? After that the objectives of the research were given. The second chapter explored the issues of translation, interpretation and appropriation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* using contextualization processes of gospel and culture, translatability and contextual theological education as tools in this exploration. In the third chapter the missional journey of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* was examined using the perspectives of three key church fathers: St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther. St. Paul has discussed the issue of justification by faith more extensively in the bible than any other person. St. Augustine's position on the doctrine of justification has played a significant role in the pre-Reformation Catholic Church and to some extent influenced the understanding of Martin Luther. Martin Luther, as the founder of the Lutheran Church has a direct bearing on the context of my study, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, making his views on *justification by faith alone* central to the study. The fourth chapter discussed the missional development of the LCCN's Gongola Diocese and how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* was translated, interpreted and transmitted by the missionaries. It also examined the role of intercultural communication in this development in order to see its effect on how the diocese interprets and appropriates the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in its cultural context.

These chapters fit into the overall structure of my study. First, they provided relevant and essential resources for answering the research question, since the interpretation of the LCCN to a large extent is directly or indirectly influenced by both how the doctrine was transmitted by the missionaries and by the cultural world view of the church's membership. Second, the information discovered in these chapters is important for the study as it serves as guide and

backdrop in the evaluation of the practical contextual realities when presenting and discussing the field work in the chapters that follow.

Chapters six, seven and eight are concerned with the practical aspects of the study namely the experiences of the people as expressed by the participants in this study, during both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The information thus generated is presented, discussed and analysed in these chapters. The present chapter deals with the research methodology and methods employed by the study. The chapter serves as a link between the previous chapters and those that follow, setting out the justification for the research design. This chapter will discuss the study's methodology including the method of data collection, and that of the analysis of the data (Henning 2008: 15). According to Erik Hofstee (2011) methodology serves as a map which shows the processes involved and the reason(s) for the choices made to arrive at conclusions in research (2011: 107). Therefore, this chapter is very significant, since it provides direction serving as sign posts on how the study was executed.

Thus in order to achieve the desired goal the chapter is structured into the following subsections: research design; research methodology; methods of data collection and production; method of data analysis; limitations; and ethical considerations.

## **5.2 Research design**

This section presents the plan of the study and how it was executed. Mouton and Marais (1990) posit that research design helps plan and structure a given research project for maximum results (Mouton and Marais in Durrheim 2010: 37). Durrheim further argues that design coherence and validity are the ingredients for maximizing research findings. The researcher has adopted an interpretive research paradigm to explore the meaning of the participants' responses (2010: 38 and Holloway 1997: 114). However, Holloway limits the role of research design to the proposal stage (1997:137), while Hofstee (2009) and Durrheim (2010) are of the view that research design is the blueprint of the entire study process. I argue with Mouton and Marais that, considering the significance of the research design to the whole research exercise, the role of research design extends beyond the proposal level and indeed shapes the entire study. Hence, as recommended by Durrheim, the study is designed in the following order, with each step building upon the last and leading to the next one: empirical method, purpose of the study, context of the study, theoretical paradigm, and research techniques employed to collect and analyse data (2010: 37). The purpose of the study, context

of the study and theoretical paradigm were discussed in chapters one and two, while the qualitative empirical method and research techniques employed are presented below.

### **5.2.1 Qualitative empirical research**

The study is a qualitative empirical research which seeks to present the people's spoken or written words as the researcher interacts with them through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Henning states that, "A qualitative study is a study presented largely in language [as opposed to figures] and is about the meaning constructed from the language that presents the data" (2008: 31). Furthermore, since research has not been conducted on this topic within Gongola Diocese, nor in the LCCN as a whole, and therefore, a qualitative study is most appropriate. Creswell (2003) corroborates this and argues that qualitative inquiry is the methodology of choice when "...not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on their ideas" (2003: 30).

Thus, qualitative study allow for new theological integrations that can help the researcher to go beyond the initial preconceptions and frameworks, as against quantitative study which replaces informants' expressions with figures and is less able to explore subtle meanings (2008: 3). Qualitative study also helps one present the "explanation of the process occurring in local contexts...chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanation" (Smith 1984: 15).

### **5.2.2 Research site and the procedures to gain access**

The research is mainly located within the three Divisions of Gongola Diocese, and covers Guyuk, Purokayo, Bobini, Bodeno, Bodwai, Shelleng and Kiri Districts. The focus is centred on one out of the three Divisions, namely Guyuk Division. The reason for this is to enable a focus on one language group and to then see how the findings can apply to the other two Divisions (Lamura and Shelleng) in the Diocese. Having said that, Gongola Diocese is part of the LCCN; therefore, the whole church and parts thereof will also feature in the study, as in-depth interviews are conducted with the church leadership, seminary lecturers, and seminary students. This has taken me to other sites such as Numan, the LCCN headquarters, Mbamba-Yola where the seminary is situated and Bukuru, Jos where the TCNN (another seminary) is situated. These sites are very significant in providing the data I need for this study. The research is about the interpretation of justification by the church as an institution,

and therefore the choice of these sites is appropriate for my research question (Holloway 1997: 145). Herman Strydom (2005: 282) corroborates this when he states that the choice of the problem is automatically directly linked to the particular field in which the inquiry is to be undertaken.

For easy communication and administration of data, both the interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in English and Hausa. However, in-depth interviews with 2 vernacular clergy, 5 lay members and 3 focus group discussions were conducted only in Hausa language. Therefore, the questions for these categories were translated into Hausa to facilitate smoother interaction and easy expression of thought by participants (see Appendix 5b). The next section, research methodology, explains how I conducted the research.

### **5.3 Research methodology**

#### **5.3.1 Procedure and methods of data collection**

##### **5.3.1.1 Procedure of data collection**

After formulating my research question, key participants who would be able to provide the relevant information needed for the study were identified. According to Roth (2005: 329) the selection of relevant participants to answer one's research question is a key element of the study design. For the initial contacts, three means of communication were used to contact my participants namely, emails, letters and phone calls. As regards the church leaders, their personal secretaries arranged my appointments with them. They were met individually and then set dates were agreed for the interview session. The other participants were approached and presented with the informed consent letter and the accompanying form for them to study. Thereafter, appointments were arranged with them for conducting of the interviews. The focus groups were approached through the authorities at their institutions, who in turn arranged for me to meet with them as a group and inform them of the objectives of the sessions. A date for the group discussion was also agreed. For the BLS students, permission was sought from the school authority through the provost; while for those at the TCCN arrangements were made through their leadership structures.

There were no difficulties in getting permission because most of the people were familiar to me as the researcher and they viewed me as a clergy colleague within the LCCN. Some of the participants were also members of my congregation, or my former students. The only

individuals who were unfamiliar were students of BLS Mbamba. The interview questions were not given to the research participants in advance because the objective was to get their candid responses to the questions and I did not want them to engage in prior consultations on the questions which could compromise their responses. Therefore, it can be argued that most of the responses represented a true reflection of what the participants believe regarding justification. Where the participants were not clear in their responses, probing and engaging approaches were used to elicit more information from them (Flick 2009). However, even with further probing questions, some of the responses do not contain any useful information for the study. Two participants confessed that they lacked proper knowledge of this doctrine and hence opted to discontinue with the interview, and the interview ended at that stage. The field research was conducted between December 2009 and November 2011 in order to allow time for the proper scheduling of the sessions since the locations were far apart.

### **5.3.1.2 Methods of data collection**

For the collection of data, the study used the following methods of collecting information: literature review, archival study and field research.

#### *Analysis of existing literature:*

The literary aspect of the research focuses on literature on relevant theories and methodology and on literature analysis of existing work on the subject of justification by faith and debate in this regards, in order to discover the gap that exists, namely a lack of clarity on the transmission to and interpretation by LCCN members of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. The gap discovered served as an entry point to make a contribution to the academic field. The literature review also provided the material needed for writing the historical background of Martin Luther and the development of the doctrine. In this respect, the UKZN library, the LTI library, the TCNN library in Bukuru, the BLS library in Mbamba, and the Internet were of great help to me in terms of providing me with the relevant resources needed for this study.

#### *Archival research:*

The LCCN Archives in Numan as well as the Diocese archives in Kem were very useful to this study. I examined the relevant minutes and documents of the church and the Diocese, especially resolutions reached on theological education, doctrines and practices of the church,

and other documents pertaining to the background history of the LCCN in general and the Gongola Diocese in particular.

*Field research:*

The field research is divided into two parts: individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions using an interview schedule. On one hand, the in-depth interview is appropriate for my study since it also sought to examine the impact of the churches interpretation of the doctrine of justification on the church members' lived experiences. According to Henning (2008: 37), "... participants can give their experience best when asked to do so in their own words, in lengthy individual interviews." On the other hand, focus group discussions provide a rich variety of responses which complement those gotten from individual interviews (Litoselliti 2003:19). Structured questions were used for both the individual interviews and focus group discussions. The questions were designed for five different categories of participants namely: church leaders, seminary lecturers, clergy, lay members, and seminary students. The two methods employed gave me the real picture of the context of my study, as it created a forum for dialogue between the researcher and the people. The interview sessions lasted for 45 minutes each. The interview was recorded using a micro-digital recorder with the consent of the interviewees. The educational level of the participants is also provided to give insight into the formulation of their responses. The participants have given consent to use their real names in the presentation of data. Next I turn to discuss what these two methods entail showing how each of them is relevant to the study and thereafter I present a description of the research participants.

### **5.3.2 Tools for data collection**

#### **5.3.2.1 In-depth interviews**

Interviews are one of the qualitative research methods that were used in this study. Bogdan and Biklen maintain that the interview is "a purposeful conversation usually between two people (but sometimes involving more) that is directed by one in order to get information" (Bogdan and Biklen 1982 in Ely et al. 1991: 58). Interviews occur in different forms and structures, from formal to informal; closed ended to open ended; semi structured to structured (1991:57). Steinar Kvale (1996: 1) defines qualitative research interviews as attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of view and unfold the meaning of people's experiences. Carolyn Baker (1997) further posits that interviews are among the most widely

used methods for data generation in the social sciences (1997: 130-143). Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 113) also agree that:

Interviews provide a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are special forms of conversation. While these conversations may vary from highly structured, and standardized, quantitatively oriented survey interviews to semi-formal guided conversations, and free-flowing informational exchanges. All interviews are interactional.

An in-depth interview with structured questions is appropriate for my study because it allows the data to speak for itself through the voices of the participants. It also allows room for dialogue between the researcher and the participants in a reciprocal manner as partners (Holloway 1997: 139 and Davies 2010: 137-139). Though semi-structured and closed ended questions provide participants with varieties of options to choose from, which structured questions do not have, the in-depth interview with structured questions best suits my study as they focus the questions directly onto the topic under study. Since I wanted to understand the position and experiences of the participants on these specific points, semi-structured questions were not appropriate; while closed ended questions were also not suitable because these do not allow participants to express themselves in their own words.

### **5.3.2.2 Focus group discussions**

Lia Litoselliti (2003: 1) describes the focus group as a group “where participants share and respond to comments, ideas and perceptions.” It is a rich means for generating data because of its interactive nature. According to Litoselliti, “Participants respond to and build on the views expressed by others in the group - a synergistic approach that produces a range of opinions, ideas and experiences, and thus generates insightful information” (2003: 2). Johann Mouton (2001) corroborates this and adds that focus group discussion allows people to communicate in a more meaningful way on a particular topic (2001: 292). It is this synergistic approach to discussion on a particular topic and the meaningful contribution from participants that focus groups offer that will be harnessed to enrich the present study.

The groups were made up of ten to twelve members of a regular group who share certain things in common and who are familiar with each other, and this also made the interaction between them freer (2003: 32). The only exceptions are the students from the two schools, but they are familiar with each other. The focus group discussion has its disadvantages such

as bias and manipulation, false consensus from participants, difficulty in distinguishing individual views from the group view, and difficulty in making generalizations in terms of representative sample (2003: 20-21). These challenges were resolved by augmentation with the data generated from the in-depth interviews.

Six focus group discussions were conducted, two with students of Brønnum Lutheran Seminary (BLS) and Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) respectively and one each with the Women Fellowship; the Men Fellowship; the Lutheran Youth Fellowship and the Boys/Girls Brigade church groups. The gender composition of participants in these groups varied, depending on the nature of the group and obviously the Men and Women Fellowship groups consisted of 100% men and 100% women respectively. The age brackets of Men and Women Fellowship groups ranged from 30 to 76 years. The Youth Fellowship and Boys/Girls Brigade groups were mixed - boys and girls together – and they were aged from 20 to 33 years. The Boys/Girls Brigade organization is structured according to age groups and for this study the senior group was intentionally chosen because of their educational level. They also have independence of opinion according to the Nigerian law and the Constitution of LCCN.

The choice of these groups was informed by different reasons. As regards the seminary students, they are pastors in training who upon graduation will either be ordained or appointed to serve as religious instructors or theological educators in church schools. Therefore, their perceptions on the subject of justification are an important contribution to this study. As far as the church groups are concerned, holding Bible studies is one of their activities and it is therefore important to discover what kind of issues they cover in these Bible studies.

The focus group discussions were conducted at the various groups' places of regular meeting for the participants' convenience and to make them feel comfortable and relaxed (Litoselliti 2003: 48). The BLS Chapel and the class where TCNN Lutheran students take their denominational instruction were recommended as the sites for the focus group discussions. The participants sat in a circle for easy communication and interactive participation. This is also to help ensure that participants were able to address everyone and to create a more friendly, informal atmosphere (2003: 48).

### **5.3.3 Research participants**

The research participants fall within five categories, namely church leaders; seminary lecturers; the clergy; seminary students and lay members. The break-down of participants interviewed is as follows: 8 church leaders; 6 seminary lecturers; 12 clergy; 10 seminary students and 8 lay members. Altogether a total of 44 individuals participated in the in-depth interviews conducted, while 6 focus group discussions were held. The participants were drawn from all sections of the church, thereby giving a valid picture of the situation across the whole institution of the LCCN. They cut across gender, age and status; therefore, all the categories of people within the church are represented. All the participants were presented with an informed consent letter and form which they signed (see Appendices 1 and 2). It is important to state here that there was no female representation in the church leaders' group, because there is no female in leadership at the national or diocesan levels, and there was only one woman in the seminary lecturers' group. It is only within the clergy group that I was able to get female representation because the church practices women's ordination.

The participants in both the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions came from different educational levels, ranging from PhD to GCE O level (General Certificate of Education Ordinary level) and from various age brackets. Their exposure on the subject in question also differed, with the church leaders as policy makers and theologians, as well as the lecturers as academics, and the seminary students, being more exposed to this subject than the others. The degree of exposure of the clergy to this subject was mixed because of the variety in their educational backgrounds. The lay members were the most challenged with regard to their knowledge on the subject because of their lack of exposure to it. To make sense of why the participants responded the way they did, an awareness of their theological educational background is necessary. Information concerning the educational levels of the respondents, their roles and experience in the church and their age ranges will similarly help in clarifying some of the factors responsible for the responses they gave during the course of the interviews and focus group discussions.

My study covers three areas: gospel and culture; the type of theological education provided by the church and the translatability of the doctrine of justification by faith. To get a complete picture of the church's position on and the people's knowledge of the doctrine, the following categories of people were interviewed in depth.

### *Church leaders:*

The eight church leaders interviewed were chosen based on their official capacity. They possessed the following educational qualifications: six had a Masters in Theology degree, while the other two had Bachelor of Theology degree. Their age bracket was between 43 and 79 years. The leaders interviewed came from both the national and the Diocesan administrative structures of the church.

At the national level the following officers were interviewed individually: the Archbishop Emeritus, the current Archbishop, the Administrative Secretary, the LCCN Director of Christian Education, the Director of Theological Education by Extension and the Secretary to the Archbishop. At the Diocesan level, the immediate past Bishop and the current Bishop were interviewed (see Appendix 3). The choice of these officers was informed by their roles as policy makers of the church. In addition to being policy makers they are trained theologians and ordained clergy. This double responsibility puts them in a strong position to provide relevant information on the church's perception of and how it interprets the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

### *Seminary lecturers:*

Six seminary lecturers were interviewed, one of whom held a PhD degree, while four had Masters of theology degrees, and the remaining one – who was also the Principal of the Women School, an arm of the seminary - held a Diploma. Their ages ranges were from 38 to 66 years. At the Brønnum Lutheran Seminary, the Provost and four lecturers who taught systematic theology and courses related to African theology were interviewed to investigate the type of theological education they provide for students as contained in the seminary curriculum. The lecturers are not directly involved with the policy and administration of the church, besides the acting Provost who was once a Bishop. The decision to interview the lecturers was based on their responsibilities as trainers of the clergy. It is important in the context of the aims of this study, to interview those vested with the responsibility of educating the clergy to hear their views on the doctrine of justification and get to know their experiences regarding its transmission and interpretation (see Appendix 4). The seminary lecturers were all male.

### *Clergy:*

A purposively selected number of clergy, cutting across gender and various levels of theological training, were interviewed individually. The clergy, like the seminary lecturers, are responsible for imparting knowledge to their members. It is for this reason that 12 clergy with different educational qualifications were interviewed. They possessed the following academic qualifications: two were holders of Masters in Theology degrees, six had Bachelors of Theology degrees, two held Diploma in Theology certificates and the remaining two had Certificates in Theology (in Hausa). Their ages ranges were from 35 to 79 years. The gender distribution was four female clergy and eight male, reflecting the church-wide gender imbalance among the clergy (see Appendices 5a and b).

*Lay members:*

A total of eight lay members, two women and six men were interviewed. Two of those interviewed held Certificates in Theology (in Hausa), one had a Bachelor's degree, one had a National Certificate of Education (NCE - Advance level), one held a National Diploma, and another one had passed the Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSCE), while the remaining two had Senior Certificates of Education (SSCE - Ordinary level). Four of the six focus group discussions were conducted with lay members, whose ages ranged from 20 to 76 and who had varying academic backgrounds (see Appendices 6a and b).

*Seminary students:*

The seminary students who participated were studying towards Bachelor of Theology degrees; their ages were between 29 and 48 years and they were 50% male and 50% female. The choice of seminary students was informed by two reasons namely; first, to know their position as pastors in training and future leaders in the church; and second, to find out what they are taught and how they understand it. Seminary students serve as the bridge between the clergy and the laity as they are graduating from being lay members to being clergy (theologians). Therefore, interviewing them has the advantage of confirming or counteracting what the lecturers say about the method of transmitting knowledge to their students. In addition to the in-depth interviews, I conducted two focus group discussions with the seminary students (see Appendix 7).

## **5.4 Data-analysis: procedure and method of data analysis**

### **5.4.1 Procedure of data analysis**

Having described how the research data was collected, I now present a discussion on the ways in which the data was analysed. According to John Swinton and Harriet Mowat (2007: 57), “data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the research process.”

The first step taken was to upload the interviews from the digital recorder to the computer and to label each of them. The researcher listened to the interviews over and over again and they were transcribed verbatim into text. Replaying of the tapes several times afforded the opportunity to go deeper into the minds of the interviewees and thereby added to the quality of the data available. The data generated from the field was reflected upon through the engagement of other resources such as literature, personal and professional experience (2007: 57). The codes for participants in this study were as follows: all the in-depth interviews were coded according to the participants’ real names. The participants gave verbal consent to use their real names because they are of the view that the study has no ethical implications on their person. The focus group discussions were coded according to the name of the group in question: Women, Men, and Youth Fellowships, Boys/Girls Brigade, BLS and TCNN students (See Appendix 8).

### **5.4.2 Method of data analysis**

The study analysed qualitative data collected from the interview and focus group discussions through discourse analysis. As noted earlier, discourse analysis is about interpreting and deconstructing a text or narrative to uncover its logic and meaning and how this informs the language, ideas, and views that are used in the construction. A thematic analysis was used in the discourse analysis and categories of themes identified in the data obtained were discussed. Discourse analysis helped to identify how ideas and views are socially constructed because every speaker is located in a social context which informs the way they speak.<sup>78</sup> Theological analysis was also used to engage the data with existing literature on *justification by faith alone*.

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<sup>78</sup> Eamon Fulcher, What is Discourse Analysis? [http://www.eamonfulcher/discourse\\_analysis.html](http://www.eamonfulcher/discourse_analysis.html) accessed 19/3/2012.

The expressions of the participants represents the primary data for analysis, hence it is a qualitative analysis. The transcribed material was read and I then manually coded the data. According to Emerson, et al. (1995), coding is done in order to produce a coherent and comprehensible analysis for readers who are not directly acquainted with the social world of the participants (1995: 142). The coded data was sorted into themes related to the research questions and other issues that emerged during the interview. The data was coded thematically into the following themes: Personal knowledge of the doctrine; Official understanding of the doctrine by LCCN; Relationship of the doctrine and the world view of the people; Resources, means and method of transmission of justification; LCCN policy on theological training of clergy and laity; Impact of the doctrine on the life of congregants; Challenges involved in transmission and understanding of justification by faith; and Assessment of LCCN's interpretation of the doctrine in relation to Scripture and Lutheran confessional documents.

### **5.5 Methodological limitations**

The researcher's insider position as a minister and theological educator in the church, also being a member of the Diocese afforded the advantage of interacting freely with the people and being able to readily earn their trust and cooperation. However this insider status has both disadvantages and advantages. According to Dahlberg and McCaig doing a research as an insider or "practitioner-research" (2010: 1- 12) has its advantages and disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages include being biased and viewing the issues at hand from the perspective of one's position rather than as an objective researcher. To overcome this limitation, in-depth explanation of the role of a researcher was given in order to facilitate critical distance and respect for my role, not as someone „working on behalf of the church' but as a scholar seeking critical information that will contribute to knowledge (2010: 6). On the other hand, the insider researcher has the advantage of being familiar with the structures and specific knowledge of the subject of study. With this knowledge they can ask the most relevant and meaningful questions. At the end the exercise may help "increase professional skills and promote reflective learning" (2010: 5-6). Flick (2002) posits that one of the potential limitations of an outsider researcher is unfamiliarity with the people, their mode of operation and activities. In that case, Flick suggests one should try to become an insider. Flick says, "A source of knowledge in this context is to gradually take an insider's perspective to understand the individual's view point or the organisational principles of social groups from a member's

perspective” (2002: 58). Another advantage of being an insider researcher is that one is familiar with the structures - in this case the church structures - and how they operate. However, being a pastor can also create power issue with lay members and with other pastors who have been students of the researcher. This potential problem was neutralised by avoiding an atmosphere built on church defined status, but one based on the academic objectives in which information was needed for the research purposes of a doctoral student.

According to Erik Hofstee (2009: 117) “All methods have limitations. Perfection is seldom, if ever, attainable.” As such, this study does not claim any perfection; it has its own limitations as well.” The participants’ cooperation was important because the lessons learnt from them have the potential of influencing the church decisions on many issues but particularly its policy on theological education and how to transmit Christian beliefs and practices. However, as noted, there were some limitations in the way in which data was collected.

Some of the participants were female; therefore it is possible that certain gender issues may affect the study. Being a male researcher it is very important to be gender sensitive by making the presence of women visible and ensuring that their voices included at all levels of this research, but full gender-representivity is not always possible, especially when it comes to the demographics of church leadership.

The diverse cultural nature of the Diocese with over 14 ethnic groups is also a potential issue that limits the study, since the focus on one language group for in-depth study was necessary in part for logistical reasons. The number of participants compared to the total population of the Diocese is also small, but the participants do represent all sectors within the church which is adequate to allow me to draw valid conclusions based on the feedback received. Representivity in qualitative research relies on information-rich cases rather than on the size of the population studied. Since the participants were purposively selected, they were well-positioned to provide information that addressed the research problem because they were familiar with the context (Silverman 2010: 194). Furthermore, Patton (1990: 169) posits that “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research....” This means that the reliability and validity of my study will not be undermined (Hofstee 2009: 118).

## **5.6 Ethical considerations**

The study took into account the procedure for ethical approval for the protection of participants through a detailed explanation of the aim and reason for doing this study in the informed consent letter (see Appendix 1a, 1b). The consent document contains both my contact details and that of my supervisor should in case any of the participants have any concern they may want addressed. According to Wolff Michael Roth (2005:103), the participants' "protection is outlined in a consent form ..., which specifies the voluntary nature and length of participation, the nature of the data sources collected, and the possibility of withdrawing from the research project at any point in time."

The informed consent document was sent to participants in advance. The document clearly states that research participants are at liberty to either participate in the exercise or choose not to. If they decided to participate then they were requested to sign the informed consent form (See Appendix 2a, 2b). All those who were identified and approached agreed to participate and they signed the informed consent form as part of the ethical requirement for this study. The ethical committee of UKZN have given their written approval of this consent document through an ethical clearance letter (see Appendix 9). The participants are adults, who are not dependent on guidance from others with regard to their position; what they expressed was their personal opinions. Participants were also aware that the session was being recorded with a digital micro recorder. The participants fall within the age range of 20 to 78, that is from the Boys/Girls Brigade members to the church leaders. Furthermore, there was no form of inducement involved in order to get participants to take part in the study or to make them provide the information required. The participants willingly agreed to participate and also voluntarily and freely expressed their views.

The last paragraph of the informed consent document mentions the benefits derivable from the research to the researcher, participants, and the church as a motivation. It states:

Participating in this research will benefit you. If the church is able to accept the outcome of the research and make use of the document, you will be part of the success story. As a member or a leader in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, it is our collective responsibility to seek to know and interpret correctly what we claim makes us unique as Lutherans. The work will be of benefit to the whole Church in helping to understand the causes of the problem and how to address them (See Appendix 1a).

Other ethical issues considered in this study are power relations and gender issues. The issue of power relations in this study was considered from two angles; between me as a researcher who happens to be a pastor to some of the participants and a lecturer to others. This dual position is likely to reflect in the way these participants view the researcher and may have an effect on their responses. This matter was addressed directly by fully informing the participant with a clear request that they do not compromise their answers with any bias due to my status in the church. This has helped minimize what Dahlberg and McCaig (2010) call “interviewer effect” on participants (2010: 138). In addition, an atmosphere of openness and true or good rapport was built between the researcher and the participants (2010: 139). Another area of power relations is between extrovert and introvert participants, especially in focus group discussions. If the extroverts are allowed to dominate the introverts, the validity of the data will be in question. Therefore, to address this issue I made sure that we sat in a circle and that everyone was encouraged to make their contribution to the discussion. The steps taken ensured that all were giving equal respect and equal opportunity to contribute to the discussion and hence to the data that emerged.

On the issue of gender power relations in which the female participants may be dominated by males (including myself), the participants who were interviewed individually were fellow clergy whom were known to me, and the environment in which the sessions were conducted facilitated free interaction as equals. Gender was therefore not considered as an obstacle in this study; the female participants and I, as the researcher, were both guided by the desire to contribute relevant information that would enhance the study. Furthermore, in our interaction, we were focused on our humanness and equality before God which is what the doctrine of justification by faith also emphasises.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher has presented a blueprint of how the research was conducted. The chapter has two parts, namely research method and methodology. The research design - presented in chapter one - discussed and described the research problem, focusing on the purpose of the study, the research questions and objectives of the study, and the scope of the study. This chapter presented the methodology used in conducting the study. It started with discussions about the methods of and tools for data collection. These discussions concerned the methodology, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and the reasons for such choices, as well as the processes of recruitment of participants, the collection and analysis of

data. Finally the limitations and ethical considerations involved in this study were outlined. Having discussed the research methodology used in this study, the next chapter will focus on presenting the findings of the research as generated from the field.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### The LCCN Gongola Diocese's interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*: field work

True theology is the attempt on the part of the church to explain and interpret the meaning of the gospel for its own life and to answer questions raised by the Christian faith, using the thought, values and categories of the truth which are authentic to that place and time (Gilliland 1989: 10-11).

#### 6. 1 Introduction

Chapter four discussed how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* was transmitted from Luther to the LCCN through the agency of the missionaries. First, the discussion revealed that the view of *justification by faith alone* that was transmitted by the missionaries has undergone many processes of modification. Second, the way the missionaries presented this doctrine did not facilitate its understanding and appropriation by the LCCN members. Third, the indigenous leadership of the LCCN did not make deliberate effort towards educating members about this doctrine. Chapter five presented the research design and the procedure for collection and analyzing the data that will be generated from the field work. That chapter formed the bridge between the previous chapters and those which now follow. The present chapter attempts to investigate further the underlying reason[s] for the situation described in chapter four which has an effect on how the doctrine is appropriated by current church members.

While the previous chapters were historical and theological based on analysis of theories, this chapter focuses on findings from field work, which will be interpreted in the light of the provision of formal and informal contextual theological education.

The objective of this chapter is to assess the knowledge and interpretation of the congregants of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* that makes them unique as Lutherans. It also seeks to evaluate how pastors and members appropriate this doctrine within their cultural world view. This information will help to answer the question: How does the LCCN Gongola Diocese interpret the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in their context? In order to achieve this objective, an examination of the respondents' personal knowledge of the doctrine and what they understand to be the LCCN's official understanding thereof, will first be made.

Second, an exploration of how they relate their understanding of the doctrine with their cultural world view will be undertaken. Third, a discussion on the resources and means and method[s] employed for the transmission of the doctrine will follow. Fourth, an examination of the impact of the doctrine on their lives will be given and finally, the challenges that they encounter with regard to the doctrine will be presented. These responses will be examined and analysed to identify the possible factors that might have influenced them.

## **6.2 Data presentation and analysis**

The data presented below was sourced through interviews and focus group discussions. Both the interviews and the focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher, James J Reynolds. The interviews were conducted with the following categories of people: church leaders, seminary lecturers, the clergy and lay members. The focus group discussions were conducted with the following groups: seminary students, the Women Fellowship, the Men Fellowship, the Youth Fellowship and the Boys/Girls Brigade. The responses differ not only from one group to the other but also within the same category, on issues such as the policy on theological education and position of the church on *justification by faith alone*. The presentation and analysis are integrated to provide a continuous flow of the discussion.

### **6.2.1 Knowledge of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone***

#### **6.2.1.1 Responses on personal knowledge of the doctrine**

During the course of the interviews and focus group discussions, one of the questions asked of the respondents was to state briefly their understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. The following responses were given, according to the five categories of respondents mentioned above.

The responses from church leaders on their personal knowledge of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* were almost uniform. One respondent said, “The doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is the cardinal doctrine of the Lutheran church, and of course all Christians. It teaches that we are justified by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>79</sup> Corroborating this another leader added that “a person is justified by faith in the death of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins, not on account of our good works.”<sup>80</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>79</sup> Response from interview with David L. Windibiziri, church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Response from interview with John L. Basil, church leader in Numan on 5th January 2010.

other respondents affirmed the view that justification is by grace through faith in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross for humankind, not by works of merit, but others expressed it using additional phrases and terms such as „God’s mercy’ and ‚redemption’ etc.<sup>81</sup>

The responses of the church leaders suggest two things; first they seem to have a good understanding of the doctrine. Their position may not be unconnected with the level of their theological education.<sup>82</sup> Second, if this is what they hold of the doctrine, have they effectively communicated it to the clergy, who can then pass this onto the congregants? What then is the understanding of the clergy, who form the tier of the LCCN’s operations below that of the church leadership, of this doctrine?

The clergy interviewed cut across all five levels of educational qualifications, as such, responses from the clergy varies. One of the clergy admitted that it is easy to mention *justification by faith alone* but not easy to explain. Commenting on this further, he said, “justification is a process or an act that reconciles one to God based on what Christ has done appropriated through faith, and even faith is a gift from God.”<sup>83</sup>

Using a judicial term, another pastor said, “justification is God’s acquittal of sinners of their sin and it is appropriated by faith not works.”<sup>84</sup> Supporting this, another pastor said, “Justification is through the grace of God alone accepted by faith alone; we are justified and accounted righteous before God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have faith, it will make you do the works or it will qualify you to do good works.”<sup>85</sup>

However, the simple response that we are justified by faith or that justification is by faith alone, as expressed by some clergy, without making reference to God’s word of promise of grace, which is an important aspect of Lutheran theology, is not enough. Luther also talks of a justifying faith, one which grasps Christ, as a grasping and appropriating faith (Luther LW

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<sup>81</sup> Responses from interviews with church leaders: John S. Kenan in Guyuk on 31st December 2009, Danlami S. Elkanah and John L. Basil in Numan on 5th January 2010 and 6th January 2010 respectively.

<sup>82</sup> Six of the church leaders interviewed are holders of Master’s Degrees in Theology while two have Bachelor of Theology Degrees.

<sup>83</sup> Response from interview with Eli Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

<sup>84</sup> Response from interview with Bala Abner, clergy in Bobini on 31st December 2009, and Yusuf Pepeh, clergy in Purokayo on 3rd January 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Response from interview with Bester Denham, clergy in Numan on 6th January 2010.

34, 1979: 110). In addition the responses failed to mention the kind of faith that justifies, a faith which develops as a "response to the divine word of forgiveness" (Lohse 1999: 261). These kinds of expressions reflect the lack of proper understanding of the doctrine; and this would then filter down to the laity. Their responses are also capable of giving the impression that justification is as a result of a synergy of faith and works, since the point that justification is only through faith is not emphasised or explained sufficiently. According to Paul Althaus (1996), these simple statements are not enough; one needs to be more precise. He says, "It is not enough, ... to say either that faith receives justification, or, that man [sic] receives justification in faith. Luther's thought must be expressed more definitely. Justification is received with faith, that is, in the form of faith. Faith is the work and gift of God" (1966: 230-231). By stating that faith is the work and gift of God Althaus means that faith receives the gift of God's grace which justifies, and this faith is also a gift from God. Therefore, one could say that faith and justification are inseparable since they are all gifts from God. Furthermore, it is only faith which receives justification because it trusts and depends on what has already been worked out by Jesus Christ not works or the law.

The responses of the clergy reveal the following: first, some clergy are still struggling with understanding the doctrine. As one of them put it: "it is easy to mention but not easy to explain ... the challenge I am faced with is how to develop or translate this doctrine so that the local people will understand it."<sup>86</sup> I find this statement quite revealing, because if one cannot communicate the meaning of a concept, it means that one has not understood the concept. That is why C. S. Lewis says, "I have come to the conclusion that if you cannot translate your own thoughts into uneducated language, then your thoughts are confused. Power to translate is the test of having really understood your own meaning" (Lewis in McGrath 2010: 41). Thus, in the light of what Lewis says, the above response seems to me to be a modest way of admitting that one lacks proper understanding of the doctrine. Second, the clergy are not properly equipped to translate and to critically engage with this doctrine. They seem not to have the resources to tackle such a translation into understandable language and meaningful messages. What then are the views of the seminary lecturers, as those who trained these clergy?

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<sup>86</sup> Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010.

The seminary lecturers are entrusted with the responsibility of forming the church's clergy, who in turn instruct the laity on the Christian faith. The responses of the seminary lecturers were similar in meaning but differ in their wordings or expressions. For instance, a lecturer said, "justification means to be made righteous or right with God by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone."<sup>87</sup> Another said, "It means a Christian is justified by faith in God alone not works coming from human effort, but benefits from God's grace."<sup>88</sup> Collaborating on this issue, another said, "human beings are justified not by personal merit but by grace through faith in Christ alone."<sup>89</sup>

Giving a historical background, one lecturer's reply was that, "The doctrine of justification is an Old Testament teaching re-echoed by prophet Habakkuk, St. Paul and Martin Luther. It simply means we are fallen creatures that need to be made righteous. The process of becoming righteous once again happened through the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross appropriated by faith not works."<sup>90</sup>

The responses of the seminary lecturers revealed the following: first, they are clear in their responses of what they understand by *justification by faith alone* as well with regard to the LCCN's official understanding. Second, the official understanding of the church is theological in nature but is not reflected in practice. According to one lecturer, "... there is hardly any correct affirmation of grace as against works in the church."<sup>91</sup>

However, if the understanding in theory is at variance with its practical application and affirmation, then it means the understanding is incomplete. Practical application has the ability to address practical concerns of the people, which the theory alone cannot do. In the words of Theodor Dieter (2009), "Luther's doctrine of justification is of relevance here because it specifically addresses this concern for wholeness. God's way of seeing encompasses the whole person..." (2009: 200). This concern for the whole person (the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects) can only be possible when theory and praxis are

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<sup>87</sup> Response from interview with Ibrahim Bitrus Ma'aji, Seminary lecturer at Mbamba - Yola on 11th January 2010.

<sup>88</sup> Response from interview with Haniel P. Yakubu, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January 2010.

<sup>89</sup> Response from interviews with Briska B. Boyi and Peter Bartimawus, seminary lecturers at Mbamba, Yola on 11th and 12th January 2010 respectively.

<sup>90</sup> Response from interview with Jackson Toma, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010.

integrated, but according to my respondents this integration is not happening in the LCCN. The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) which met in Dar es Salaam in 1976 expressed its dissatisfaction with this type of theological exercise in the final statement thus: “We reject as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection on the reality of the Third world” (Torres and Fabella 1978: 269; see also Kalilombe 1999: 168-9). It is when these two vital concepts of commitment and critical reflection are put together that theory and praxis will gain proper integration in people’s practical realities.

The lay members interviewed fall within two categories: seminary students and congregants. With the seminary students in both individual interviews and focus group discussions the responses were that justification is by God’s grace appropriated by faith not by any deed, power or knowledge.<sup>92</sup> It is through the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross that people have been restored back to fellowship with God.<sup>93</sup>

Unlike the responses from the seminary students, responses from lay congregants were varied, some did know the basic meaning of the doctrine, while others did not, as expressed in these responses below.

Two responses from lay members<sup>94</sup> convey the message that there is a lack of proper understanding of this doctrine among members. The first respondent said, “*Ta wurin bangaskiya mukan sami ceto, amma ina kara da cewa sai tare da ayyuka mutum zai Barata*”<sup>95</sup> (meaning, Through faith one is saved, but I would like to add that one must add works to faith in order to be justified). The other respondent said, “*Ba ta wurin bangaskiya*

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<sup>92</sup> Responses from focus group discussions on 12th January 2010 with Brønnum Lutheran Seminary (BLS) students, at Mbamba, Yola, and on 25th January 2010 with Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) students, at Bukuru in Jos.

<sup>93</sup> A response from the focus group discussion with BLS students also quoted 1 John 1: 9 -10 which says, “If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” to support their point.

<sup>94</sup> One of these two respondents was a teacher in one of the church’s Bible schools for over ten years; the other has a certificate in theology from another Bible school.

<sup>95</sup> Response from interview with Raymond R. Shemeni, lay member in Purokayo on 4th January 2010.

*kadai ba amma tare da ayyuka mutum zai Barata*<sup>96</sup> (which means, Not through faith alone but together with works one is justified). Yet another respondent, during a focus group discussion said, “Faith alone can never justify for faith cannot stand alone. Faith is the foundation works is the building. We are justified by faith but for it to be complete works are important.”<sup>97</sup> The Women Fellowship members were also divided in their understanding of this doctrine as expressed during the focus group discussion. Some were of the opinion that justification is by faith alone while others held that it is by faith and works. The situation was similar for the other groups, namely the Men Fellowship, the Boys/Girls Brigade and the Youth Fellowship.

Responses from the laity revealed the following: first, according to some respondents on one hand, justification is by faith and works; therefore, the statement *justification by faith alone* is not correct. Second, according to others, indeed *justification is by faith alone*. Even though justification by faith does not rule out the significance of works, many of the responses tend to elevate works above faith with regards to the subject of justification. What do the respondents mean when they say that justification is by faith and works? Do they see faith as the instrument of justification; while works are its evidence (see Pentecost 1965: 109-110)? If however they see works from the perspective of earning salvation as they tend to suggest, then their understanding is not properly formed. In the words of one of the respondents, “the laity is not well informed because this issue borders on theology. For one to understand this doctrine there is need for the church (LCCN) and its pastors to develop a good Bible study material for the instruction of the laity.”<sup>98</sup>

These responses raise the following questions: what informs these responses by the various groups and individuals: is it the way in which the church transmits the message of justification to them; is it to do with the practices of the church; or is it connected to their cultural world view? Do these responses reflect the understanding of the church or they are at variance with it? To attempt to answer this question I now turn to what my respondents think the church understands by *justification by faith alone*.

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<sup>96</sup> Response from interview with Fidelia Banyangi, lay member in Purokayo on 9th January 2010, and response from the focus group discussion with Women Fellowship LCCN Majami’ar Almasihu in Jos on 19th July 2010.

<sup>97</sup> Response from the focus group discussion with Boys and Girls Brigade of LCCN No 1, Yola Town on 1st July 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Response from interview with McDonald Gwangduke, lay member in Kiri on 5th December 2009.

### 6.2.2.2 Responses on the LCCN official understanding of the doctrine

The responses of the church leaders on the understanding of the church are that justification is by grace through faith in the atoning death of Christ on the cross for humanity.<sup>99</sup> However, one leader said, “The LCCN understanding is shallow and tends towards emphasizing works. This is due to lack of proper teaching; even the Catechism classes are handled by laity who lack proper understanding and have no theological background.”<sup>100</sup> This was corroborated by another leader who added that, “The church (LCCN) has problem letting people know and understand this doctrine, this is evident in the fact that they continue to live in fear of death. Most of our members do not understand this doctrine.”<sup>101</sup>

From the responses of the church leaders on the church’s understanding of this doctrine, the following points can be drawn: first, it is evident that the emphasis of the church’s understanding is on faith in the death of Christ rather than works of merit. Second, there is also lack of satisfaction with the way the doctrine is presented to members and with how they in turn appropriate it. Since the church is not managing to transmit the meaning and implications of this doctrine to its members well, what then do other sectors other than the leadership of the church hold of the church’s understanding on *justification by faith alone*? To attempt to answer this question, the views of these other sectors are crucial. First, I look at the responses of the seminary lecturers in this regard.

The lecturers are divided in their responses on the church’s understanding. For instance, one lecturer said the understanding of the church is that: “Justification is by faith alone apart from works of merit. We are saved by believing in God’s gracious gift to us through Christ not works.”<sup>102</sup> Another lecturer responded,

In principle the understanding of the church is grace and faith centred, but in practice that is not the case; because there is hardly any correct affirmation of grace as against works in the church. Certain practices of the church; how it disciplines and exclude

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<sup>99</sup> Responses from interviews with church leaders: Nemuel A. Babba, Abudu Doli, and Danlami S. Elkanah in Numan on 5th January 2010 and Asriel T. Myatafadi in Numan on 6th January 2010.

<sup>100</sup> Windibiziri, church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010.

<sup>101</sup> Kenan, church leader in Guyuk on 31st December 2009.

<sup>102</sup> Boyi, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January 2010.

people from the Eucharist and other practices, suggest that we are justified by faith and works almost on the same level with scripture.<sup>103</sup>

The responses of the seminary lecturers show the following: first, in their view the church's understanding is that justification is by faith not works or a synergy of faith and works. Second, the practical appropriation of this understanding is at variance with the church's stance. Third, some practices of the LCCN do not facilitate a proper understanding of this doctrine, since they tends to suggest a faith and works dimension of justification.

Most of the clergy interviewed stated that the understanding of the church is that we are justified by God's grace through faith in the death of Christ on the cross for our sins. One clergy said, "The church's understanding is that God's grace is the sole means for the remission of the sins of guilty humankind and we appropriate this by believing what Christ has done on our behalf not by works of merit."<sup>104</sup> Corroborating this another clergy remarked that, "without the work of Christ on the cross no one can be saved; works and morality aside, rather we appropriate God's gift by faith in Christ alone."<sup>105</sup> However one clergy respondent asserted, "The church understands justification by faith to mean participating in church activities and being obedient to Jesus who alone died for us."<sup>106</sup>

The responses of the clergy on the church's understanding of this doctrine revealed the following: first, that justification is by faith in the redemptive death of Christ. Second, that justification is not by faith alone. This is evident in the response of one clergy who said, "Justification by faith means participating in church activities and being obedient to Jesus who alone died for us."<sup>107</sup> This response confirms what a church leader and one of the lecturers said, namely that the understanding of the LCCN is shallow and there is hardly any correct affirmation of grace as against works in the church. This respondent could have been influenced by the practice of the church of exclusion of those who are not active in works in

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<sup>103</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010. This respondent was referring to section 9, p.123 of the LCCN Constitution.

<sup>104</sup> Abner, clergy in Bobini on 31st December 2009. The response of this respondent tends towards a works oriented rather than grace and faith centered understanding of the doctrine of justification.

<sup>105</sup> Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010.

<sup>106</sup> Responde from interview with Aristarkus Shemeni, clergy in Purokayo on 3rd January 2010.

<sup>107</sup> Shemeni, clergy in Purokayo on 3rd January 2010.

the church, as reported by Pweddton (2005: 67) who states that the church policy is that, “Members consistently failing to go to church and Annual Church Meetings should be counselled; if they persisted in absenting themselves from church activities, they could face disciplinary action.” This further confirms two things: first, that even the clergy are struggling with their understanding of this doctrine; and second, that there is a failure on the part of the LCCN to transmit the message of *justification by faith alone*. From this it could also be argued that, if the clergy have difficulty understanding the doctrine, it follows then the situation among the laity will be even more problematic.

The responses from the laity on the LCCN’s understanding of *justification by faith alone* are varied: some said the church’s understanding is that justification is indeed by faith alone while others said it is by faith and works. For example, a participant in the Women Fellowship focus group discussion stated that, “The two work hand in hand, faith without works is dead; you cannot separate the two, when you do faith becomes barren. Justification is 50% faith and 50% works.”<sup>108</sup> Some members of the Men Fellowship also share similar views, expressed thus, “It means doing God’s work. Faith through works will make one justified.”<sup>109</sup> Another however said, “It means one cannot be saved by works except through believing in God alone not by works.”<sup>110</sup> The situation in other groups, namely the Boys/Girls Brigade and the Youth Fellowship was also similar: some posited that the church’s understanding is that justification is by faith, while others argued that it is by faith and works. What this study discovered from the responses of the laity is; first, there are varied opinions on what the understanding of justification is, some said it is by faith alone while others said it is by faith and works. Second, these responses indicate that the participants do not have an informed knowledge of this doctrine.

What are some of the reasons for this lack of understanding? Could it be linked to the people’s cultural world view? Or to put it differently, are they struggling to understand the realities of their identity - who they are as Christians and who they are in their culture?

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<sup>108</sup> Response from a participant in a focus group discussion with the Women Fellowship, LCCN Majami’ar Almasihu in Jos on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

<sup>109</sup> Response from a participant in a focus group discussion with the Men Fellowship LCCN in Purokayo on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

<sup>110</sup> Response from a participant in a Focus group discussion with Men Fellowship LCCN in Purokayo on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

### 6.2.3 Responses on the relationship of the gospel and people's cultural world view

Most of the responses from church leaders were in support of the view that the people's cultural world view emphasises works. One leader put it thus: "Our cultural world view is works centred and has no provision for eternal salvation, while the gospel is Christ centred."<sup>111</sup> Another said, "Culture understands the doctrine of justification from the point of view of the relationship between parents and their children where children are dependent on their parents for their needs."<sup>112</sup> For this respondent, the culturally central parental relationship is an important element towards an informed understanding of justification. This response could be a valid contribution to the discussion on justification by faith from a cultural perspective; however, it has some elements that are problematic. On one hand, the problem with this position is that, as the children grow, they contribute in the running of the family in one way or the other. Therefore, when this explanation is adopted in interpreting the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, it gives the impression that when people are young in the Christian faith, they rely on faith, but when they grow older, they contribute through works. However, on the other hand, this parallel can be useful in stressing the point of one's relatedness to Christ by adoption through justification whereby one becomes God's child.

Another church leader responded that,

The Lunguda culture practice of *ntsandah* (propitiation) is similar to the idea of justification by faith, this we can relate to the redemptive work of Christ. Using this cultural practice will help create an informed understanding of justification by faith since the people are familiar with the practice. Furthermore, the blood that is shed during the propitiation is effective and has the power of granting pardon and freedom for the offender just as Christ's blood has the power of granting pardon and forgiveness of sins.<sup>113</sup>

Collaborating on this, another leader agreed, "Lunguda culture practices of *Ntsandah* or *Nimungile* can be equated with the redemptive work of Christ in relation to the doctrine of

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<sup>111</sup> Response from interview with Haniel I. Dading, church leader in Numan on 5th January 2010.

<sup>112</sup> Babba, church leader in Numan on 5th January 2010.

<sup>113</sup> Windibiziri, church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

*justification by faith alone.*”<sup>114</sup> The leader further asserted that once the proper propitiation is made, the culprit is redeemed and does not need to do anything extra to complete the process of redemption.<sup>115</sup>

The point which this response conveys is that the propitiation is made by someone else, not the accused, hence the need for dependence on external assistance to grant one’s redemption. However, the additional explanation by one of these leaders in the Lunguda language thus: “*Frama Yambawa yina yiwam na*”<sup>116</sup> (which means, It is God’s kindness that will deliver you) is problematic. This expression does not correctly represent the notion of God’s grace in connection with the subject of justification. The Lunguda word for grace is *‘jimjele’* which when translated means gift, so instead of saying *Frama Yambawa yina yiwam na*, a more correct phrase would be *Jimjele Yambawa yina ningam nyimamdume*, meaning, It is God’s gift or grace that will grant you eternal life or salvation.

The seminary lecturers, like the church leaders also had varied opinions on the issue of cultural world view. A lecturer said “Culture and gospel are gifts from God” and went on to argue that “the gospel is another culture”.<sup>117</sup> Having said that, he maintained that culture places emphasis on merit or human effort rather than faith, a view shared by some of his colleagues.<sup>118</sup>

Elaborating on this another lecturer said:

In Lunguda culture there are a lot of similarities between the gospel and culture on the issue of justification. For instance, forgiveness is followed by sacrifice where blood is shed. Confession and sacrifice tend to metamorphose into the concept of forgiveness.

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<sup>114</sup> Windibiziri, Church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010. *Ntsandah* as used by the Lunguda on the hill and *Thwakim wamama* or *Nimungile* as used by the Lunguda on the plain, both mean propitiation. In this practice of *Ntsandah* or *Thwakim wamama*, the relatives or friends of the offender offer sacrifice in form of food, animals, etc., in order to appease the gods and or the community and to secure the following: redemption and forgiveness.

<sup>115</sup> Windibiziri, Church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

<sup>116</sup> Kenan, Church leader in Guyuk on 31st December 2009

<sup>117</sup> Toma, Seminary lecturer at Mbamba – Yola on 11th January 2010

<sup>118</sup> Yakubu, Seminary lecturer at Mbamba – Yola on 11th and Bartimawus, 12th January 2010

However, the cultural elements have influenced our understanding of righteousness or justification which in turn makes us tend to lay emphasis on works.<sup>119</sup>

The latter response gives a glimpse into the reasons why cultural influences can lead some people to hold the view that justification is by faith and works rather than by faith alone.<sup>120</sup>

However, after making reference to the cultural practice of propitiation, a lecturer asserted that the practice has both a positive and a negative impact on the people. The practice has a positive impact because it effects redemption for the offender; but negatively, this cultural element influences the people's understanding of righteousness and justification, which in turn leads them to tend to lay emphasis on works rather than faith. In this double position on the people's cultural world view, I discern a silent disapproval of the practice by this respondent. This kind of attitude amounts to what Aylward Shorter (1977) terms as "adapting a false or incomplete picture of African culture"(1977: 6).

Most of the responses tended to project culture as work centred therefore. It then seems that they did not manage to identify anything in their cultural world view that accommodates *justification by faith alone*. However, a lecturer in his response says that both culture and the gospel are gifts from God and that the gospel itself is another culture. Unfortunately this respondent did not state how the two could be used in a complementary way, since both are from the same source; rather, he concluded by saying, "In the cultural world view, justification is by works not by faith."<sup>121</sup> This position cannot enhance a healthy dialogue between gospel and culture because it pushes the people's cultural worldview to the margins without a proper exploration of its potential to dialogue with the gospel.

Shenk argues that this perception amounts to denial of one's self-authenticity as a Christian and as a legitimate member of one's culture (2005: 193). It is pertinent to realize that the gospel is another culture as rightly mentioned the lecturer referred to above; therefore, a dialogue between the gospel and the people's culture will help in "narrowing the gap between official and popular Christianity" (Shorter 1977: 142). It will also make the church more

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<sup>119</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010.

<sup>120</sup> During a focus group discussion 2010 with students of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), in Bukuru, Jos on 25th January 2010, the general view was that culture emphasizes "doing" and that this has in turned influenced how the Christian faith is practiced.

<sup>121</sup> Yakubu, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January 2010

relevant in a pluralistic society like that of Gongola Diocese, as it strives to attend to the cultural identities and aspirations of the people.

The seminary students, for their part, saw their cultural world view as works centred rather than faith centred. Therefore, in their view, the people's cultural world view will not be a valid contribution towards an informed understanding of the doctrine of Justification by faith. Their response to a large extent is influenced by what they hold of their cultural world view, and possibly also by the position of their lecturers since some of them hold the same stance regarding the cultural world view.

Responses from the laity also indicated that the gospel and culture are opposed. A participant in a focus group discussion with the Youth Fellowship said, "There is no salvation in Lunguda culture, only when we become Christians by faith that we can be saved. The Gospel is faith centred while culture is works centred and there is no eternal salvation in culture."<sup>122</sup> In the Women Fellowship group, there was also a range of views. On the one hand, some argued that, "there is a direct link in the cultural world view with the concept of justification by faith through the intermediaries." On the other hand, some maintained that "there is no direct link with the concept of justification by faith alone in culture."<sup>123</sup> The response of the Boys/Girls Brigade focused on the cultural aspect of sacrifice for appeasement, and therefore concluded that gospel and culture are not related as far as the issue of justification by faith is concerned. When these participants responded the way they did, were they fully aware of the meaning of the gospel on one hand and the meaning of culture on the other? Were they also aware that, the gospel is culture-embodied right from its inception?

The negative perception of culture and the attitude of some Lutheran members towards members of the African instituted churches, as reported in chapter one, are connected. This position portrays an attitude which Gordon Willard Allport (1960: 257- 266) describes as religious prejudice, a perception based on cultural prejudice, that gives a problematic impression of the true meaning of *justification by faith alone*, especially when expressed by people who claim it is their cardinal doctrine.

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<sup>122</sup> Response from a participant in a focus group discussion with Lutheran Youth Fellowship LCCN in Purokayo on 4th January 2010.

<sup>123</sup> Responses from participants in a Focus group discussion with Women Fellowship, LCCN Majami'ar Almasihu in Jos on 19th July 2010.

From the responses, three issues emerge. The first is that lack of a proper understanding of the cultural world view;<sup>124</sup> the second issue is the denial, leading to the devaluing, of the cultural world view,<sup>125</sup> and the third is Western influence on the people, especially that expressed by Brønnum which dismissed and condemned the indigenous culture, but simultaneously did not want to promote Westernization for fear of losing authority over the native people (cf. the refusal to allow male servants to wear long trousers in the houses of the missionaries).<sup>126</sup> Nida says that this kind of attitude “has often resulted in cleverly contrived compromises, so as to make life appear rational, agreeable, and even meaningful” (Nida 1968: 9), while in fact reflects attempts at control and manipulation. Consequently, what follows is pretence rather than genuine encounter arising from healthy engagement between cultures. These are serious issues that call for deliberate efforts from all concerned in order to be addressed.

Kalilombe says, “Doing theology demands encouraging and giving room for the constant look at and careful study of the situation within which the theologizing communities are immersed” (1999: 169). Thus there is a need to examine the methods, means and the resources in use for the transmission of knowledge about the church’s doctrine. How does the LCCN as a church, and how do its seminary lecturers and the clergy transmit this doctrine with this perception of the relationship between the gospel and the cultural world view of the people?

## **6.2.4 Transmission of the knowledge of the doctrine to members**

### **6.2.4.1 Responses on resources, means and method of transmission**

The general opinion among church leaders was that there are no local resources to help teachers and clergy in transmitting the church’s faith to its members. The church relies solely on general Lutheran documents such as the Book of Concord and pamphlets written by former missionaries; but even these resources are scarce and have not been translated into

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<sup>124</sup> Culture is from one perspective only, rather than being understood to encapsulate the whole of way of life of a society.

<sup>125</sup> This view was expressed by some seminary lecturers and students.

<sup>126</sup> Niels H. Brønnum, *Under Daemoners Aag* (Under the Yoke of Demons), Kobenham: Dansk Forkenet Sudan Mission, 1956 as discussed in chapter four above.

local languages.<sup>127</sup> One leader said, “The medium of communication is Hausa but it has not been reduced into writing. For now there are no resources available at the disposal of church members on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.”<sup>128</sup> Therefore, “without these documents there can be no proper understanding of *justification by faith alone*; because these documents provide good explanations on the subject”<sup>129</sup> said another leader.

The seminary lecturers concurred with the position of the church leaders on the issue of resources. One respondent said, “I doubt if there are enough documents - we only have rehearsed statements, but none deals with the subjects of baptism, salvation, etc. There are only two books on Sacraments but these are not contextual in approach.”<sup>130</sup> However some lecturers pointed to the availability of some local resources, referring to the Constitution, the Bible and the Small Catechism.<sup>131</sup>

The clergy also agreed that there are very scanty documents locally available that address Lutheran beliefs including *justification by faith alone*.<sup>132</sup> However, the vernacular trained pastors said there are local resources for the transmission of this doctrine. When asked to give some examples they mentioned the Bible, Small Catechism, Hymn Book and daily devotionals as resources.<sup>133</sup>

The thrust of these responses is focused on resources and methods of presentation. These provide pointers to the kind of theological education provided in the seminary and, therefore also in the church. Regarding the issue of resources, most respondents argued that there are no or few local resources available, and that even the general Lutheran resources are not readily accessible or even useful in transmitting the tenets of the faith to church members. Hence, some asserted that without these documents there can be no proper understanding of

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<sup>127</sup> Windibiziri, church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010; Babba and Myatafadi, church leaders in Numan on 5th January 2010.

<sup>128</sup> Kenan, church leader in Guyuk on 31st December 2009.

<sup>129</sup> Myatafadi, church leader in Numan on 5th January 2010.

<sup>130</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010.

<sup>131</sup> Yakubu and Toma, seminary lecturers at Mbamba, Yola on 11th and 12th January 2010 respectively.

<sup>132</sup> Yakubu, clergy in Guyuk on 27th December 2009; Abner, clergy in Bobini on 31st December 2009; and Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010.

<sup>133</sup> Pepeh and Shemeni, clergy in Purokayo on 3rd January 2010.

doctrine, because they are needed to provide clear and correct explanations on this doctrinal teaching. As for the means and methods, teaching and preaching are employed in the church, as well as Catechism classes, TEE courses, Bible studies and seminars to transmit knowledge of the doctrine to members.<sup>134</sup> However, some clergy complained that these means and methods are not effective due to lack of resources, as well as a lack of commitment from pastors and members and language barriers.<sup>135</sup> On the latter point, a few clergy members said that using the vernacular for teaching was very effective, especially with the older people, but that they no longer employ the vernacular because it is too demanding on them.<sup>136</sup> Others blame the low level of training received in the seminary in terms of Lutheran beliefs for the ineffectiveness of the processes. For instance, a respondent said,

The level of training offered at BLS is low in terms of Lutheran beliefs; therefore locally trained clergy are not adequately informed which results in a very limited output. If the clergy do not have a good understanding the teaching will just be a brush over with little or no impact.<sup>137</sup>

A lecturer added, "Some students do not believe in what is taught even in the seminary; as such there is no transformation in their lives."<sup>138</sup>

Secondly, the over emphasis on lack of resources is to some extent an excuse, because the seminary has a book store where people can purchase books that can help to enhance their ministry, should they feel that such resources are a priority. Aside from the issue of a lack of existing resources, there is also a lack of commitment to create such resources on the part of both the church and the clergy. Were this not the case, the church could have commissioned some of its theologians to develop these resources locally for the benefit of its members; or the clergy could have, out of their own initiative, developed such material for use in their area of assignment. Moreover, an added question is: What is their understanding of local

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<sup>134</sup> Interviews with members of the clergy: Amchilo in Guyuk on 12th December 2009; Yakubu in Guyuk on 27th December 2009; Titus in Bodwai on 29th December 2009; and Pepeh and Shemeni in Purokayo on 3rd January 2010.

<sup>135</sup> Interviews with members of the clergy: Yakubu in Guyuk on 27th December 2009; and Titus in Bodwai on 29th December 2009.

<sup>136</sup> Shemeni, clergy in Purokayo on 3rd January 2010, and Safiya Uriah, clergy in Numan on 6th January 2010.

<sup>137</sup> Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010.

<sup>138</sup> Toma, Seminary lecturer at Mbamba – Yola on 12th January 2010

resources? Local resources do not necessarily mean only books, but could also include sermons, addresses, hymns and personal reflections (Parratt 1987: 143).

If there are no relevant resources locally how then do pastors and teachers transmit the knowledge of this doctrine to members?

The seminary lecturers differed in some of their responses, but they all agreed that the doctrine is not given enough attention as it is only treated as a topic under Lutheranism in general rather than as a specific course.<sup>139</sup> As one lecturer stated, “There is not enough contextual reflection in terms of our Lutheran identity. Superstition was Luther’s context which is similar to ours, hence, there is need to apply Luther in our contemporary African context.”<sup>140</sup> Another lecturer said “it is not easy to approach this doctrine contextually.”<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, another lecturer said he prefers to “approach it from a classical point of view because of its root in the Scripture.”<sup>142</sup>

The seminary does not make provision for a contextual approach to study in its curriculum. This may not be unconnected with the statement made by the lecturer above, namely that it is not easy to approach the doctrine contextually. Since there is no contextual approach, what occurs is what Shoki Coe (1962) describes as a process of “uncritically repeating and imitating the particular pattern we happened to inherit” (Coe in Shenk 2005: 206). The effect of this approach on the students is that the knowledge they acquire does not equip them with the right tools to handle contemporary issues contextually. Consequently, Shoki Coe elsewhere argues that, “Effective theological education should lead to a deeper understanding of the Gospel in the context of the particular cultural and religious setting of the church” (Coe 1973: 236). The contextual approach to theology will help in discussing theological statements in a way that is able to address the context of the recipients directly, as observed by one of the lecturers above. The lack of a contextual approach in the curriculum of the seminary is a major challenge that has multiple effects on the church and its members. Despite being a theological institution, the seminary does not operate in accordance with a central aim of WOCATI, namely that of, “relating theological education to the realities of

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<sup>139</sup> Toma and Bartimawus, seminary lecturers at Mbamba, Yola on 11th and 12th January 2010 respectively.

<sup>140</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

<sup>141</sup> Boyi, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

<sup>142</sup> Toma, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January

particular social and cultural contexts, liberating theological education from any captivity of certain social milieus, cultural one-sidedness and spiritual blindness existing in certain indigenous traditions” (Werner 2009: 162).

The responses on the resources and methods of transmitting the understanding of justification by faith alone from the church leaders, seminary lecturers and clergy revealed the following: first, the training of the clergy at BLS in the aspect of Lutheran beliefs is insufficient. It does not equip its graduands to engage in critical reflection on theological positions. Second, there are no local resources available. Third, the approach of both lecturers and clergy in transmitting the knowledge of this doctrine is not contextual; this has the potential impact of affecting how it is appropriated by members and students. What is responsible for the poor levels of training given to the clergy at BLS, the church’s denominational seminary? Why are there no resources available? Is the church’s policy on theological education of both clergy and laity is lacking in substance? The next section examines the church’s policy on theological education to find out whether or not the problems identified in section 6.2.4 are related to this policy.

#### **6.2.4.2 Responses on LCCN’s policy on theological education of the clergy and laity**

The responses of church leaders to the issue of church policy on the theological education of clergy and laity are that the policy mostly focused on the training of personnel for the church. A leader said, “The policy states that for one to become a leader in the church, right from the local congregation level, one must at least acquire four years theological education from a Bible school.”<sup>143</sup> However, another leader reported that, “the church’s policy is to train lay people theologically before they become clergy and this training starts right from Sunday school, extending to the Bible schools and seminaries.”<sup>144</sup> A further church leader said, “The church’s policy on theological education of the clergy and the laity is to provide lay people with theological education through Theological Education by Extension (TEE), while the clergy are to be trained in Bible schools and seminaries; this helps in bridging the gap between the laity and the clergy.”<sup>145</sup> After stating the church’s policy on theological education of the clergy and laity, one leader observed that, “the policy lacks focus and is

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<sup>143</sup> Myatafadi, church leader in Numan on 5th January 2010

<sup>144</sup> Babba, church leader in Numan on 5th January 2010

<sup>145</sup> Windibiziri, church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

heavily dependent on foreign assistance and there is also not much support to clergy for further study.”<sup>146</sup>

The responses of the leaders indicate that: first, there is a policy in place, however, the policy lacks proper focus and the church is not committed to its implementation; second, the policy is only concerned with personnel for the pastoral ministry and has not taken into consideration how to prepare a clergy capable of handling contemporary challenges through critical theological engagement. How do other sectors of the church view the church’s policy? Do they share similar concerns or they do not even know that such a policy exists? In order to find out what others think of the church’s policy, it is important to listen to some of their responses as presented below.

Most of the seminary lecturers that were interviewed seemed to be ignorant of any existing church policy on the theological education of both clergy and laity. For instance a lecturer said,

I am not aware of the church’s policy on the training of both clergy and the laity. There is no clear articulated policy except the one which says for one to become a clergy the person must acquire certain level of theological training. There is no policy that says after serving for certain number of years you go for further studies.<sup>147</sup>

Another lecturer categorically denied the existence of any policy on this subject in the church, saying, “The church has no articulated policy on theological education for the clergy and the laity.”<sup>148</sup> Two other lecturers in their separate responses stated that, “the policy is not well furnished”<sup>149</sup> and that, “the policy is to train both clergy and laity depending on available resources.”<sup>150</sup>

In summary the responses revealed that: first, some lecturers are ignorant of the church’s policy on theological education of both clergy and laity. Second, the policy is more focussed

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<sup>146</sup> Kenan, church leader in Guyuk on 31st December 2009

<sup>147</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba on 12th January 2010

<sup>148</sup> Ma’aji, seminary lecturer at Mbamba on 11th January 2010

<sup>149</sup> Toma, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

<sup>150</sup> Yakubu, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January 2010

on clergy training than laity training and it is not clearly articulated. Is it really true that some seminary lecturers are ignorant of the existence of such a policy, or are they simply not comfortable to refer to such a document as a policy? We now turn to ask what the clergy think of the church's policy on theological education.

The understanding of the clergy of the church's policy also differed from person to person, as with the previous responses. A clergy member said, "The policy is to train human resources in the seminary and Bible schools. But for the laity this is done through TEE which does not cover the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. There is need of creating a programme that will train the laity."<sup>151</sup> Another said, "The church's policy is clergy centred only."<sup>152</sup> A colleague commented, "The policy states that every church leader must acquire some level of theological education through Bible school, seminary or TEE."<sup>153</sup> Another respondent said, "To become a pastor you must be trained while the lay people are trained by the pastors."<sup>154</sup>

As regards the laity's responses on the church's policy on theological education, most stated that they had no idea of what the policy says. However, a seminary student said the policy states that, "Laity are to be educated through conventions and Bible studies, while clergy are to be trained through seminaries and Bible schools."<sup>155</sup>

There were varying opinions as to whether there is a policy in existence, and what the policy states with regard to theological education of clergy and laity in the church. The church leaders were unanimous in their responses that the policy is to train leaders for the church in the Bible schools, while the lay members are trained through the TEE programme. However, one leader asserted that the policy lacks focus and it is not supported locally. Some of the lecturers were ignorant of the existence of such a policy. The clergy on their part argued that the policy is clergy centred and that the laity is not properly taken care of in terms of their theological education. Another clergy member asserted that the TEE programme does not cover the doctrine of justification by faith.

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<sup>151</sup> Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

<sup>152</sup> Response from interview with Danjumma Tanko, clergy in Purokayo on 9th January 2010

<sup>153</sup> Titus, clergy in Bodwai on 29th December 2009

<sup>154</sup> Uriah, clergy in Numan on 6th January 2010

<sup>155</sup> Response from interview with Haruna Mallam, seminary student in BLS Mbamba-Yola on 12 January 2010

However, based on the sources studied in this thesis, it is evident that the church indeed has a policy on theological education of the clergy and laity, covering procedure, guidelines and action plan. The Education Department is mandated to oversee the implementation of this policy by the General Church Council, as enshrined in the Constitution of the church.<sup>156</sup> In pursuance of its assignment, the Department produced a 5 year plan for the LCCN Christian education office.<sup>157</sup> Though the set target was not achieved, the fact remains that there is a policy on ground; the problem lies with the follow up and implementation thereof. As for the claim that the TEE programme does not cover the doctrine of justification, this is not correct. The major TEE text on Lutheran doctrine has a whole chapter on *justification by faith alone*.<sup>158</sup> Therefore, either the clergy member who made the claim above, is ignorant of this document or he chooses to ignore it altogether as substandard. If the former is the case, then this further confirms the assertion that some clergy are lagging behind in discharging their teaching responsibilities.

The assertion by some clergy that the policy is clergy centred contradicts the claim that the clergy are responsible for educating the laity since it assumes other sources of training for lay members. In some of the responses on policy, some respondents said that the clergy are to be trained in the Bible schools, and/or the seminary, while the laity are to be taught by the clergy. Therefore, this contradicts the claim that the policy is clergy centred only.

The various responses in my view reveal that, first, on one hand some of the respondents are not aware of the church's policy on theological education for clergy and laity; while on the other hand, some are aware of this policy. Others again are not satisfied with the scope and content of the policy, so that some of the responses indicating that the policy is not well articulated may not be far from the truth. Second, the responses also revealed that though justification is a central doctrine of the Lutheran church, the LCCN has not devoted much attention to its transmission, as expressed by most of my respondents. The scenario is also

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<sup>156</sup> The Constitution of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, Section 30, p. 105 as amended in 1988.

<sup>157</sup> Elizabeth Holtegaard and Japhet Aeneas, "5 years plan for LCCN Christian Education Office," Numan: Christian Education Department, LCCN Headquarters, 1988. The 5 years plan touched on the following matters: vernacular Bible schools, the seminary, refresher courses, establishing theological libraries, resources for Baptism and Confirmation classes, Bible study materials and course materials for seminars among other things.

<sup>158</sup> See Mogens Kjaer and Lillian Risum's book, *Koyarwa Ekklesiyar Lutheran* (Doctrine of the Lutheran Church), Jos: Salama Press, 1982. This book was published by the TEE Department of the LCCN. The authors devoted two chapters to the doctrine of justification by faith: chapter two which deals with *justification by faith alone* and chapter five which discusses Luther's concept of *Simul iustus et Peccator* (a Christian is both a righteous person and a sinner at the same time) which is also related to the concept of justification.

likely to affect the impact of the doctrine on the life of members. How then has the doctrine impacted the life of the congregants under such a situation?

### **6.2.5 Assessment of the impact of the doctrine and church's interpretation**

In this section an investigation of the impact of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* on members will be made. In the second subheading a discussion on the challenges that are associated with transmitting, understanding and appropriating this doctrine will be presented and thirdly an assessment of the church's interpretation of this doctrine will be examined.

#### **6.2.5.1 Responses on assessment of the impact of the doctrine on the life of congregants**

Most of the responses from the church leaders indicated that the impact of the doctrine on the life of church members is very minimal. A respondent said "there is less impact because most members do not understand the doctrine. Some members are more of church goers than genuine Christians. There is need for concerted efforts towards teaching."<sup>159</sup> Corroborating this, another respondent said, "The few who understand the doctrine can easily be identified; they are committed Christians and are actively involved in church activities, while those who do not understand misappropriate salvation by grace, using it as a license for laxity."<sup>160</sup> However another church leader argued that it has impacted them positively because, "it creates the desire for love of neighbour as fellow human being."<sup>161</sup>

The responses of the seminary lecturers, like that of the church leaders, was varied: some were of the view that there are misconceptions about the doctrine among members which led them to conceptualise justification works, not faith<sup>162</sup>, while others held that it has impacted them positively.<sup>163</sup> One lecturer out-rightly opined that: "it has not impacted them because their Christian life is still works centred rather than faith centred."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Windibiziri, church leader in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

<sup>160</sup> Kenan, church leader in Guyuk on 31st December 2009

<sup>161</sup> Basil, church leader in Numan on 6th January 2010

<sup>162</sup> Bartimawus and Toma, seminary lecturers at Mbamba on 12th January 2010

<sup>163</sup> Yakubu and Boyi, seminary lecturers at Mbamba, Yola on 11th and 12th January 2010 respectively.

<sup>164</sup> Toma, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

The problem with these responses on the impact of the doctrine on the life of members is that they were not explicit in terms of what they meant by „positive impact’ and or „no impact’, even after probing them further on this.

The impact of the doctrine on the life of members as observed by the clergy, was viewed as both positive and negative.<sup>165</sup> A clergy responded that,

The impact is both positive and negative. On the positive side, it elicits a life of forgiveness in those who understand it properly. On the other hand, it is abused rather than being appreciated because of lack of proper understanding as it is used as an excuse for freedom to do what they like. However, I wish to add that most members have a good impression of this doctrine, what is left is how to educate them so that they can have a proper informed understanding, because this doctrine has become a pillar and fortress of the church.<sup>166</sup>

The view that the doctrine has suffered abuse was supported by another clergy who said, "Some members argue that God’s grace is sufficient for them, therefore they live a care free life style."<sup>167</sup> This negative appropriation of justification is what St. Paul condemns by asking, “Should we continue to sin that grace may abound?” (Romans 6: 1 NRSV). According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1948: 37) holding such a view amounts to cheap grace, which means “the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner”. This attitude is at variance with what grace truly means. Bonhoeffer further posits that, “... the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin” (1948: 37), all because of its wrong perception of grace. Bonhoeffer argues that grace is costly, it costs God the death of Christ, and therefore, there is no such thing as cheap grace. Do the clergy share the same view with the lecturers about the impact of *justification by faith alone* on members?

Some clergy are of the view that the doctrine has impacted the life of members positively. A clergy member in her response said, "It helps them relate well with people of other faiths and are willing to share their Christian faith with others. They are committed and enthusiastic

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<sup>165</sup> The responses from the clergy are based on what occurs in their various Districts: there are 33 Districts in the Diocese, only 8 of which are in Guyuk Division.

<sup>166</sup> Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

<sup>167</sup> Amchilo, clergy in Guyuk on 12th December 2009

about their faith."<sup>168</sup> In agreement with this another clergy said, "It serves as a rule of conduct in their relationships outside the church."<sup>169</sup> However, one clergy was of the view that the doctrine has not impacted the life of members in his words, "it has only changed the lives of the clergy not the laity."<sup>170</sup>

The responses of the clergy revealed that: first, it is either the clergy have not paid proper attention to how the doctrine has impacted on the life of members; or they have not taken time to educate their members properly. Second, there was no clear response as to what could be categorized as a positive or negative impact apart from the comment that some members abuse grace. What do the members think of the impact of this doctrine on their lives?

The responses of members on the impact of the doctrine on their lives are mostly relational. A member of the Boys/Girls Brigade responded that, "This doctrine has impacted on my life positively; it has opened my mind to trust and depend on God in every situation I find myself."<sup>171</sup> Two participants from the Women Fellowship group responded: "It helps create healthy relationship with my neighbours and makes me forgive when offended" and, "It has helped me to trust in God rather than my effort as it removes doubts. I am more hopeful than before."<sup>172</sup> A participant in the seminary students' focus group discussion said;

The doctrine of justification by faith alone has helped prepare me for the challenges of the world. It has opened my eyes to see the folly of relying on my efforts. Draws me to the need of daily praying to know more of what God requires of me.<sup>173</sup>

The responses of members on the impact of the doctrine on their lives are that it has made positive impact on their lives. This position is contrary to that held by the church leaders, seminary lecturers and the clergy. It seems that there is a conflict of interest at play here

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<sup>168</sup> Titus, clergy in Bodwai on 29th December 2009

<sup>169</sup> Abner, clergy in Bobini on 31st December 2009

<sup>170</sup> Yakubu, clergy in Guyuk on 27th December 2009

<sup>171</sup> Response from a participant in focus group discussion with Boys/Girls Brigade LCCN in Yola Town on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010.

<sup>172</sup> Responses from participants in a focus group discussion with Women Fellowship, LCCN Majami'ar Almasihu in Jos on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2010.

<sup>173</sup> Response from a participant in a focus group discussion with TCNN students, Bukuru in Jos on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

between the laity on one hand and the church leaders, seminary lecturers and clergy on the other.

Various respondents, apart from those of the laity opined that the doctrine has made little or no positive impact on the life of members because, as they argue, most members do not understand the doctrine. They also felt that this is due to misconceptions about the doctrine which leads to work centredness. Some said the doctrine has impacted the life of members negatively as they abuse and use it as an excuse for loose life. However, the laity and a few other respondents said that the doctrine has impacted the life of members positively and that it elicits a life of forgiveness in them in response to their being forgiven by God through Christ.

These responses reveal: first, a feeling of dissatisfaction with the impact of the doctrine on the life of members from both the leaders of the church and the clergy. This is to be expected though, given their earlier responses which revealed that there is lack of an informed understanding of this doctrine among members. Second, it was further pointed out that there is little commitment on the part of the church and its clergy in instructing the followership; and because of that, the clergy may not be very keenly observing the impact of the doctrine on the life of their members. Third, the clergy and other people entrusted with the responsibility of instructing the members may be facing other particular challenges. What then could be the factors responsible for this situation? What are some of the challenges associated with transmission and appropriation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?

#### **6.2.5.2 Responses on the challenges involved with the doctrine of *justification by faith alone***

##### **6.2.5.2.1 Challenges related to transmission of this doctrine**

The people who are directly involved with imparting the knowledge of the Christian faith are the clergy and seminary lecturers, therefore the question on challenges associated with the transmission of the doctrine was directed to them. Their responses showed that there are many challenges involved, the key ones are those presented here.

Some lecturers in their responses focused on the challenges they face in trying to teach their students, while others focused on the attitude of the students. Those who were concerned with how to teach the doctrine mentioned the following as challenges.

For one lecturer contextualization and pluralism are the major challenges. He said,

In order to contextualize you have to understand the problem and then try to apply that in a given context. Luther was Christocentric but we are faced with the challenges of multi religious realities- pluralism. Another challenge is we are educated via Western tradition and we want to impose that on our context which is not healthy.<sup>174</sup>

He further argued that "we cannot say we are Lutherans if we do not have any document to back our claim of identity. We cannot claim to be Lutherans without our confessional documents that are contextual in nature yet in agreement with the Scripture and other Lutheran confessional documents."<sup>175</sup>

For another lecturer, the challenges are multi-dimensional bordering on resources and attitude of students. This lecturer opined that,

When you try to stress the fact that salvation is by grace through faith some students tend to see you as un-spiritual. This is because they come with closed minds and presuppositions of certain doctrines and practices. Furthermore, there is the issue of lack of learning resources and lack of incentive for staff members to undertake research.<sup>176</sup>

Commenting on the attitude of students towards what is taught, another lecturer said, "There is no coherence between theory and practice. Because some students do not believe in what is taught, as such there is no proper transformation in their lives."<sup>177</sup>

In their responses, the clergy enumerated a number of challenges that affect their effort in teaching members knowledge of the doctrine. Most of them said that a lack of resources and language barriers are the major challenges. A clergy said, "After reading some concepts in English one has to translate these into Hausa, then the local dialect and in the process the

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<sup>174</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

<sup>175</sup> Bartimawus, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

<sup>176</sup> Ma'aji, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January 2010

<sup>177</sup> Yakubu, seminary lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January 2010

original meaning of the concept is lost."<sup>178</sup> Another clergy member also added low educational level of members and inadequate personnel as additional challenges. He said,

My training has all along been in English, so it is difficult to translate some concepts into the vernacular and teach them properly. I am faced with two levels of crisis regarding how to handle this doctrine. It is difficult to use relevant vocabulary. Also the educational level of the congregants is very low. Another challenge is lack of personnel; the numbers of congregations assigned to one pastor are many for one person to manage effectively.<sup>179</sup>

My focus here with regards to the challenges is on the transmission of the doctrine by clergy and seminary lecturers on one hand, and on how to facilitate the understanding and appropriation of the doctrine by members on the other hand.

For the seminary lecturers, the challenges they encounter include how to translate the type of education they have received via the Western educational system in a way that will address the pluralistic nature of their society, both religious and cultural. The above mentioned challenge points to two things. First, it confirms earlier assertions about the policy of the church as not being focused. Second, the level of training at the seminary is weak and does not equip students to critically reflect on contemporary challenges. A theological training that does not take into account the multi-religious and multi-cultural nature of its target audience cannot impact the society meaningfully (Mugambi, 2003: 119).

Some clergy also have problem with understanding the cultural world view of the people, which is why they find it difficult to translate the concepts from English into the local language and teach them properly. Another challenge the clergy are faced with is the size of their area of jurisdiction due to insufficient staff numbers. This is further compounded by the low educational level of the congregants.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Titus, clergy in Bodwai on 29th December 2009. The concern expressed by this respondent is evident in the church's translation of the Apostles' Creed as found in both the Hausa version of Luther's Small Catechism and the Hausa Hymn book. The expression, "I believe in ..." is translated as, "*Ina bada gaskiya ga ...*" which literally means, "I give faith to ...". This may be misunderstood as referring to a process of contributing something for one's justification.

<sup>179</sup> Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010

<sup>180</sup> Bartimawus, clergy in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010 and Titus, clergy in Bodwai on 29th December 2009. One District has between 7-12 Local Congregations under the supervision of one Pastor (Church statistical data in

#### 6.2.6.2.2 Challenges related to appropriation of this doctrine

The members also have challenges in connection to this doctrine, as expressed by some of them during my study. The major challenge members are faced with in relation to this doctrine is lack of resources.<sup>181</sup> The responses from the focus group discussion with the seminary students dealt with the issue of understanding and appropriating the doctrine. A respondent said, "My major challenge is how to appropriate this doctrine in real critical or practical life situations especially coming from a context that lays much emphasis on reward for hard work."<sup>182</sup> Contributing to the discussion another said, "my challenge is how to embrace both grace and law without neglecting any yet depending on God's grace that justifies as the only means of salvation not my own merit."<sup>183</sup>

The congregants on their part have a lack of resources and a problem with how to appropriate the doctrine in their cultural context as their major challenges. This was stated thus by one respondent, who said her challenge is "Lack of resources and how to appropriate the meaning of justification in critical life situation are some of the challenges I face with this doctrine."<sup>184</sup>

This partly confirms what some clergy said regarding the knowledge of the doctrine among lay members as well as its impact on them. That is why some respondents asserted that only the clergy know the doctrine and that it has only impacted the lives of the clergy.<sup>185</sup>

Speaking of this situation, Anna E. Mghwira (1997) says: "The Lutheran heritage in African is alien to African Lutheran Christian members. Luther and all his contemporaries are only the subjects of Seminaries. For most people, it does not really matter that they should adhere to the Lutheran tradition" (1997:137). This correctly describes the state of the laity and LCCN as an institution.

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LCCN Pocket Diary, 2011). Also, in the whole Diocese the highest educational institution is that of high school (or secondary school as it is called in Nigeria).

<sup>181</sup> Gwangduke, lay member in Kiri on 5th December 2009

<sup>182</sup> Response from focus group discussion with seminary students of BLS Mbamba in Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010.

<sup>183</sup> Seminary students of BLS Mbamba in Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

<sup>184</sup> Response from interview with Hauwa Madi, lay member in Shelleng on 11 December 2009

<sup>185</sup> Yakubu, clergy in Guyuk on 27th December 2009 and Abner, clergy in Bobini on 31st December 2009

Most lay members lack proper knowledge of their culture and some cannot even speak their language due to the influence of either the English or Hausa languages. This is evident in their responses especially with respect to their local language. Language is an important aspect of culture; therefore if they cannot speak their local language this means that they lack the capacity to understand their culture as well. Martin Luther as quoted by Carl E. Braaten (2007) acknowledges the place of language in transmitting the Christian faith. Luther says, "We will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this Sword of the Spirit is contained" (Luther in Braaten 2007: 13). Given the above challenges, what then is the people's assessment of the church's interpretation of the doctrine?

### **6.2.6.3 Assessment of the church's (LCCN) interpretation of the doctrine**

In their responses most of the church leaders stated that the church's interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is sound, but expressed dissatisfaction with its impact on the life of members.<sup>186</sup> They also put the blame for this on a lack of teaching. One respondent said,

The church's interpretation is scripturally based but at variance with practical life. It is in agreement with official confessional documents though members lack proper understanding of these documents due to lack of teaching. It is preached but not lived and also there is no uniform understanding.<sup>187</sup>

Another leader in his response said, "The church's interpretation promotes Christian spirituality though it suffers from inadequate presentation due to the fact that it is not given adequate attention by the church and the clergy; hence, it affects members' Christian spirituality negatively."<sup>188</sup>

Since most of the complaints from the church leaders are pointed in the direction of teaching, what is the view of seminary lecturers and pastors with regards to the church's interpretation

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<sup>186</sup> Church leaders: Windibiziri in Guyuk on 2nd January 2010, Haniel I. Dading in Numan on 5th January 2010, and Basil in Numan on 6th January 2010.

<sup>187</sup> Kenan, church leader in Guyuk on 31st December 2009

<sup>188</sup> Myatafadi, church leader in Numan on 5th January 2010

since these two groups are directly responsible for teaching either in the seminary or the church?

The lecturers agreed that the church's interpretation of the doctrine is scripturally based and is sound; but they expressed dissatisfaction with the way it is presented to members. They pointed to a lack of literature as the cause for the failure to develop a proper understanding of the doctrine among members. A lecturer said, "There is no proper understanding because there is no literature except Luther's Small Catechism. There are no official confessional documents; the LCCN is very ignorant of the official Lutheran confessional documents."<sup>189</sup> Another said, "The interpretation is faithful to Scriptures and Lutheran confessional documents though our cultural background tends to draw people back to relying on works instead of faith."<sup>190</sup>

The responses from the lecturers did not address the issue of how the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* promotes Christian spirituality; they only focused on its relation to Scripture and Lutheran confessional documents.

The general impression among the clergy who were interviewed was that the church's interpretation of the doctrine is good; however, lack of literature and its appropriation by members in practical life situations constitute the major challenges.

A clergy said, "The interpretation is faithful to Scripture but its application in practical life by members is faulty and there is no strong emphasis on it by the church. Only the clergy understand and benefit from the interpretation."<sup>191</sup> Another respondent, focusing on whether the doctrine promotes Christian spirituality or not said, "It has weakened some people's Christian spirituality especially those who do not understand the doctrine well. Some people are saying they have been saved by works while others are saying by grace through faith. To some extent this doctrine has encouraged people to indulge in sin."<sup>192</sup> While affirming that the interpretation of the church is scripturally based, this respondent is skeptical of its faithfulness to official Lutheran confessional documents. He said that, "as for official

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<sup>189</sup> Ma'aji, lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 12th January 2010

<sup>190</sup> Yakubu, lecturer at Mbamba, Yola on 11th January 2010

<sup>191</sup> Yakubu, clergy in Guyuk on 27th December 2009

<sup>192</sup> Denham, clergy in Numan on 6th December 2009

confessional documents, there are no materials available so it is difficult to say whether it is in line or not."<sup>193</sup>

The onus of the argument has been that lack of teaching is responsible for the ignorance of members of this doctrine. Therefore, it is to be expected that the seminary students who are taught theology will have a better understanding of this doctrine and will be familiar with official Lutheran Confessional documents, but some of them are not.<sup>194</sup> There is also uncertainty as to whether the doctrine promotes Christian spirituality, as expressed by this respondent thus, "I am not sure whether it enhances Christian spirituality, because there is lack of proper understanding of the doctrine by members."<sup>195</sup>

The church leaders maintained that the church's interpretation is scriptural. However, some are concerned that the doctrine has suffered from inadequate presentation because it has not been given adequate attention. This has partly contributed to the negative impact that the teaching has on the life of congregants.

The seminary lecturers also share the same view with the church leaders on this issue. One of the lecturers asserted that the LCCN is ignorant of the official Lutheran confessional documents, saying that this is one of the reasons why there is hardly any correct affirmation of grace as against works. If this assertion is true, then the church has a problem, considering the significance of these documents as expressed by Braaten thus, "... for these documents themselves (confessional writings) direct us to search the Scriptures" (2007: 41). Furthermore, he maintained that: "The confessional principle is not constructive but rather destructive if it does not assist the church in preaching the gospel and actualizing its reality within every new missionary situation" (2007: 39-40). Braaten's statement rightly describes the situation of the LCCN and explains why the reality of the doctrine is not in great evidence in the life of the people, simply because they do not know this confessional principle.

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<sup>193</sup> Amchilo, clergy in Guyuk on 12th December 2009

<sup>194</sup> Some students in their responses during both the focus group discussion and individual interviews, when asked whether the interpretation of the church is faithful to official Lutheran Confessional documents, responded by saying, "Yes, as found in the church's liturgy where we confess that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us..." This response indicates that these students do not know what the official Lutheran Confessional documents are. And if the students who are in an academic environment with a library are uninformed, then the level of understanding among ordinary lay members cannot but be worse than this.

<sup>195</sup> Response from focus group discussion with seminary students of TCNN Bukuru in Bukuru on 12th January 2010

Similarly the clergy said the problem is with application. The expression by some clergy that they are not familiar with Lutheran confessional documents is surprising. If it is true that some clergy do not know the Lutheran confessional documents, the question is arises: were these clergy not taught Lutheran doctrine during their theological education? If they were taught Lutheran doctrine, what texts did the lecturer used?

It is of interest to know that the church leaders, seminary lecturers and the clergy were all aware that the doctrine of justification by faith has not been adequately presented, but the question is, what are they doing to address the situation? The mere acknowledgement of the existence of a problem without taking deliberate action at addressing it is like diagnosing a disease without prescribing a medication for it.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter examined the data generated from respondents during individual interviews and focus group discussions. The responses are diverse due to the educational level of the respondents as well as their various kinds of engagement in the church. The discussions touched on the following themes: knowledge of the doctrine; gospel versus cultural world view of the people; resources and means of transmission; policy on theological education; impact of the doctrine; challenges associated with understanding and appropriation; and assessment of the church's interpretation. The findings from this chapter are as follows:

First, the knowledge of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is limited among members as compared to the clergy. Even though the leadership of the church and clergy seem to have a better understanding, this is not reflected in the lives of their members, suggesting that they have not adequately transferred their knowledge of the doctrine to the laity. Consequently, there is a lack of proper application, leading to a negative rather than positive impact of the doctrine on the life of members.

Secondly, there is a lack of proper understanding of the cultural world view. The church has not projected a positive image of the local culture. This, coupled with its inability to adequately create an informed understanding of the doctrine among church members, has led members to become alienated both from their culture and from this doctrine. Therefore, members still hold onto the notion that the cultural world view is opposed to the gospel and by extension the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* since culture is works rather than faith

centred. This position does not create an enabling environment for dialogue between gospel and culture.

Thirdly, the methods employed for the transmission of knowledge are not contextual and therefore not very effective. This is exacerbated by language barrier as some members do not understand either Hausa or English and some clergy too cannot not express themselves fluently in their mother tongue.<sup>196</sup> Another issue is lack of learning resources such as books, which means that the members totally depend on what they get from their pastors. It was also evident that most of the problems can be linked to the church's policy on theological education for the clergy and laity. Generally, the field work revealed that the church's interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is not clear and this has affected its understanding by members.

At this point, it is pertinent to consider how the church can address these challenges in order to provide an interpretation of the doctrine that is both relevant and life transforming. The next two chapters seek to examine possible ways for achieving this, as I discuss the issues that emerged from the field work. This will contribute to the further advancement of knowledge within the area of study and also proffer some proposals on the way forward for further research.

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<sup>196</sup> Most of the young people in the church are out of touch with their mother tongue due largely to the dominant influence of on the one hand the Hausa language which is the language of communication in the northern part of Nigeria and is also the official language of the church; and on the other hand of English in schools.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Contextual implication for theological education

*Justification by faith alone* is not a threat to morality, but the sworn foe of all forms of self-justification (Taylor 1954: 16).

#### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined data from the field work to assess the knowledge of and appropriation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* bearing in mind the formal and informal theological education provided to the various groups associated with or belonging to the LCCN. The data revealed among other things that: a) there is lack of proper knowledge of the doctrine among members, b) the theological education programme of the LCCN is clergy centred, c) there is lack of contextual approach in the curriculum of the church's seminary, d) there is a lack of adequate teaching resources including qualified personnel, e) there is a neglect of the role of mother tongue in the church and f) there is insufficient commitment from the LCCN in transmitting its beliefs and practices to the grassroots. As a result of all these factors, there is an increasing gap or even a clear contradiction between theory and praxis, formal and informal learning in the lives of LCCN clergy and laity in relation to the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

The objective of this chapter is to investigate the viability of a contextual theological education programme for the training of both clergy and laity that is broad minded enough to take into account the pluralistic nature of the Diocese both religiously and culturally. To achieve this objective, themes that emerged from the field work as discussed in the previous chapter, will be utilised to engage both the historical theological education and the formal and informal theological education of the church in a dialogue. Since the study embraces three theoretical frameworks, namely gospel and culture in dialogue, translation, and contextual theological education programming; the discussion of this chapter will be aligned according to these theories. This will help to integrate the gaps discovered through the field work in order to come up with some proposals for further research in this area in the next chapter.

#### 7.2 Inadequate knowledge of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* among members

The doctrine of *justification by faith alone* has suffered from an improper understanding by people since the time of the apostles. As such, many works have been written in order to correct some of these misconceptions. The effort put into these works has helped in some

ways, but the problem still persisted right up to the time of Martin Luther. Luther added his voice to those who had preceded him, which culminated in the Reformation of the church and dogma in the sixteenth century. However, though Luther's effort made a significant impact, it did not completely solve the problem. When the subject of *justification by faith alone* is discussed, most people do not comprehend, as expressed by Luther thus, "When I preach on the article of justification, the congregation sleeps and coughs. When I begin to tell stories and give examples, the people perk up their ears, are quiet, and listen intently" (Luther, WATr 2: 454, 17-19, no. 2408b; between January 10 and 22, 1532 in Dieter 2009:189). The people's attitude does not mean that the subject is uninteresting; rather it is as a result of many factors, one of which is that it does not naturally fit into what the existing worldview and experience of the people, because it has no provision for their active participation. Hence, there is a need for continued attempts in search of fresh insights that will help enhance the understanding of this doctrine by the ordinary people.

The official position of the Lutheran church which the LCCN subscribes to is that, justification is from start to finish an act of God's grace to humankind through the redemptive work of Christ and is appropriated by faith alone (Kolb and Wengert, BC 2000: 240).<sup>197</sup> The doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is faith rather than works centred; nor is it a synergy of faith and works. Any form of work arising from the justified, is seen as an expression of gratitude and demonstration of one's love to God and humanity (Luther LW 34, 1960: 161).<sup>198</sup> It is not an extra requirement for the completion of one's justification. But for the ordinary people, justification meant something different even in Luther's time. It meant faith together with works. The situation today in the LCCN is not different from that of Luther's context, as expressed by Dieter above. The responses of some members reveal that their understanding of this doctrine is that of a synergy of works and faith as discussed in the previous chapter.

What might be the reason for this? Could it be that *justification by faith alone* is illogical to them or that the gospel message did not appeal to the people within their cultural/religious worldview? It is possible that the cultural world view of the people might have influenced the way they understand the doctrine of justification. The Lunguda world view is works rather

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<sup>197</sup> BC stands for the Book of Concord of the Evangelical Lutheran church, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert.

<sup>198</sup> LW stands for Luther's Works followed by the volume number, year and page number.

than faith centred like that of most African societies. It hinges on the idea of appeasing the gods and ancestors and making payment for one's wrong deed[s]. Therefore, any explanation of justification that does not provide a space for their indigenous religious eloquence and a connecting part in its actualisation will be difficult for the Lunguda to comprehend. Since that is how the mind-set of the people operates, one way of bridging the gap is by identifying areas of similarities between the act of justification and the Lunguda cultural/religious world view.

Justification is predicated on the idea of atonement or propitiation; in the same way, the Lunguda cultural/religious world view hinges on the practice of *ntsandah* (propitiation). Other acts that are central to *justification by faith alone* are redemption, forgiveness and reconciliation. In relation to justification, these acts provide another opportunity for renewal and restoration. Similarly, these concepts are also crucial in the Lunguda cultural practice of *ntsandah* or *wakama*<sup>199</sup> (propitiation).

Both *ntsandah* and *wakama* refer to a sacrifice of cleansing in order to please the gods. According to this practice, the offender does not have the religious ceremonial purity to offer an acceptable sacrifice to the gods; someone else does that on behalf of the person. According to Harold Mirchaulum and Michael Jamthi, *nimungile* or *wakama* is an act performed by the offering of a gift to appease the gods in order for them to grant forgiveness or cleansing for someone. The gods are appeased by giving them some form of gift, such as animals or birds and or grains to pacify their anger. Mirchaulum and Jamthi cite scripture references where the two terms are used in the New Testament Lunguda Bible such as Rom. 3: 25; 1 John 2: 2 and 4: 10.<sup>200</sup> Through this practice, the offender who had been banished from the community is forgiven, cleansed and reconciled or reintegrated into the community. The practice conveys two things related to the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

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<sup>199</sup> The terms *ntsandah* and *wakama* are used by the Hill Lunguda and those on the plain respectively. The two words mean the same thing a gift of appeasement to the god's for cleansing or forgiveness.

<sup>200</sup> Harold Mirchaulum and Michael Jamthi, interviewed at Guyuk on 18th August 2011. The Lunguda New Testament translation is based on the King James Version of the Bible which has used the word propitiation instead of the Revised Standard Version's atonement. The text of the scripture references mentioned by Mirchaulum and Jamthi read: "whom God set forth as propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate His [sic] righteousness, because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." (Romans 3: 25 NKJV); "And He Himself [sic] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1John 2: 2 NKJV); and "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1John 4: 10 NKJV). In all the three scripture references, the word propitiation is translated into Lunguda as *wakama*.

Firstly, the person accepts to return to the community based on faith since she or he was not there when *ntsandah* or *wakama* (propitiation) was performed. The person believes that what was done on her or his behalf has settled the debt owed. Secondly, the person contributed nothing to make the redemption that was acquired through *ntsandah* or *wakama* complete, but simply benefits from the end result; that is, pardon and acquittal (justification). Thirdly, once the redeemed person is integrated into the society, he or she is expected to show gratitude to the benefactor in words and good living. This appreciation contributes nothing to the process of the redemption; rather, it helps in enhancing the relationship between the redeemed and the benefactor.

In the same vein, when one turns to the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, one could see that it is built on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, namely, his sacrificial death on the cross which satisfied God's justice and thereafter grants pardon and the acquittal of the sinner. It is important to note here that, in the case of justification by faith, the redemptive work of Christ is not repetitive, it is a once for all event unlike in the case of *ntsandah*.

The Lunguda practice of *ntsandah* is repeated after an offence is committed, which is not the case with *justification by faith alone*. Also, the practice may cause one to associate justification with works since something has to be given before the acquittal of the offender, which may lead to lack of proper understanding of *justification by faith alone*. Despite these negative implications of the practice of *ntsandah* can be compared to justification by faith; the strength of the parallels given earlier outweigh the differences.

Though the two processes have their differences, they also have similarities. Their similarities include the following: first, both are external acts performed on behalf of someone. Second, both are effective in granting pardon, acquittal and causing a change of status of the offender before the offended. Third, they both also serve as source of peace and reconciliation. With respect to the third similarity – reconciliation - the Church of Norway Council of Ecumenical and International Relations says that, "...one of the most important similarities [between justification and reconciliation] is actually a conviction that it is part of the innermost essence of religion to be a source of peace and reconciliation."<sup>201</sup> This position supports the assertion that both justification and *ntsandah* are concerned with bringing peace and reconciliation

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<sup>201</sup> NCEIR, "Vulnerability and Security: Current challenges in security policy from an ethical and theological perspective," Commission on International Affairs in the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, 2006, p. 26; [http://www.kirken.no/english/doc/Kisp\\_vulnerab\\_00.pdf](http://www.kirken.no/english/doc/Kisp_vulnerab_00.pdf) accessed 10/12/2011.

between two parties. Fourthly, through propitiation the demands of justice are met or satisfied through the practice of *ntsandah* and Christ's redemptive/sacrificial death; thereby granting new status to the offender before the offended. The justified in turn claims or appropriates this gift of propitiation that grants justification by faith. Thereafter, in appreciation, the justified lives a life of gratitude, not to pay back or to complete the process of redemption/justification, but as a practical testimony of a change that occurred in his or her life.

Given the importance of the Lunguda concept of *ntsandah* in understanding and appropriating *justification by faith alone* as discussed above, the role of dialogue between gospel and culture is brought to the fore as being of essential significance. Munib A. Younan (2009) refers to this kind of dialogue as a prophetic dialogue for life among all faiths and further asserts that, "It speaks the truth about reality yet dares to seek the common values for justice, peace, reconciliation, and love, forgiveness, mutual respect, and human dignity for all" (2009: 50). The first five points mentioned by Younan are the main concerns of both justification by faith and the Lunguda practice of *ntsandah*; while the last two are the pillars of a genuine dialogue. Joseph A. Ilori (1993) in a paper titled "Dialogue between Christians and Muslims: How Feasible" extols the importance of dialogue. Ilori says, "The essence of dialogue could be to seek relationship with another in order to expose misunderstanding and stereotypes, and to break down barriers that separate and create hostility and conflict" (1993: 43). Tijani El Miskin (1995) for his part sees dialogue as a civilized vogue aimed at promoting mutual cordiality (1995: 67). Therefore, through a critical engagement of the gospel and culture in dialogue, the strength of the practice of *ntsandah* among the Lunguda can be used to create or enhance a better understanding of *justification by faith alone*. This then requires a well-articulated theological education programme for both clergy and laity. How is the theological education programme of the LCCN currently articulated?

### **7.3 Theological education programme of LCCN is clergy centred**

Theological education is an avenue through which religious knowledge is imparted to its adherents. Education is the bed rock of any meaningful human development. It helps in making people more cultured in their relationships and life commitments whether religious, personal or political. According to Tappert, education suffered a major setback during the early stage of the Reformation, but later, it played a significant role in the success of the reform movement. The turning point came when Luther decided to visit churches within

Electoral Saxony as part of the visitation team; in the course of his visit he discovered a high level of ignorance due to the neglect of the clergy in performing their duty. He described the situation thus: “Good God, what wretchedness I beheld! The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching” (Tappert 1959: 338).

After reflecting on the matter, Luther set out to address the issue at two levels - the family and the church - by writing the Catechisms to serve as instructional materials (Tappert 1959: 338). Luther realized that for theological education to be effective there is a need for pastors to be properly equipped with resources. To meet this challenge, he wrote two Catechisms and translated the Bible into the German language. The availability of these materials gave theological education a great boost (Johnson 2004: 150).

The writing of the Catechisms and translation of the Bible into the German language, coupled with the invention of printing, made the circulation of these documents and transmission of Luther’s ideas faster and more widespread. People were able to have access to Luther’s documents which gave them an insight into what he was advocating.

In addition to these materials, Luther wrote an appeal titled “To the councilmen of all cities in Germany that they establish and maintain Christian schools” in 1524. This treatise was a response to some who misconstrued him as being against education because of his criticism of existing schools. In this Treatise, Luther maintains that “education is necessary for the spiritual growth of both boys and girls and equally essential if they are to become useful citizens” (Luther LW 45, 1962: 343-344). He further argues that though home training is essential, it should not be seen as a replacement for public schools because home training provides one with limited exposure and experience, while public schools exposes one to global issues (Luther LW 45, 1962: 368-369).

When he realized that the councilmen needed the support of parents for these schools to thrive, Luther preached a sermon titled “Keeping children in school” in 1530. As a follow up to his appeal to those in authority, Luther in this sermon urges parents to send their children to school. During this time some German parents preferred their children to enter into one trade or the other in order to gain wealth. In response Luther argues that education is better than material possessions, for it gives wisdom and the fear of God (Luther LW 46, 1967: 210-

211). Furthermore, he charges preachers and parents to support the effort of those in authority so that these schools could be successful (Luther LW 46, 1967: 214-215). Though Luther initiated the move for a solid education through the visitations, Philip Melanchthon was the one who gave it a definitive form (Spitz 1997: 51-53 and Kittelson 2003: 243-249).

Through Luther, it became recognized that the key to understanding the Christian faith is through the provision of proper theological education via Christian instruction in the family by parents and Christian teaching and preaching by pastors in the church. Through theological education Luther's thought on the word of God as the rule of faith and doctrine of *justification by faith alone* gained an informed acceptance by people, especially through the vehicles of his three reformatory treatises (Nichols 2002:77-79 and Stauffer 1967: 24-25).<sup>202</sup> This was made possible through the provision of adequate language education in school; according to Luther, "The scriptures cannot be understood without the languages, the languages can be learned only in school" (Luther in Bainton 1950: 335).

Luther was passionate about the provision of theological education to Christians both clergy and laity at home, in the church and school. He backed this passion with relevant resources and translations of texts. Similarly, we need to ask: How can the LCCN use theological education and translations of Lutheran Confessional documents to provide an appropriate interpretation of *justification by faith alone*?

The attitude of the LCCN in Lunguda land during the first years heeded the Lutheran appeal. Commenting on the situation, Margaret Nissen (1968) in her book *An African Church is Born* states that, "All Christians in the area were invited for short courses" (1968: 171). Unfortunately, this practice of organising short courses could not be sustained by the LCCN even in the Guyuk area.

While general education on one hand makes people better citizens, theological education on the other hand has double benefits as it helps in building character and effects spiritual growth. Therefore, for one to have a good grasp of what the Christian doctrines – the elements of the Christian faith – mean, there is need for a sound theological education. The field work revealed that the theological education programme of the LCCN is clergy centred. Because of this, the laity lacks a proper understanding of the church's beliefs and practices,

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<sup>202</sup> The treatises are: "An Address to the German Nobility", "Christian Liberty" and "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church".

as reflected in some of their responses discussed in the previous chapter. It should be mentioned here that matters of belief and practices of a church are not the exclusive rights of a few people; they concern all, the laity inclusive. According to Idowu, the lay people are a vital factor in the life of the church; therefore, theological training should not be seen as the monopoly of the clergy (1965: 48). Jesse N. K. Mugambi (1995) also corroborates this view and adds that, “Ideally, all members of a society need religious education at ...[a] basic level to enable them appropriate the functions of religion in society” (1995: 26). In addition to this, they also need theological education to help them communicate and live out the faith they profess correctly. This education should go beyond simple catechistic instruction, in order to cater for a pluralistic society like that of Gongola Diocese. Luther was concerned about providing theological education for all people so that they will become better Christians. Is the LCCN not aware of Luther’s position on theological education for both the clergy and laity, given that it has neglected the laity in its theological education policy?

Though the theological education programme of the LCCN is clergy centred; the training offered even in this limited realm is inadequate, because it does not adequately equip the trained pastors for ministry in a religiously pluralistic society. According to respondents, the level of training is low and it lacks a contextual approach as reported in chapter six, sub-section 6.2.4.1. Consequently, even the clergy are challenged in terms of appropriating the functions of religion in society. These are serious challenges that cannot be ignored if theological education is to be of any significance to the broader community which the church is supposed to serve. According to Mugambi, it is crucial that theological educators ask themselves the question, “To what extent are current programmes of Christian theological education sensitive to the religious plurality of the societies which trained pastors are expected to serve?” (1995: 27). Such a stance on programmes of Christian theological education is very significant in my view. This will not only help in creating cultural and religious harmonious coexistence; it will also produce a clergy that is well informed and equipped to handle contemporary challenges.

The initial goal of theological education training programmes of the LCCN was to provide workers for pastoral ministry within the church; other practical issues were either overlooked or considered irrelevant. However, recent developments call for a rethink of how these programmes should be run, especially as relates to their impact on wider humanity. The lecturers said some of their challenges include lack of relevant materials and how to

contextualize Lutheran doctrines. The question is: do these lecturers have the capacity to produce relevant materials and theology to enhance critical reflective engagement with contemporary challenges? Are the lecturers conscious of their role as academics and the need to be up to date in terms of their approach, as well as the presentation and production of their ideas contextually? Or they are just content with producing preachers and not critical thinkers? What is the effect of the church's policy on theological education on the kind of training received at the BLS? The Education Department and its subsidiary, the Education Office are responsible for the training and the production of material, what has the Office done to in the areas of staff recruitment in the seminary and student in-take? What is the vision of the Education Office?

It is one thing to put a policy and structure in place, and quite another thing to take practical steps in implementing this policy within the laid down structures. The success or failure of implementation is to some extent dependent on the approach employed. Thus, an examination of the problem related to contextual approach to the seminary curriculum is the focus of the next section.

#### **7.4 Lack of contextual approach in the curriculum of the church's seminary**

Despite the fact that theology has always been done contextually, the responses from the field work reveal that the curriculum of the LCCN's seminary lacks a contextual approach. This has also influenced the approach of the lecturers. Some lecturers indeed testified that they do not approach their lectures contextually. The curriculum of any educational programme to a large extent has an impact on the quality of its graduates and the community they would serve. In order for educational institutions to have a positive impact on both the learners and the community, there is need to include contextualization in the curriculum of study including theological education programmes. This is more applicable to theological exercise because scholars have argued that theology has always been done contextually (1995: 20 and Bevans 2009: 3). Eugene A. Nida (1968) corroborates the problems of failing to be contextual by stating that, "Despite honest attempts by many theologians to reach the secular mind, the average minister seems less and less capable of speaking meaningfully to and about the world and its pressing problems" (1968: 14). Through contextualization the learners will be exposed to the felt needs, values and lived experiences of their context and will be able to integrate what they learnt with the real life situation on ground; that is, to integrate theory and reality.

Commenting on the significance of lived experience to any fruitful theological exercise, especially that of justification by faith, Theodor Dieter states that, “The meaning and relevance of justification cannot be demonstrated in abstraction from reality” (Dieter 2009: 203). A relevant contextualization exercise is one that is both faith and life affirming. This kind of exercise fits into Louis J. Luzbetak’s (1988) definition of contextualization as, “the process by which a local Christian community integrates the Gospel message (the text) with the real life context, blending text and context into that single, God – intended reality called Christian living” (1988: 133). For this integration and blending between text and context to take place, the gospel and culture of the local Christian community must dialogue. The same also applies to Christian concepts (doctrines) and the cultural context of the local community. Our failure to embark on this exercise results in the situation that Anna E. Mghwira (1997) describes below,

The interpretation of scripture in Africa is quite often removed from the very context that could enhance its understanding. Scripture becomes distant and not genuine, nor is it truly presented as worthy of our faith. This failure to build on African experience puts many of us in a kind of limbo (1997: 135).

Mghwira’s description is more evident during crisis situations, where some Christians feel as if the God whom they believe in does not provides a solution to their pressing challenges. Because of this, some are left in a state of indecision, while others compromise their faith.

Historically, the rediscovery of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by Luther is as a result of his personal experience which he then translated in the light of the people’s personal life experiences. Hence, Eric W. Gritsch (1983) describes Luther as a contextual theologian “... who felt constrained to relate his findings to concrete situations relating to the issues of his age” (1983:266). However, in the case of LCCN, the message of justification is detached from the people’s lived experiences. The responses from most respondents as discussed in chapter five show a discontent with the cultural world view of the people. Their perception of the relationship between gospel and culture is that the two are opposites. According to them, culture is works centred while gospel is faith centred. Their response may not be unconnected with the view of the first missionary who said the people had no religion and culture discussed in chapter four, section 4. 3. This position shows a lack of adequate knowledge of culture, taking into account that culture is people’s way of life. Therefore, any attempt to regard other people’s culture with contempt is at variance with the message of *justification by*

*faith alone* which stresses acceptance and reconciliation. Furthermore, it is difficult to reach a people without appealing to their way of life. In light of this, Luzbetak says, “Christian doctrines and practices, and for that matter any innovation that the Church may have to offer, be it of a spiritual nature or social, should not be left dangling but should be tailored to the local set of needs” (1988: 161; Ukpong 1995: 4 and Idowu 1965: 10). This set of needs is what defines them as a people, their being and aspirations; hence they should not be ignored. I also wish to add that the issue of our responsibility to the whole of creation should also be given adequate attention in theological training. Gender inequality, justice and peace issues should also be given attention in such training in order to produce a clergy that is knowledgeable enough to apply the message of justification to these other areas.

The world of the spirits was real to Luther and indeed to most late Middle Ages Christians, likewise with witchcraft and superstition. This is evident in the kind of relics people collected and in Luther’s devotion to Saint Anne (Robinson 2010: 5-8). According to Heiko A. Oberman (2006) Luther was so pre-occupied with the idea of Satan’s attack to the extent that placed it at the core of his explanation on the Lord’s prayer “Lead us not into temptation” in the Catechism (2006: 175-185). Nürnbergger corroborates this and adds that “the church had become ... riddled with superstition...” (2005: 80). Indeed, the “Christian worldview and assumptions have been irrelevant and superstitious in the past” (2005: 31). Luther acknowledged these issues as realities and found a way of dealing with them, but the LCCN is living in denial of the existence of these realities for its own members (Lohse 1999: 29). This denial has created a gap in the life of members such that whenever they are confronted with practical challenges they lay down their „Christian garment’ and reach out for their „traditional garment’ which they believe has solution for the problem confronting them (Nürnbergger 2007: 68). This double position may also be associated with the reason why some see justification as a synergy of faith and works (human effort). What this means for the African Christian today is that the message of justification must be approached from practical life experiences rather than abstract, otherwise, it will be difficult to appropriate its message correctly.

Elaborating on this Jens Holger Schjørring (1997) says, “During the Reformation, the message of justification was directly connected to what people had experienced, this is different today, and thus experience had to be envisaged anew” (1997: 378). Also commenting on what Christians should do with regards to the relationship between the gospel

and culture and their lived experiences, Mugambi opines that, “Realistically, it should be emphasized that Christians in each part of the world have a responsibility to raise the questions that are most relevant in their own situations and seek guidance from the Gospel in their quest for relevant answers” (1995: 23). This comment constitutes a big challenge to LCCN and its theological educators because this quest for relevant answers has not been given serious attention.

The present state of neglect as regards the contextual approach in the seminary’s curriculum and the attitude of some of its lecturers do not provide an enabling ground to take up this challenge. In order to address this concern, it is important that people should seek to know and be willing to accept the reality of what they live with - their set of needs and cultural world view - as they theologize. Collaborating on this, Todd M. Vanden Berg (2005) suggests that, "African theologians must overcome ... Western theological interests and begins to set the direction of theology that is derived from a specifically African world view and cultural context” (2005: 59). This will not only make their theological exercise relevant; it will also help in the production of relevant teaching resources and qualified personnel with the capacity to reflect critically on contemporary issues.

### **7.5 Lack of adequate teaching resources including qualified personnel**

The transfer of knowledge is dependent on many factors key amongst which are relevant resources and qualified personnel. Despite the importance of these two factors, the field work revealed that both the resources and personnel are either lacking or inadequately supplied.

The structure of the LCCN assigned the responsibility of spiritual nurture to trained evangelists, catechists and the clergy. The Constitution of the LCCN states that the leader of a local church must be someone “whose knowledge of the word of God is at least equal to four years in Bible School.” However, the practical situation within the church shows that there are inadequate numbers of trained personnel to take charge of the spiritual nurture of members, and that the education of those with higher training often lack depths and applicability. As a result, there is no practical compliance to the provisions of the constitution in some local churches. This is evidenced by the fact that some local congregations are under the supervision of people who have had no theological training at all but were elected to lead because of vacancies in the leadership. At the District level as well, a District with seven to twelve congregations is overseen by one Pastor, while some Districts have no Pastor at all to

oversee their affairs. The duties of a Pastor in LCCN include among other things to organise Bible studies and to carry out confirmation and baptism class instruction. However because of insufficient personnel, lay people are asked to handle baptism classes, making it difficult to engage in in-depth discussions of theological and doctrinal issues as the instructors are not knowledgeable enough to handle such assignments. As a result of this scenario, “catechism instruction is no longer adding knowledge; rather it has become either memorization or a storytelling exercise.”<sup>203</sup> This implies that such baptism class instructors only repeat what they read in the manual without any corresponding explanation on the meaning of the text. This situation confirms earlier assertion that the laity is not properly covered by the theological education programme of the LCCN, rather the programme is clergy centred.

After baptism and or confirmation, members’ spiritual nurture and counselling require a more in-depth approach. This study revealed that there is no coordinated effort towards a proper post baptism and post confirmation Christian education for all groups of people within LCCN despite the fact that the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is ready to assist in this area. The LWF indeed wants member churches to implement post confirmation education for all people at the congregational level (Mau Jr 1985: 207).

Furthermore, there are no instructional materials available such as books, including the Lutheran confessional documents, apart from Luther’s Small Catechism. In most of the feedback from respondents presented in chapter five, the lack of resources especially in the local languages and inaccessibility of the few texts in English were identified as among the challenges responsible for lack of an informed understanding and appropriation of the doctrine of justification.

Firstly, the problem of inaccessibility of books is related to the issue of affordability of the books as well. Another associated issue is that the reading culture of the people is weak due to the absence of public libraries and low educational level of most people within the Diocese. What is the church doing to tackle these problems? If they are doing something, is it a solid effort and is the church committed to its effectiveness and success?

Second, closely related to the first problem is the issue of local resources in local languages. This issue raises the following questions; first, when the lecturers were engaged what was the

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<sup>203</sup> Response from interview with Hauwa Madi, church member in Shelleng on 11th December 2009

church's expectation from them? Second, do these lecturers have the intellectual capacity to engage in critical reflection on contemporary issues? Third, has the church supported these lecturers so that they can be productive in producing relevant theology and publishing relevant material for use by students and the congregants? Fourth, are the working conditions favourable for research and publication of research findings? These questions are critical in addressing the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* from the perspective of the three theories which undergirds this study. Failure to take into consideration and to make deliberate efforts towards addressing the questions above means failure to provide an informed interpretation of *justification by faith alone*. According to Stephen J. Bevans,

The role of a trained theologian (the minister; the theology teacher) is that of articulating more clearly what the people are expressing more generally or vaguely, deepening their ideas by providing them with the wealth of the Christian tradition and challenging them to broaden their horizons by them with the whole Christian theological expression" (2003: 18).

The above statement is significant for any relevant theological exercise. Is this how the LCCN as an institution and the lecturers see their role in providing theological education to students and members? Are they keen on evaluating the impact of the type of education they provide on their target audience?

Third, another issue is that the church's documents do not provide pastors and members the assistance needed for them to access and be guided in understanding its beliefs and practices. For instance, ordination candidates are asked twelve questions, but none of these questions addresses the subject of *justification by faith alone* or makes reference to the Lutheran Confessional documents. Other Lutheran churches such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa ask those to be ordained whether they believe and accept these teachings and will equally teach it to members in questions one, two and three of their ordination ceremony.<sup>204</sup> After their training and ordination, the clergy have no forum where they can evaluate or refresh themselves after sometime especially those who are not eager to proceed

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<sup>204</sup> Question 1: "... Do you believe the Canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired word of God and the only rule of faith and Christian living?" Question 2: „Do you accept the three ecumenical creeds, the Apostle's, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, to be the faith full testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and do you reject all errors which they condemn?" Question 3: „Do you also believe that the Lutheran Confessional writings are in agreement with the teaching and content of the Holy Scriptures?" *Altar Book*, Kimberley: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, 1995, p.159.

with their formal education. Because of this, they are unable to engage properly with emerging contemporary and contextual issues around them. Therefore, Mau's statement (1985: 208) on the resolution of LWF "that integration of theological education and Christian education be effected, particularly by providing church members, including pastors, with opportunities for theological reflection on their life situations, and thus creating relevant theology in a learning community" needs to be brought to the forefront. For this to be actualized, the LCCN has to come up with a well-structured contextual theological education programme for the training of both clergy and the laity. This will also help the church to strategize and draw an articulated plan for effective Theological Education by Extension (TEE) which some describe as being in a state of coma.<sup>205</sup>

Schjorring, giving a theological reflection in the LWF, identified three stages of theological development since the inception of the organisation, these are: the foundational, provocative theological renewal and contextual theological exercise.

During the foundational phase of the LWF, the period from 1947 to 1963, theological exercise in Lutheranism was basically fashioned after the classical heritage. According to Schjorring, the major players were academicians and church leaders from Germany, America and the Nordic Lutherans (1997: 180). The Nordic Lutherans are those from the Scandinavian countries namely: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland (1997: 9). Since theological approaches were developed by scholars and church leaders only, it emerged from a general consensus reached within the Federation; an intellectual, abstract activity within the academia (1997: 180, 189). The end result of this exercise was only relevant to few, the majority of the members remained unaware, hence, did not directly benefit from it.

The second phase of the LWF is the period from 1963 to 1977, a period described as that of provocative theological renewal. During this phase Lutherans from other parts of the world lent their voices in the theological discourse. It was also described as a period of prophetic denunciation where "critical social theory was used as a key hermeneutical instrument in a nearly comprehensive revision of the classical heritage" (1997: 180). Like the previous exercise, though this was more open, it was concerned with right teaching rather than looking at these teachings in the light of current issues.

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<sup>205</sup> This was reported by some respondents during field work discussed in chapter six above.

The third phase of LWF is from 1977 to present and this is a period of contextual theological exercise. The concern of LWF in this period is on how to develop a balanced theology that engages with contemporary critical issues. Schjorring says, “In this period attention has been given to crafting a role for theology that mediates between the original basic concern faithfully to identify and maintain the Lutheran tradition as well as the more recent critical concerns” (1997: 180).

During the first phase of LWF, “theology was must frequently regarded as an intellectual, abstract activity confined to the academic ivory tower; it was held to lack contact with or relevance to the life of the churches” (1997: 189). Though LWF as a body is in the third phase, the practical reality within the LCCN reflects the situation during the first phase as described by Schjorring. In order for the LCCN to give an interpretation of justification by faith that addresses peoples’ felt needs, the words of Dieter that, “If justification is to be appropriated as exciting and pertinent, then it must be treated as a unique challenge for us today,” (2009: 191) must be taken seriously. Treating the doctrine as a unique contemporary challenge will help the church apply the message of justification by faith to all areas of human struggle, thereby giving it an all-inclusive approach and relevance. This approach also supports Bevans’ assertion that the focus of contextual theology is present human experience (Bevans 2003: 4). This is because the correct appropriation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is one which elicits the fear of God, promotes justice, religious harmonious coexistence, respect for the dignity of humankind irrespective of gender, race and class, and the whole of creation.

Fourth, there is also lack of proper understanding of what faith means. For example, one clergy while contributing to a discussion during one of the General Church Councils said: “*Bishara ta zo mana cikin bangaskiya, mun karbe ta cikin bangaskiya, muna ci gaba cikin ta cikin bangaskiya ba da dogon ilimi ba*”<sup>206</sup>, meaning, “The gospel came to us in faith, we received it by faith, we continued in it by faith not by high intellectualism”. This attitude is not peculiar to this pastor; many members of the General Church Council both clergy and laity share similar view. This position tends to sever faith from intellectual reasoning which is contrary to the three dimensions of faith. Faith must be seen in relation to knowledge of

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<sup>206</sup> Rev. Kefas Guleduwa, Dasha, LCCN General Church Council, November 1994.

historical events (*assensus*), trust or commitment to this event (*fiducia*), and faithful living or fruits of faith (*fidelitas*).<sup>207</sup>

There is no clear understanding of faith as both knowledge and trust or commitment in the cultural/religious context of the Lunguda people. Rather, faith is viewed as an expression of confidence in the potency or efficacy of something based on past experience. For one to get a good result, one has to do something to earn the favour of the source of that power: the gods and ancestors.<sup>208</sup> Therefore, the people are more inclined to perceive justification in terms of appeasement that satisfies the demands of justice.

The actions of the LCCN also made the matter worse. First, when the church introduced a renewal fee for church membership, those who did not pay the fee were treated as non-standing members. Commenting on this situation, John B. Grimley and Gordon E. Robinson (1966) said, “Although these people in every other way were convinced Christians and were living a life according to the precepts of the church, ... since they either had no membership cards or did not pay the fees, they did not commune” (1966: 136-138). Therefore, when the members are presented with the view that “faith is a receptor not a contributor” they become more confused; because the message of God’s grace is undermined in favour of church policy and administration (Johnson 2004: 86).

Second, the stress on faith with regards to justification is only in theory; in practice, the emphasis is more on law than on faith or grace. This assertion is to some extent true, because in the case of LCCN, a church which claims *justification by faith alone* as its cardinal doctrine, in practice reverse is the case. As a result, some members see faith in itself as all they need in order to be justified; hence they say your faith will get heaven for you. Here, faith is seen as that which saves, contrary to what Scripture and Luther hold which is that it is faith in Christ that saves. Luther says, “Observe, faith is not enough, but only that faith which hides under the wings of Christ and glories in his righteousness” (Luther, Luther Latom WA 8: 112 in Pelikan 1983: 154). This faith that is associated with justification is predicated on the work of redemption accomplished by Christ’s death on the cross; it is not something internal.

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<sup>207</sup> Marcus Borg, Types of Faith <http://www.brucealderman.info/blog/2006/02/types-of-faith.html> accessed on 19/10/2011.

<sup>208</sup> David L. Windibiziri, interview conducted by James J. Reynolds at Guyuk on 24th November 2011.

Sinclair B. Ferguson (2003) provides a way out of this state of confusion when he explains that, “faith draws everything from Christ and contributes nothing to him. Faith is simply a short hand description of abandoning oneself trustingly to Christ whom God has made our righteousness.” (2003: 83). This position agrees with that held by those who drafted the Lutheran Formula of Concord that “faith is the desire for and the reception of the promise of Christ...” (Kolb and Wengert, BC 2000: 165). Johnson corroborates this, arguing that when faith is detached from its object or ground - the redemptive death of Christ - then it becomes another form of works (2004: 83-84). Faith should always be seen as a gift from God that requires a commitment in accepting the promise of God’s grace.

In chapter two translation was discussed as a vital tool for creating an informed interpretation of *justification by faith alone*. It was mentioned that translation does not have to be word for word because some concepts do not have direct equivalent and a dynamic equivalent can be employed instead. Therefore, since there is no clear expression of faith as trust and commitment in the Lunguda language, through the process of dynamic equivalent a more suitable expression can be used considering the influence of mother tongue in understanding and expression.

### **7.6 Lack of utilization of mother tongue (translation)**

The role of the mother tongue in communication and enhancing comprehension of message is enormous. Through the process of translation and contextualization, the message of the gospel becomes easily accessible to the receiving audience. Three examples from Luther, Brønnum and Lunguda evangelists avail to authenticate this position.

Martin Luther utilized translation for the advancement of the Christian faith and practice. The most significant contribution of Luther in the area of translation is how he used the everyday language of the ordinary people in translating the Bible into German.

Luther valued the contribution of vernacular or local languages in communicating the gospel message and the Christian faith. He also took into account the different intellectual levels of his audience and provided instructional materials for different categories of people. To this end, Stolt (2009) asserts that, “Luther gave his mother tongue the same status as the original biblical languages by translating the Bible into German” (2009: 134).

For Luther, translation and mother tongue (language) are necessary tools for understanding, transmitting and appropriating the Christian faith, in which the doctrine of justification by faith is central. The LCCN has not taken these three elements of understanding, appropriating and transmitting seriously, as expressed by some respondents during the course of this study. The LCCN started with similar attitude to that of Luther, but as it grew, it abandoned the practice of utilizing the local ordinary language in communicating the gospel; as a result, a large segment of the ordinary people is not catered for in most branches of the church.

Brønnum the pioneer missionary of LCCN also made use of translation and the local language in his communication of the gospel message. For instance, he preached to the Bachama in Bachama language and later to the Hausa in Hausa language (Jensen 1992: 120). This attitude opened the way for the local people to embrace him and the message of the gospel which he brought. Learning and speaking other people's language means acceptance, identifying with them and respecting what they stand for, and their identity as a people.

The third example is that of the Lunguda ethnic group. The Lunguda people were evangelized by their own kinsmen in their mother tongue. The first Lunguda evangelists were freed slaves who later became house helpers to the missionaries. Through their encounter with the missionaries they were converted to the Christian faith. These Lunguda converts were instrumental in reaching their own people with the gospel (Nissen 1968:169). Nissen also reports that since the Lunguda land was an inaccessible area, these local evangelists received the gospel message first in Hausa, and then it was translated into Kanakuru before it was further translated into Lunguda; yet despite this the response from the people was great (1993: 165). It is said that the success of the gospel in Lunguda land is owed largely due to two factors. First, there was the fact that the evangelists were people they knew from amongst themselves and were considered trust-worthy. Second, the evangelists spoke to the people in their mother tongue as they translated and contextualized some of the terms they learned from the missionaries. This practiced was sustained by the converts even when they grew into organized congregations. As a result, even the elderly people, who initially saw Christianity as encouraging laziness, gradually converted and embraced the Christian faith.<sup>209</sup> During worship services, if the preacher was preaching in Hausa, someone was always on hand to translate the sermon into the local language, likewise for Bible studies. Some of the clergy

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<sup>209</sup> Windibiziri, interview conducted by James J. Reynolds at Guyuk on 24th November 2011.

interviewed attest to the fact that today, when they use the vernacular in particular the elderly people are carried along by the message because it is communicated to them in their local language.<sup>210</sup>

However, the responses from the respondents revealed that both translation and the use of mother tongue in teaching and preaching have been relegated to the background in the LCCN.<sup>211</sup> This attitude of the LCCN has huge consequences on the life of its members when it comes to understanding and appropriating the beliefs and practices of the church. One of the effects of this neglect of local language in the life of the church is manifested in the members' inadequate knowledge of *justification by faith alone*. Considering the role of mother tongue in communication, a re-engagement with this issue will help to create an informed understanding of the church's beliefs and practices; and will also enable the church to better meet the spiritual needs of the people, especially the elderly who have problems understanding both English and Hausa.

Therefore, through the use of local language and careful translation of the Christian faith into relevant everyday language of the ordinary people, an informed understanding of *justification by faith alone* could be enhanced. This approach is vital for developing grassroots theology. According to John S. Parratt (1987: 144), "Such theology is usually done in the vernacular ... and this enables it to speak to the life of ordinary Christians ...". The use of translation and vernacular is not a magical solution though; there are challenges and technicalities that need to be taken into account. That is why Luther made two important statements regarding translation and the local language. Firstly, it is necessary for the translator to depart from the literal meaning of the words of the original in order to clarify in the new language their actual sense. Secondly, translating requires a right, honest, trained, informed and experienced heart (Luther, LW 35, 1960: 179; 194). Therefore, for translation and the use of mother tongue to achieve the desired result, there must be commitment from the church and cooperation from the key players.

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<sup>210</sup> This was discussed in chapter six under field work.

<sup>211</sup> When the church stopped using the mother tongue in worship services in most places, the elderly people were left unattended to spiritually as they felt excluded. As a result, some of them left the LCCN and joined the African instituted churches where they still make use of the vernacular in conducting the service as well as preaching.

### **7.7 Less commitment in transmitting beliefs and practices to the grassroots**

Most of the problems identified as discussed above are related to the issue of lack of commitment in one way or the other. The problem of inadequate understanding is a consequence of, while the last four are a direct manifestation of a lack of commitment from the LCCN in transmitting its beliefs and practices to its members. Though the leadership of the LCCN maintains that the church is committed to educating its members on its beliefs and practices; the practical situation on ground indicates otherwise. While admitting that not enough has been done with respect to transmission of the church's beliefs and practices, the leadership attributes the failure to lack of funds for an efficient and sustainable training programme for all within the church. The lay members for their part see rather a lack of commitment on the part of the LCCN.

The inadequate knowledge of the doctrine of justification by faith among members is indicative that they have not been taught properly. The responsibility of teaching members the beliefs and practices of the LCCN lies with the church. Because it is the church that develops the training programmes for the training of its ministers, they are in turn assigned to minister to the needs (including education) of their members at the grassroots. When there is a problem with the training programme, this will in the long run have an effect on the performance of the clergy on the field. Consequently, when the members are not properly catered for they will look for spiritual nourishment elsewhere, and what they get there sometimes may be different from what the LCCN believes and practices; hence, when asked what they understand by *justification by faith alone*, they say "we are justified by faith and works."<sup>212</sup> Responses like this leaves no one in doubt of the need that exists in the LCCN, especially that of a determined effort towards proper teaching.

Therefore, it could be argued that the members' inability to accumulate a proper knowledge of *justification by faith alone* is as a result of the church's lack of commitment in transmitting its doctrines and practices. Consequently, the fundamentally Lutheran emphasis on justification by faith is not expressed with the same drive in teaching which would allow members to get an informed understanding that may elicit a proper appropriation of this doctrine in their religious and personal life.

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<sup>212</sup> These were some of the responses from lay members during the field research as discussed in chapter six

Furthermore, in instances where the instructional materials are available, such as the TEE teaching manual/textbook on Lutheran doctrines, the commitment to make full use of these is not there on the part of both the learners and the instructors.<sup>213</sup> Accordingly, the problem is multifaceted and lies with both the leaders and the led. Hence, in order to address this problem the members need to show an interest so that this will motivate the church leadership to be more committed towards addressing the needs of the laity.

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the problems identified in the previous chapter. All six problems identified are linked to the issue of lack of commitment from both the LCCN as an institution and its members. The church's attitude towards culture and the local language of the people has played a major role in how the members in turn view the relationship between the gospel and their culture. This is further compounded by lack of attention to contextualization in the curriculum, by the lecturers who are training future ministers. Consequently, this has created a vacuum that counters the enhancement of the method of teaching and preaching by both the lecturers and/or the clergy. Since the view of the people on faith is obscured and their mother tongues have been ignored; the understanding of this doctrine by members is rendered inadequate. Therefore, a contextual theological programme for the training of both clergy and laity will be a viable tool in facilitating for the understanding and appropriation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. This programme has the potential of addressing the following issues:

Firstly, it will create proper understanding of the people's cultural/religious world view and also help regarding how to relate the message of the gospel to them within that worldview. For instance, the Lunguda view on faith can only be addressed through an informed understanding of that culture.

Secondly, through a contextual approach the people's felt needs will be taken into consideration when transmitting the Christian faith through teaching and or preaching. This approach will also help them deal with practical life issues in relation to their faith. In addition it will also assist them to relate with people of other faiths and cultures, given the milieu in which they live.

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<sup>213</sup> Response from interview with Safraitu F. Titus, clergy in Bodwai on 29th December 2009

The third point has to do with the role of mother tongue in comprehension. Language is a major part of culture, and the process of translation from one language to another is also a contextual issue, because translation is a model of contextualization. This exercise gives people the opportunity to hear and understand what is taught or preached in their local language.

In view of the reasons given above, it could be argued that a contextual theological education programme will be a useful tool for creating a better understanding of justification by faith. Similarly, with proper utilization of contextualization, the LCCN Gongola Diocese can use the Lunguda cultural practice of *ntsandah* or *wakama* to create an informed understanding of the doctrine of justification that is faith rather than works centred. It will also create room for a fruitful inter-face between this theological understanding and their lived experiences.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Conclusion: towards a contextual missio-cultural appropriation

#### 8.1 Introduction

In chapter seven, six problems were discussed that emerged from the field work namely: lack of proper understanding, neglect of mother tongue, translation, lack of contextual approach, lack of resources, and lack of commitment in transmitting the doctrine. The discussion revealed how these problems can be addressed using resources from the Lutheran church and the Lunguda cultural/ religious background. Also, the chapter noted that a good understanding of the Lunguda cultural/religious worldview will help to identify areas of similarity that can be used as bridges for the transmission of the Christian faith. However, the findings from the field work revealed that the LCCN has not utilized this avenue optimally; hence, there is lack of proper understanding and interpretation of *justification by faith alone* by the LCCN. The second issue is lack of proper application of the meaning of *justification by faith alone* to the felt needs of the people through the process of contextualization. When these two are closely examined, it becomes clear that the thrust of the matter is lack of concerted effort towards the transmission of the doctrine by the LCCN.

This chapter presents the summary of the thesis and conclusions of the study, drawing on insights from the research findings. Though the sample of my study is small, the findings of the previous chapters will serve as pointers to the real issues in the broader church. The lessons learnt are important guides for further research on this topic in the wider context of the LCCN in order to address the practical situation on ground. Having identified the problems that emerged from this study, the objective is to identify proposals that will help in addressing the gaps identified as well as enhance future research in this area.

#### 8.2 Summary

This study comprises of two parts namely: 1) the historical/theological facets of the doctrine of justification and 2) the practical application of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*. The first part is mainly theoretical, exploring the historical background of and the way in which justification by faith developed, especially in Luther's thinking, and how this was transmitted, with special focus on the LCCN. This was covered in chapters one to four. In between the first part and the second is chapter five which deals with methodology. The

second part of the study focussed on the practical application of justification by the LCCN. Through field work, an investigation was carried out that concerned how the doctrine is being interpreted and appropriated by members, as presented in chapter six. The problems and challenges that emerged out of the findings from the field work were discussed in chapter seven. This final chapter draws conclusions based on the findings from the field work. The challenges that were discovered from the field work form the basis of my proposal for the way forward and future study in this area. Here follows a summary of the chapters.

The first chapter discussed background information of the study including the research question, motivation for study, methodology and theoretical frameworks. The study revealed that for a proper interpretation of the Christian faith including doctrines, three aspects are crucial namely: the relationship between the Christian faith and the local culture; translation and a contextual theological education programme. This means that contextualization is central since it facilitates intercultural communication which is a key aspect in the transmission and interpretation of *justification by faith alone*.

Having understood the role of contextualization in arriving at an informed understanding and interpretation of *justification by faith alone*, the second chapter is devoted to discussing and analysing the three theories. The analysis revealed that, in as much as these theories are helpful, they also have their limitations. First, in the case of dialogue between gospel and culture, the gospel demands and claims for absolute truth is already a hindrance to any fruitful dialogue (Mbillah 2010: 112). However, both the gospel and culture are concerned with the wellbeing of humankind (Younan 2009: 64). This shared concern can serve as source of strength for meaningful dialogue. Second, in translation, as concepts are translated from one language to another, there is a strong tendency to lose the original meaning and force of the text (Mugambi 2003: 121). This is the limitation of translation in terms of its effect on the transmission and interpretation of ideas. That notwithstanding, through careful and appropriate translation the receiving audience gains a better understanding of the idea that is communicated as it is decoded in one's local language and cultural idioms (Bevans 2003: 40). Third, like the other two theories, contextual theological education too is prone to compromise in some areas and by and large losing touch with the original meaning and focus as it falls "prey to whatever is the current trend" (Schjørring 1997:179). Despite this, contextual theological education has the advantage of incorporating contemporary issues into the theology in existence thereby giving it a wider perspective and relevance (Bevans 2003:

9-10). Secondly, it also makes people feel respected and cared for as their felt needs within the reality of their context are attended to. Hence, through proper employment of these theories, the LCCN Gongola Diocese can arrive at an interpretation of *justification by faith alone* that is life affirming.

The third chapter discussed the historical background of *justification by faith alone* focusing on the roles played by St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther in its transmission interculturally. In this chapter it was argued that these church fathers were sensitive to the cultural world views of their audience and their approach helped in creating informed understanding and appropriation of the doctrine of justification. They used the language and context of the people of their time and place, in transmitting their message. According to Robinson, Luther taught and interpreted the doctrine within his cultural context to the extent that he used the everyday language of the ordinary people to transmit the message of the gospel through translation (2010: 48). The chapter also discovered that a proper understanding of *justification by faith alone* is one that is wrought through practical application and life experience; or one that is experiential (Atkinson 1986:71). From this perspective, theology becomes, “an interrelated account of the whole experience of faith” (Schreiter 1993: 89). This understanding is also expressed by St. Paul, St. Augustine and Luther in their teaching, writings and preaching, as reported by scholars discussed in chapter three.

Chapter four discussed the transmission of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* from Martin Luther to the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria. An examination was made of the role played by the missionaries on one hand and the role of the indigenous leadership on the other hand in translating, interpreting and transmitting this doctrine to the new converts in Nigeria and LCCN members respectively. The study discovered that both the missionaries and the indigenous leadership had not done enough in transmitting the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* interculturally. However, the study also discovered that some members of the church have indeed understood the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*; this is evident in locally composed songs, some of which were discussed in this chapter. The question which remains to be answered is: Since both the missionaries and the indigenous leadership had not done enough to make the doctrine understood, appropriated and applied among the local people, how did these members manage to access this informed understanding of *justification by faith alone*? A further question was: Has the understanding

of the doctrine by the laity been reflected in how it is appropriated in practical life experiences?

The fifth chapter constitutes the methodology, where the research design, methodology and methods were highlighted and discussed. The chapter discussed the nature of the study - a qualitative empirical study - and how the study is organised. It also discussed the sources of data, namely the analysis of existing literature, archival material and field research data. The processes involved in the collection of data from the field – in-depth interviews and focus group discussions - were also discussed. Other main areas discussed in this chapter included the process of data analysis by creating themes, and the study's limitations and ethical considerations.

The sixth chapter is mainly based on the outcome of the field work. The responses of participants in the field work were gathered from five categories of respondents namely: church leaders, clergy, seminary lecturers, seminary students and lay members. The chapter used the feedback from the field work to examine the relationship between the formal and informal knowledge of the doctrine among both clergy and laity. Firstly, the study revealed a contrast between the official position of the church (the formal) and the understanding of the doctrine by members; as well as how they appropriate it in practical life (the informal). The confusion centres on the place of work in the life of a believer. This was not about whether both work and faith are necessary or not, since faith and works are both important, because the Christian's life consists of faith and love, receiving and doing, that is, faith active in love (Reynolds 2003: 13 and Bornkamm 1965: 80-92). Rather the confusion was linked to the understanding of works as a means of justification, as opposed to faith alone.

Secondly, the responses from respondents revealed that this situation has been brought about by six key factors namely: lack of teaching resources and qualified personnel; neglect of mother tongue; lack of contextual approach in teaching by seminary lecturers as well as the clergy; lack of commitment from the church in educating its members on its beliefs and practices; and lack of or under-utilization of translation in teaching and preaching.

Thirdly, the findings of the field work confirmed the assertion that the church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification is inadequate; hence, it has not impacted on the life of the church's members. This has answered the question: How has the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* impacted on the day to day life of members in the society?

Chapter seven discussed the problems identified in the previous chapter with the aim of analysing them one by one. These problems serve both as challenges and gaps that need to be addressed. At the centre of these challenges is the issue of a lack of commitment to the contextual approach in the method of transmission and application of the Christian faith. The Lunguda cultural practice of *ntsandah* is seen as a valid entry point that could enhance this contextual approach in the church's theology and interpretation of *justification by faith alone*.

Chapter eight is the conclusion of this study. The chapter highlighted the insights and discussions that have emerged from the study. In addition to answering the research question some signposts for future research are identified and the way forward in addressing the challenges are proposed.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

There is a theological disconnection between the two worlds of Lutheranism on the question of *justification by faith alone*. It is pertinent to state that though the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria belongs to the Lutheran family worldwide, it seems to have a problem in appropriating the basic tenets of Lutheranism within its African cultural context. This is evident from what was discussed in chapters five and six above. In chapter five the data gathered from the respondents show firstly, that the LCCN as an institution has not managed to effectively transmit its position on the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to its members. LCCN's understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* is appropriate, but its interpretation by the church and its appropriation by members is at variance with this understanding, thereby posing a question mark on the validity of the understanding itself too. This situation is similar to that of the Anglican Church in Nigeria described by Bolaji Edward Idowu 47 years ago. According to Idowu (1975),

Christian Nigerians have not yet begun to do their own thinking and to grapple spiritually and intellectually with questions relating to the Christian faith... people repeat the creeds and catechism without understanding; as such the truth which they convey is not appropriated intelligently (1975: 23).

This statement by Idowu confirms why it was difficult for most of my respondents to give a tangible assessment of the impact of the doctrine on members. The problem is further compounded by lack of teaching resources as well as failure to make a concerted effort at

educating members on what the church believes and practices; a situation described by Idowu as “a signal mark of failure” (1975: 23).

Secondly, there is the problem of the low level of training of the clergy at the local seminary; this has in turn affected their performance in the area of teaching in their various places of primary assignment. If the clergy cannot confidently demonstrate an informed understanding of the Lutherans’ chief article of faith and also enable the appropriation of this understanding in their lived experiences, then they face an identity crisis; indeed, what right do they have to lay claim to the Lutheran identity and heritage? The situation surrounding such training is what Idowu describes as uncritical acceptance of whatever is taught which in turn is given out undigested in preaching and teaching (1975: 23). In view of this, Idowu makes some proposals for an indigenous church in Nigeria. His proposals focused on the identity of the church, and especially on issues of culture, translation, training, local theology, liturgy, local hymns, and dress and vestments (1975: 2- 38).

It could be argued that some of what Idowu proposes with regard to the indigenous church in Nigeria in 1975 is still relevant today. Idowu’s proposals on culture, language, translation, local hymns and theology remain relevant for the church in Nigeria in general and the LCCN in particular. The need for local theology in the LCCN is long overdue, the church having existed for a century. Idowu’s perspective on the issue of identity is also important, because one’s identity determines one’s actions and attitude as it gives one a sense of independence. Identity and culture defines who one is, therefore, as long as one is dependent on someone, one loses much of one’s identity and one is likely to look down on one’s culture as reflected in this study. However, some of Idowu’s proposals seem to be too radical, including those on dress and vestments, liturgy, and designation in outlook. Since people belong to different Christian traditions, there are certain elements that are distinctive to those traditions which are vital for their unity; these should be maintained for the sake of unity not uniformity.

A proper grasp of justification should lead to transformation, liberation and acceptance of others as God has unconditionally accepted and justified humanity. According to Roderick Hewitt, transformation can only happen when there is transformational leadership. A leadership that is vibrant, dynamic, visionary and committed to the purpose of God’s kingdom in the world (Hewitt 1996: 17-22). Where this is not taking place, it means theological training of the clergy has lost touch with the felt needs of the community (Percy

2005: 133). According to Jens Holger Schjørring (1997: 179) people show their discontent with this kind of theological exercise. He describes it thus: “The charge is frequently made that theology is imprisoned within tradition. This accusation alleges that theology fails to demonstrate relevance or topicality, or that it is bound to an outmoded, antiquarian vocabulary.” (1997: 179). Therefore, for theology to be redeemed from this imprisonment there is need for interaction between tradition and context. On one hand, tradition provides the historical background, while context provides the basis for interpretation on the other hand. Advancing reasons for why this interaction is necessary, Schjørring further asserts that, “The interpreter is part of a community that itself is determined and shaped by a concrete framework of culture and society as well as by a particular tradition of learning and ecclesial service” (1997: 179). This interactive exercise will help promote healthy engagement between Luther’s world and the 21st century LCCN. This dialogue is what I found lacking in the LCCN’s interpretation of *justification by faith alone*. There are two questions that need to be addressed in order to create the enabling environment for effective interaction and engagement. First, does the LCCN as an institution have what it takes to provide an adequate interpretation of the doctrine in question that is life affirming to its members? Second, is the LCCN prepared to harness all that is at its disposal to achieve this? This can only be answered through undertaking another study. Therefore, there is need for further research on this area. The LCCN is a multi-ethnic and multicultural institution, but this study focused mainly on one ethnic group, the Lunguda. Therefore, for the whole church to benefit; there is need for further research on this subject to assess the role of religious-cultural world views of other ethnic groups within the LCCN in appropriating *justification by faith alone* within their various cultural world views.

#### **8.4 Contribution to knowledge/proposals**

The message of justification was first transmitted interculturally by Christ and the church fathers. In that way, its target audience were reached in their cultural context. *Justification by faith alone* is a cardinal doctrine of the Lutheran Church and indeed Evangelical Christianity. However, for this doctrine to regain its relevance in each of the different contexts in which the Lutheran Church has emerged, it has to be communicated interculturally. This study sought to answer the question, “Does the interpretation of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria as an institution enhance its understanding and appropriation by members?” The study revealed that, the interpretation has not enhanced the understanding

and appropriation of the doctrine by members as reflected in previous chapters. Therefore, having discussed the challenges impeding on adequate interpretation that will lead to proper understanding and appropriation, The following missional signposts have been identified for further research. These proposals touch on the following areas: 1) developing local teaching resources, 2) introducing translation courses in the curriculum of the seminary, 3) establishing a contextual theological education programme, 4) strategically planning and effectively implementing means of transmission, namely preaching and music and 5) creating a department of theology and study as a research centre.

First, there is the need for developing relevant resources for teaching. Knowledge transfer is made easier with the availability of learning resources. Therefore, since Luther's Small Catechism is currently the only available theological literature that deals with the basic beliefs of the church, it is proposed that the production of a teacher's handbook and that having catechism and baptism classes led by people with strong theological backgrounds are two mechanisms that will greatly enhance the understanding of the church's beliefs by members. Not only that, a resource such as a handbook will equally help the teachers in their planning as they consider critically the key objectives of their instruction, namely to help the learner to acquire knowledge, to treasure and to apply or practice it (Schneider 2000: 61-63). Consequently, this will assist teachers take in to consideration the challenges facing the students and will lead them to balance their teaching in such a way that both the content of the teaching and the needs and interests of the students correlate (2000: 61). In addition this will motivate both the clergy and lay theologians to become interested in writing and publishing books locally, for the nurture and growth of members.

Secondly, there is need for the use of translation as a viable tool for an informed understanding of *justification by faith alone*. Translation is an important tool for transfer of knowledge whether it is religious or secular. It is said that Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German defined the modern German language and culture; hence, it became a model for the common language (Robinson 2010: 48 and Kittelson 2003: 117). According to Stolt (2009: 129), "His (Luther's) Bible translation is remarkably sensitive to language's capacity to describe reality. This is one of his great gifts to the Christian religion and German culture" and by extension, the Finnish and Swedish languages were also enriched via Luther's students (2009: 132).

Therefore, the LCCN's seminary needs to introduce a course in translation so that students who want to specialise in translating are properly trained in the techniques and subtleties thereof. Martin Luther's words were mentioned earlier: "Ah, translating is not every man's [sic] skill ... It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God- fearing, Christian, trained, informed, and experienced heart" (LW35, 1960:194). The person who possesses such qualities is one who has been exposed to the technicalities of translation. Since this process requires trained personnel to start such a programme, in the interim, each Diocese should train at least one person as a translator at either the Bible Translation Centre in Jos or at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria.

Another requirement of a translator is to be informed, in this context; this may refer to the cultural world view of the new language. Therefore, a contextual theological programme will be a boost to translation exercise. In addition to the technical aspect of the translation; a good knowledge of the cultural world view will give the translator a better insight into the various meanings and idioms available in a given language. This is because, as Luther puts it:

At times it is necessary for the translator to depart from the literal meaning of the words of the original in order to clarify in the new language their actual sense, and that a careful translation will sometimes therefore convey a meaning quite different from the one conventionally held (LW35, 1960:179).

It is evident that the church has difficulties with transmitting the knowledge of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to members. When one more closely examines the locally translated resources in Hausa, it's terminology is misleading as it portrays faith as works. For instance, the Hausa version of the Apostles' Creed that is used for catechism and baptism class instructions says, "*Ina bada gaskiya ga Allah ...*" meaning, "I give faith to God ..." Rather than standing for an affirmation of faith, members take with them from this the understanding that one has something to give to God. This in turn affects the way the doctrine is understood and appropriated by members; hence, both the church leadership and clergy complain that there is lack of understanding of the doctrine by members. Sigurd Bergmann (2003: 88) sounds a word of caution that, translation should aim at finding suitable and or approximate indigenous words or idioms for biblical concepts and categories rather than aim at word for word translation. The goal of translation should be how it could be life affirming.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need for the inclusion of a contextual theological education programme in the theological training of both clergy and laity. The study revealed that education played a significant role in enhancing people's comprehension of this doctrine in the past; especially an education that is contextual. Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-cultural country; hence, contextual theological education is not an option as in each of these contexts, theology must be able to speak to the people. The LCCN with the support of the LWF has created a forum for dialogue between Christians and Muslims, but the LCCN's efforts in Christian-Muslim mutual dialogue is not yielding meaningful results. This is evident in persistent inter-ethnic and interreligious or ethno-religious conflicts witnessed at the heart of where this LWF centre is situated. Je'adayibe Dogara Gwamna (2010: 53) states that, "... these conflicts have both ethnic and religious causative factors." Through contextual theological education, there will be wider mobilization at grassroots, that will create proper awareness of the need for dialogue. Theological exercise should not be limited to the professionals only; it should be made to include all constituent parts of the church including the lay members. This will help them to link faith and reality, their life experiences. Wilbert L. Shenk (2005) corroborates that contextual theology is giving needed impetus for the recovery of a theology that engages because "only engaged theology empowers the church" (2005: 208). Along the same line of thought, Martyn Percy (2005) argues that, "It is this kind of programme that will assist Christians in interpreting their faithful responses to reality, which will in turn be resourced by interpretation of tradition and heritage, hermeneutics and educational stratagem" (2005: 130). Therefore, with a contextual theological education programme in place, the interpretation of justification by the LCCN and indeed the understanding and practical appropriation of the Christian faith by members will be greatly enriched. Contextuality connects people with real life experiences; hence, Shenk posits that,

Proponents of contextual theology recognized that a fresh start had to [be] made if the churches in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the South Pacific were to get fresh purchase on their reality. They urgently needed to establish their authenticity as Christians and as members of their cultures (2005: 193).

The fourth proposal is concerned with the means of transmitting knowledge, namely teaching, preaching and music. Teaching has been covered in the other proposals discussed above; therefore, I will focus my discussion here on preaching and music only.

Since preaching is one of the most viable means through which the Christian faith is communicated to members, the preaching of justification should not be done casually. Hermann Sasse (1946) sees the preaching of the doctrine of justification by faith as a noble service to the Church. According to Sasse,

Hence we cannot possibly render a better service to the whole Christian church on earth, or even to the Christians of other communions who do not understand us today, than by preaching this doctrine in all its purity and clarity. Indeed, it is the greatest contribution which can be made toward the true unity of divided Christendom (1946: 17).

How can the LCCN preach the message of *justification by faith alone* in the way described by Sasse when there is insufficient commitment to do so from those concerned? Does the LCCN realize that the preaching of *justification by faith alone* is a vital tool for the unity of humanity and creation as a whole; because *justification by faith alone* conveys the message of reconciliation as its hallmark?

One of the complaints from the clergy was that members are not keen in attending Bible studies and other teaching sessions, but during Sunday worship the attendance is high. Therefore, the clergy and other lay preachers should use the preaching avenue to transmit the appropriate understanding of the message of justification by faith to members. This is significant because as Terry L. Johnson (2004) states, “No other doctrine is so vital to biblical preaching and effective ministry” (2004: 78). However, despite the place of justification in preaching, “Regrettably, one may have to search long and hard to hear a sermon on the subject ....” (2004: 78). A concerted effort in this direction will help to address the neglect and distortion that this doctrine has suffered in the LCCN.

Music is one of the tools people use to express their condition, especially songs and hymns. In the same vein locally composed hymns and songs state the basic meaning of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* as discussed in chapter four. The church should encourage the use of this gift by members and the clergy alike considering its benefit to the church. Indeed, Martin Luther says, “next after Theology, I give to the Church music the highest place and the greatest honour for it is an agent of the Holy Spirit” (Nichols 2002: 180). What the people need is support and good counsel so that they do not use their gift of singing as a means of settling personal issues; rather they should use it for the edification of the church.

Furthermore, the Hausa Hymn Book could be a vital source for Bible study considering the place of hymns and songs in the life and practice of the Lutheran church in general and the LCCN in particular. This is because firstly, most members have personal copies of the Hymn Book. Secondly, the language used in these hymns is clear and simple, therefore, with little assistance the members can easily understand its message. Thirdly, hymns and songs are oral theological reflections on the faith one professes.

The church (LCCN) should revisit the use of the vernacular in worship especially in village congregations. The current practice whereby only one song is sung in the local language is not enough; this should be expanded to cover a whole service. The argument has been that the worshippers are drawn from diverse languages, but where the congregation is made up mostly of people from the local tribe there should be a second service conducted in the local language for the benefit of those who do not understand either the Hausa or English language. This will help in carrying everybody along, as testified by some clergy who said that when the church was using the local language in worship and during the sermon, the older people followed and understood what was being said in a language familiar to them. Even though the older people cannot read, what they hear has great impact on their life because, in the first place they are accustomed to oral information through story telling. Secondly, there is great power behind oral speech compared to written text (LW 15, 1972: 322). On this, Birgit Stolt (2009) notes, “The sound of the living voice transmits the ‘feeling’ of the message, the attitude and personality of the speaker, and the contact between speaker and hearer. These transmissions are important clues that help the hearer understand how what has been said is actually meant.” (2009: 135).

Finally, the last signpost points to the need for the creation of a department for theology and study in the LCCN structure, akin to the Department for Theology and Studies of the Lutheran World Federation. This department should serve as a research centre for the church where theologians from church institutions and those serving in parishes will be tasked with the responsibility of undertaking research on theology and practice in the LCCN. This department will help the church to address most of the challenges identified and discussed in chapters five and six such as a lack of resources and qualified personnel, through the publication of research and training of personnel. The context of the LCCN is multi-cultural and multi-religious, but this study focused on one Diocese and one ethnic group only. The

department of theology and study will then also be able to encourage further research among other ethnic groups.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1a

School of Religion and Theology (SORAT)  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus,  
Private Bag X01 Scottsville 3209,  
South Africa.

Dear Sir/Madam

#### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am doing Doctoral Research in Systematic Theology. I need to gather information that will help me in my research. I am going to conduct interviews and focus group discussions where applicable. I hope that you will be able to provide me with useful information but I need your consent to do this. I promise that any information given will be treated as confidential and that either your identity will be protected or you will have the choice to remain anonymous. The interview and focus group discussion is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any time you wish.

The working title of the research project is: “A Critical Analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, Gongola Diocese”. This title was chosen based on my experience in the course of interacting with Pastors and Catechists during a Seminar organised by the Diocese and at TCNN Bukuru during Denominational Instruction. In these instances I discovered that there is lack of proper understanding of this doctrine among Pastors and Catechists who have the responsibility of instructing members. As Lutherans, this doctrine forms the foundation of our beliefs and practices but it lacks the attention commensurate to its status in the church. These are hypotheses that I want to investigate with the help of information provided by you.

I need your help in giving me time for you to be interviewed or participate in focus group discussion. For the interview a single meeting will last between 40 to 50 minutes, unless there is a need for a follow up. The focus group discussion will last for about 50 minutes. With your permission I will use a digital micro recorder to record the interviews and the focus group discussions. I will dispose of the data when I analysed them by deleting them from my computer system.

Participating in this research will benefit you. If the church is able to accept the outcome of the research and make use of the document, you will be part of the success story. As a member or a leader in the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, it is our collective responsibility to seek to know and interpret correctly what we claim makes us unique as Lutherans. The work will be of benefit to the whole Church in helping to understand the causes of the problem and how to address them.

My contact details and those of my Supervisor are given below in case you want to confirm the above information or find out anything from her.

Rev. James Jemeyira Reynolds; **Email:** [jjemeyira@yahoo.com](mailto:jjemeyira@yahoo.com), [208529058@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:208529058@ukzn.ac.za)  
**Cell-phone:** +2348034492902, +27843631711; **Residence:** TCNN, Bukuru- Jos, Nigeria.  
**Supervisor:** Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri, **Email:** [phirii@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:phirii@ukzn.ac.za)

## Appendix 1b

School of Religion and Theology (SORAT)  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus,  
Private Bag X01 Scottsville 3209,  
South Africa.

Dear Sir/Madam

*WASIKAR NEMAN IZINI*

*Ina bincike domin digiri na uku a tauhidi a farnin Systematic Theology. Ina bukatar tara bayani da zai taimako yin wannan bincike. Domin haka zan tambayi mutane su taimaka da bayani da ko kuma tattauna da kungiyoyi. Ina fata zaka/ki taimake ni da bayanai da nake bukata, amma ina son iznin yin haka daga gareka/ki. Domin kare mutuncinka/ki inda akwai hatsari gareka/ki, na dauki alkawarin sakaye sunanka/ki. Kasancewarka/ki cikin wannan bincike ba tilas, kana kuma da zabin janyewa daya bada bayani ko tattaunawa a kungiya duk lokacinda ka ga daman yin haka.*

*Kan maganan wannan bincike shine: "Nazarin Fassarar Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese game da Koyaswar Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai". Na zabi wannan kan magana ne domin abubuwa biyu da suka faru sa'adda na ke shudanya da Pastorci da Katekists a wani bita da Gongola Diocese ta shirya a 2000 da kuma sa'adda na ke daukan darasin koyarda daliban Lutheran a TCCN. Cikin wadannan yanayi biyu, na tarar akwai rashin cikakken fahimtar Koyaswar Barata ta wurin bangaskiya kadai sakanin pastorci da katikists wadanda nauyin fahimtar da yan Ekklesiya ya rataya a wuyansu. A matsayinmu na mabiya darikar Lutheran, wannan koyaswa itace ginshikin bangaskiyarmu amma ba'a ba ta cikaken lokaci da ya chanchanta a LCCN ba. Wannan sammani ne; ina so in bincika in ga ko haka ya ke da taimakon bayani da zan samu daga wurinka/ki.*

*Ina bukatar ka/ki taimake ni ta wurin ba ni lokacinka/ki domin in yi maka/ki tambayoyi ko kuma ka/ki kasance cikin tattaunawa a kungiya. Bada amsoshi ga tambayoyin zai dauki wajen minti 40-50 in ba wadansu tambayoyi da suka taso. Tattaunawa a kungiya kuma zai dauki minti 50 kachal. Zan yi amfani da na'ura mai dauka murya domin daukan amsoshi da tattaunawa a kungiya. Bayan na gama bincike na zan share wadannan amsoshi daga wannan na'ura da kuma na'ura mai kwakwalwa na watau computer.*

*Kasancewa cikin wannan bincike zai amfane ka/ki. Idan Ekklesiya ta karbi sakamakon wannan bincike ta kuma yi amfani da shi, zaka/ki zama daya cikin wadanda suka yi sanadin wannan nasara. A matsayinka/ki na dan ekklesiya ko shugaba cikin LCCN, hakin mu ne duka mu nemi fahimtar da kuma bada fassara mai kyau kan imaninmu. Sakamakon zai zama da amfani ga dukan Ekklesiya wurin ganar da mu matsalolin rashin sanin wannan bangaskiya a kuma magance su.*

*Hanyoyin sadaswa na da kuma na mai yi mani jagora cikin wannan bincike suna nan a kasa idan kana/kina son Karin bayani ko wani tambaya game da wannan bincike.*

Rev. James Jemeyira Reynolds; **Email:** [jjemeyira@yahoo.com](mailto:jjemeyira@yahoo.com), [208529058@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:208529058@ukzn.ac.za)  
**Cell-phone:** +2348034492902, +27843631711; **Residence:** TCNN, Bukuru- Jos, Nigeria.  
**Supervisor:** Professor Isabel Apawo Phiri, **Email:** [phirii@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:phirii@ukzn.ac.za)

## Appendix 2a

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

If you agree to be interviewed or participate in the focus group discussions, please sign the consent form agreement below.

***Consent:***

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....

.....

Signature of participant

Date

## Appendix 2b

### TAKADAR BAYANA YARDA

*Idan ka/ kin yarda in yi maka/ maki tambayoyi ko kasance cikin tattaunawa da sauran mutane domin wannan bincike, sai ka/ ki sa hannu kan wannan takarda a kasa.*

#### **Bayana yarda**

*Ni..... (rubuta suna cikake), na tabbatar cewa na fahimci abinda ke kunce cikin wannan takarda da kuma yanayin wannan bincike, na kuma bayana yardana domin in bada gudumawa na ga wannan bincike.*

*Na fahimta cewa ina da yanci in janye daga kasancewa duk lokacin da na ga dama, in ina son yin haka.*

.....

.....

*Sa hannun*

*Kwanan wata*

## Appendix 3

### Questions for Church leaders

#### Introduction

My name is James Jemeyira Reynolds a PhD student of UKZN. I am conducting research on the topic “A critical Analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a theological education programme that will address these concerns.

1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.
2. What is the Church’s understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
3. Are there provisions in the church’s documents to back this understanding?
4. What does the Church use to communicate this understanding to its members?
5. What resources are there to help church members understand this doctrine?
6. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to *justification by faith alone*?
7. What is the church’s policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?
8. How has the doctrine impacted the life of members in their day to day experiences?
9. How has the doctrine impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?
10. What is your assessment of the church’s interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in relation to the following -:
  - a. Teaching of the scriptures
  - b. Official Confessional documents of the church and
  - c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?

Thank you for your time and contributions to the research study.

## Appendix 4

### Questions for the Provost/Seminary Lecturers

#### Introduction

My name is James Jemeyira Reynolds a PhD student of UKZN. I am conducting research on the topic “A critical Analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a theological education programme that will address these concerns.

1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.
2. What is the Church’s understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
3. Are there provisions in the church’s documents to back this understanding?
4. Do you have provision for contextual theological education in the Seminary Curriculum?
5. Do you treat the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* as a course or as a topic?
6. How do you approach the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in your lectures?
7. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to *justification by faith alone*?
8. What is the church’s policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?
9. How has the doctrine impacted the life of students in their day to day experiences?
10. How has the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?
11. What is your assessment of the church’s interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in relation to the following -:
  - a. Teaching of the scriptures
  - b. Official Confessional documents of the church and
  - c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?
12. What are the challenges you encounter in your task as theological educators?

Thank you for your time and contributions to the research study.

## Appendix 5a

### Questions for the Clergy

#### Introduction

My name is James Jemeyira Reynolds a PhD student of UKZN. I am conducting research on the topic “A critical Analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a theological education programme that will address these concerns.

1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.
2. What is the Church’s understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
3. Are there provisions in the church’s documents to back this understanding?
4. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to *justification by faith alone*?
5. What is the church’s policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?
6. What are the means put in place by the Church to provide theological education to the congregants?
7. As a pastor, how often do you educate your members on this doctrine?
8. How has the doctrine impacted the life of members in their day to day experiences?
9. How much of the people’s local language (vernacular) do you use in your Bible study and teaching?
10. What are the challenges you encounter as you try to communicate this doctrine to your church members?
11. How has the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?
12. What is your assessment of the church’s interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in relation to the following -:
  - a. Teaching of the scriptures
  - b. Official Confessional documents of the church and
  - c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?

Thank you for your time and contributions to the research study.

## Appendix 5b

### Tambayoyi domin pastorci

#### Gabatarwa

*Sunana James Jemeyira Reynolds dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan kan maganan nan “Nazarin Fassarar Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese game da Koyaswar Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai”. Na gode domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki ga wadannan tambayoyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshi a sanake domin in yi amfani da shi wurin rubuta sakamakon wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu sanin muhimman damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan farni, a kuma kirkiro hanya mafi inganci na ilmantarda jama'a game da wadannan matsaloli.*

1. *Bayyana a takaice fahimtarka/ki kan koyaswar imanin Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai.*
2. *Memene fahimtar Ekklesiyar LCCN kan koyaswar imanin Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai?*
3. *Ko akwai kyakkyawar shiri da ekklesiya ta yi cikin litattafanta da ke goyon bayan wannan fahimtar ta?*
4. *A ganinka/ki ya ya dangantakar Bishara da al'adunku na gargajiya dangane da wannan koyaswar imanin Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai a zancen ceto?*
5. *Menene tsarin Ekklesiya kan samar da Ilimin Tauhidi ga pastorci da yan Ekklesiya?*
6. *Wadanne hanyoyi Ekklesiya ta tsara domin samarwa yan Ekklesiya Ilimin Tauhidi?*
7. *A matsayinka/ki na pastor sau nawa ka ke koyawa membobinka/ki wannan imani na Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai?*
8. *Ta yaya wannan koyaswa ta ta ba rayuwar yan Ekklesiya cikin hulda da jama'a yau da kullum?*
9. *Sau nawa ka/ki ke amfani da yaren mutanenka/ki cikin nazarin Littafi mai Tsarki da koyaswarka/ki?*
10. *Ko kokarinka/ki na gamuwa da cikas ta dalilin rashin kayan aiki da litattafai da suka cancanta da yaren sadaswa?*
11. *Ta yaya wannan koyaswa ya ta ba rayuwar ruhaniya da zaman tsarki na yan Ekklesiya?*
12. *Ya ya zaka/ki bayyana fassarar Ekklesiya kan koyaswar imanin Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai ta wurin la'akari da wadannan:*
  - a. *Koyaswar Littafi Mai Tsarki*
  - b. *Litattafan Bangaskiya da Imanin Lutheran*
  - c. *Karfafa zaman ruhaniya ko rayuwa mai tsarki?*

## Appendix 6a

### Questions for Church members

#### Introduction

My name is James Jemeyira Reynolds a PhD student of UKZN. I am conducting research on the topic “A critical Analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a theological education programme that will address these concerns.

1. Are you aware of a doctrine call *justification by faith alone*?
2. Briefly state what you understand to be the meaning of *justification by faith alone*.
3. What is the difference between Justification by faith and justification by works?
4. How do you relate this understanding with the concept of salvation and sanctification?
5. What is the role of Christ in the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
6. What is the Church’s interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
7. What are the means put in place by the church to provide theological education to Church members?
8. How do you relate the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* to your cultural world view?
9. How has the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* impacted your life in the society?
10. How has the understanding of this doctrine shaped your Christian spirituality?

Thank you for your time and contributions to the research study.

## Appendix 6b

### Tambayoyi domin yan Ekklesiya

#### Gabatarwa

*Sunana James Jemeyira Reynolds dalibin digiri na uku a jamiar UKZN. Ina bincike akan kan maganan nan “Nazarin Fassarar Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese game da Koyaswar Barata ta wurin Bangaskiya kadai”. Na gode domin sadaukar da lokacinka/ki da amsoshin da zaka/ki ga wadannan tambayoyi. Zan saurari wadannan amsoshi a sanake domin in yi amfani da shi wurin rubuta sakamakon wannan bincike. Wannan zai taimakemu sanin muhimman damuwan da ka/ki ke fuskanta a wannan farni, a kuma kirkiro hanya mafi inganci na ilmantarda jama'a game da wadannan matsaloki.*

- 1. Kana/kina sane da koyaswan imanin Barata ta wurin bangaskiya kadai?*
- 2. Bayyana a takaice ma'anar imanin Barata ta wurin bangaskiya kadai.*
- 3. Menene banbancin Barata ta wurin bangaskiya da Barata ta wurin ayyuka?*
- 4. Yaya ka/ki ke danganta wannan fahimta da zancen ceto da tsarkakewa (zaman tsarki)?*
- 5. Ina matsayin Yesu cikin koyaswan imanin Barata ta wurin bangaskiya kadai?*
- 6. Menene fassararEkklesiya kan imanin Barata ta wurin bangaskiya kadai?*
- 7. Wadanne hanyoyi Ekklesiya ta tsara don samarwa yan Ekklesiya ilimin tauhidi?*
- 8. Ya ya ka/ki ke danganta imanin Barata ta wurin bangaskiya kadai da al'adunku na gargajiya?*
- 9. Ta ya ya imanin Barata ta wurin bangaskiya kadai ta shafi rayuwarka/ki cikin al'umma?*
- 10. Ta ya ya fahimtarka/ki na imanin nan ya taimaka ga gina ruhaniyarka/ki cikin Kristi?*

*Na gode da lokaci da kuma gudumawarka/ki ga wannan bincike.*

## Appendix 7

### Questions for Seminary Students

#### Introduction

My name is James Jemeyira Reynolds a PhD student of UKZN. I am conducting research on the topic “A critical Analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese”. I am very grateful for your time and the responses that you will provide to these questions. Your input will be carefully listened to and used in developing the research. It will also help us understand your main concerns in this area and design a theological education programme that will address these concerns.

1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.
2. What is the Church’s understanding of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*?
3. Are there provisions in the church’s documents to back this understanding?
4. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to *justification by faith alone*?
5. What is the church’s policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?
6. What are the means put in place by the Church to provide theological education to the congregants?
7. How has the doctrine impacted your day to day life experiences?
8. What are the challenges you encounter in connection to the doctrine of Justification by faith?
9. How has the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?
10. What is your assessment of the church’s interpretation of the doctrine of *justification by faith alone* in relation to the following -:
  - a. Teaching of the scriptures
  - b. Official Confessional documents of the church and
  - c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?

Thank you for your time and contributions to the research study.

## Appendix 8

### Samples of some transcribed interviews

#### A. Transcribed interview with a church leader

##### 1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

That one is justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as taught by the church right from baptism class; it is on account of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins not because of any good deed or our personal effort.

##### 2. What is the Church's understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?

The church's understanding is that the death of Christ was a gift from God for the salvation of humankind not our good works.

##### 3. Are there provisions in the church's documents to back this understanding?

There are no provisions in the Church's documents locally except the universal documents such as Martin Luther's Catechisms and Book of concord.

##### 4. What does the Church use to communicate this understanding to its members?

Sunday school, Baptism classes, Seminary, TEE, teaching and preaching are the means used to explain the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone.

##### 5. What resources are there to help church members understand this doctrine?

The church uses Lutheran documents such as those mentioned earlier, journals, articles, and official proceedings from Lutheran consultations to help members understand this doctrine.

##### 6. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to justification by faith alone?

First I would like to say that there are no documentation when it comes to the issue of culture as it is with the gospel. Having said that, my culture understands this doctrine from the point of view of the relationship between parents and their children; just as children are dependent on their parents and trust their parents so the doctrine of justification teaches us to depend on and trust in what God has done for us in Christ.

##### 7. What is the church's policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?

The policy of the LCCN is to train lay people theologically before they become clergy though not all get ordained after the training. We want our clergy to be more up to date academically. The church supports the education of its members right from Sunday school to seminaries, and the universities.

**8. How has the doctrine impacted the life of members in their day to day experiences?**

Our members are mature and are not easily intimidated or persuaded by new teachings, even if they leave the LCCN for other churches, they normally come back.

**9. How has the doctrine impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?**

Spiritually, they are more committed to the church and the Christian faith.

**10. What is your assessment of the church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in relation to the following -:**

**a. Teaching of the scriptures**

**b. Official Confessional documents of the church and**

**c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?**

It is scripturally based because it points to the Christ of scripture as the source of justification. Those who think there is conflict between Paul and James misunderstand the contexts of these evangelists.

**11. Any advice or suggestion to the church on the way forward?**

I would like to see this doctrine exhibited in the lives of our clergy, because some of our clergy do not seem to fully understand this doctrine. Pastors should revisit their call and ordination vow and the questions they have answered during their ordination. They should know that they have a double call – first to be Christians, and then pastors.

**B. Transcribed interview with a seminary lecturer**

**1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.**

Human beings are justified by faith through grace alone not by personal merit but by grace through faith in Christ alone. Luther's 16<sup>th</sup> century position is the foundation of this doctrine that stands in opposition to the Roman Catholic position of works and faith.

**2. What is the Church's understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

Historically we lay allegiance to the Lutheran church. Yes it is different because through the church's practice you discover that it disciplines, excludes people from certain practices which suggest that we are justified by faith and works almost on the same level with

scripture. In principle yes but in practice no; because there is hardly any correct affirmation of grace as against works in the church. The Lutheran church of Christ in Nigeria is highly ignorant of its historic origin and context.

**3. Are there provisions in the church's documents to back this understanding?**

I doubt if there are enough documents- we only have rehearsed statements, but none deals with baptism and salvation, there are only two books on sacraments but not contextual in approach.

**4. Do you have provision for contextual theological education in the Seminary Curriculum?**

Not properly in place, there is shallow contextual reflection in terms of our Lutheran identity.

**5. Do you treat the doctrine of Justification by faith alone as a course or as a topic?**

Not as a course but as a topic, but as a Lutheran institution it needs to be treated as a course so that students can have a full grasp of the doctrine.

**6. How do you approach the doctrine of Justification by faith alone in your lectures?**

Superstition was Luther's context which is similar to ours in Africa, so there is need to apply Luther in our contemporary African context.

**7. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to justification by faith alone?**

In Lunguda culture there are a lot of similarities, for instance, forgiveness is followed by sacrifice where blood is shed. Confession and sacrifice tends to metamorphose into the concept of forgiveness. The cultural elements have influenced our understanding of righteousness or justification which in turn makes us tend to lay emphasis on works done and don'ts.

**8. What is the church's policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?**

I am not aware of the church's policy on training of both clergy and laity – no articulated policy except for one to become a clergy training is required but not that after serving for certain number of years you go for further studies.

**9. How has the doctrine impacted the life of students in their day to day experiences?**

Yet to find any authentic Lutheran church in Africa but we have contextual Lutheran church in the sense that we believe we are Lutherans by affiliation to the founding missionaries. But in terms of theology we are closer to the evangelicals and the Reformed not because we have a different understanding of the concept of grace.

**10. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?**

It is difficult to out rightly say yes or no because of the complexities involved. But one can say that a lot need to be done for any meaningful impact to be noticed in the lives of members.

**11. What is your assessment of the church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in relation to the following -:**

**a. Teaching of the scriptures**

**b. Official Confessional documents of the church and**

**c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?**

When it is not taken in its context you get lost. For instance it places emphasis on repentance but the 16<sup>th</sup> century Germany was Christian. There is no proper understanding – there are no literatures except Luther's Small Catechism. There are no official confessional documents; the church is very ignorant of the official Lutheran confessional documents. The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria is highly ignorant of its historic origin and context.

**12. What are the challenges you encounter in your task as theological educators?**

In order to contextualize you have to understand the problem and then try to apply that in a given context. Luther was Christocentric but we are faced with the challenges of multi religious realities- pluralism. We are educated via Western tradition and want to impose that on our context which is not healthy. There is need to consciously try to educate people and to embark on contextualization. We say we are Lutherans but we do not have our own articulated official statement and books. We cannot say we are Lutherans without documents that are contextual in nature in relation to scripture and Lutheran confessional documents to back our claim of identity. There should be room for plurality of approaches to issues whether theological or pastoral.

**C. Transcribed interview with a pastor (clergy)**

**1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.**

It is easy to mention it but not easy to explain. It is a process or an act that reconciles one to God based on what Christ has done through faith in what Christ has done, even faith is a gift from God.

**2. What is the Church's understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

Without the work of Christ no one can be saved. Works, morality aside but faith alone, we appropriate it by responding in faith.

### **3. Are there provisions in the church's documents to back this understanding?**

There are no documents locally only the general like the Book of Concord, the challenge is how to develop this for local use.

### **4. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to justification by faith alone?**

Gospel is a product of a culture so also this doctrine. In Lunguda culture there is provision for redemption or propitiation. If we see justification as something done for us- the Lunguda will understand it if explained properly the idea of paying for someone's sin or offense. The Lunguda culture is a fertile ground for the gospel.

### **5. What is the church's policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?**

Train human resources in seminary, Bible schools and for the laity through TEE which does not cover the doctrine of justification by faith alone. There is need of creating a programme that will train the laity. The level of training at BLS is low in terms of Lutheran beliefs. Locally trained clergy are not adequately informed hence it results in a very limited output. If the clergy do not have a good understanding the teaching will always be a brush over with little or no impact. TEE is in a coma now it needs to be resuscitated.

### **6. What are the means put in place by the Church to provide theological education to the congregants?**

Teaching depending on the initiative of the pastor who is also challenged due to the number of congregations under a single pastor. The level of education of the church chairmen is low so it is difficult to train them to teach members, they end up saying few words like saved by grace that is all.

### **7. As a pastor, how often do you educate your members on this doctrine?**

It forms almost part of every teaching and preaching I give in the church and in conferences, though this too is not satisfactory. It needs to be given more time and more deliberate effort from all concerned is required.

### **8. How has the doctrine impacted the life of members in their day to day experiences?**

It is both positive and negative. It elicits a life of forgiveness in those who understand it properly. On the other hand, it is abused rather than being appreciated because of lack of proper understanding as it is used as an excuse for freedom to do what they like.

### **9. How much of the people's local language (vernacular) do you use in your Bible study and teaching?**

My church is complex because of the composition of its membership. Also my training has all along been in English so it is difficult to translate some concepts into the vernacular and

teach them properly. So my efforts are hampered with, I am faced with two levels of crisis regarding how to handle this subject.

**10. What are the challenges you encounter as you try to communicate this doctrine to your church members?**

Lack of resources and it is difficult to use relevant vocabulary. The educational level of the congregants is very low also the number of congregations assigned to one pastor are many for one person to manage.

**11. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?**

Most members have a good impression of this doctrine, what is left is how to educate them so they can have a proper informed understanding, because this doctrine has become a pillar and fortress of the church.

**12. What is your assessment of the church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in relation to the following -:**

**a. Teaching of the scriptures**

**b. Official Confessional documents of the church and**

**c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?**

It is scripturally based (Rom.1: 17) and tries to separate legalism from faith dependability on what Christ has done to save humanity, hence an appreciative response will lead to a good or sanctified life. Though a central doctrine it has suffered gross neglect. The church should reconsider how to bring this doctrine to limelight among members; that will lead to good living in line with the scriptures.

**D. Transcribed interview with a lay member**

**1. Are you aware of a doctrine call Justification by faith alone?**

Yes I am aware of this doctrine of justification by faith

**2. Briefly state what you understand to be the meaning of justification by faith alone.**

Through faith one is saved, but I would like to add that one must add works to faith in order to be justified (*Ta wurin bangaskiya mukan sami ceto, amma in mai kara da cewa sai tare da ayyuka Mutum zai Barata*).

**3. What is the difference between Justification by faith and justification by works?**

Faith and works work together to grant one justification and salvation, faith alone cannot justify.

**4. How do you relate this understanding with the concept of salvation and sanctification?**

Faith is completed in a sanctified life.

**5. What is the role of Christ in the doctrine of Justification by faith alone?**

Christ is the centre of justification.

**6. What is the Church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

Teaches that all who believe in Jesus Christ all be justified and saved.

**7. What are the means put in place by the church to provide theological education to Church members?**

The church uses the following means to provide theological education to members Sunday school, Bible schools, and Seminary.

**8. How do you relate the doctrine of Justification by faith alone to your cultural world view?**

Culture is works centred emphasizing human merit and cannot save while gospel is faith in Christ centred and saves.

**9. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted your life in the society?**

It has helped changed my life and I thank God for the coming of Christ.

**10. How has the understanding of this doctrine shaped your Christian spirituality?**

It has changed my life and I am now committed to God and depend on God's grace for guidance. As a congregation we plan and assist members understand the basic Christian doctrines including justification by faith alone on Wednesdays and Fridays. We also do organise some seminars once in a while. I am appealing to pastors to put in more effort in teaching members because there is great lack of understanding of this doctrine among members.

**E. Transcribed interview with a seminary student**

**1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.**

I am justified before God by faith alone not by my own works.

**2. What is the Church's understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

According to the understanding of LCCN justification is a way by which God justifies a sinner not by works or keeping of the law.

**3. Are there provisions in the church's documents to back this understanding?**

Catechism and scripture

**4. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to justification by faith alone?**

There was no response from the participant to this question

**5. What is the church's policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?**

Said I do not know the church's policy on theological education for the clergy and laity

**6. What are the means put in place by the Church to provide theological education to the congregants?**

Seminars, preaching and training by the clergy (Catechism class)

**7. How has the doctrine impacted your day to day life experiences?**

It has helped humble me as I realise I cannot save myself except through God's grace. It also reminds me of the need to always confess my sins.

**8. What are the challenges you encounter in connection to the doctrine of justification by faith?**

How to appropriate this doctrine in real critical life situations especially coming from a context that lays much emphasis on reward for hard work. Another challenge is how to embrace both grace and law without neglecting any yet depending on God's grace that justifies as the only means of salvation not my own effort.

**9. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?**

It has helped me become a committed Christian.

**10. What is your assessment of the church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in relation to the following -:**

**a. Teaching of the scriptures**

**b. Official Confessional documents of the church and**

**c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?**

The church is trying and is scripturally based not only as a matter of church tradition. The confessional documents misunderstood for confession of sins as found in the liturgy of the church. It promotes spirituality as people become humble- teaches humility.

## **F. Transcribed Focus Group discussions with TCNN Bukuru and BLS Mbamba Seminary Students**

### **1. Briefly state your understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone.**

BLS FG: We are sinners who cannot save ourselves by our own efforts except through believing in Jesus Christ by faith alone. Nothing will qualify one to be accepted by God but faith alone. Jesus justified us and restored us back to our fellowship with God. As human beings we are sinful hence we confess if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. TCNN FG: We contribute nothing towards our justification, but God justifies us freely by grace through faith alone.

### **2. What is the Church's understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

BLS FG: By grace through faith not by observance of the law or good works. TCNN FG: We cannot work out our salvation and justification. It is God's activity accepted by faith in the work of Christ on the cross alone apart from works. Even faith is created by God in us, we are justified by faith alone apart from works.

### **3. Are there provisions in the church's documents to back this understanding?**

BLS FG: Liturgy which gives a picture of the doctrine of justification, Constitution, Catechism and other writings of Luther. TCNN FG: Yes, such as the Book of Concord, the Catechisms of Luther, the Augsburg Confessions, TEE teaching materials and the Constitution of the LCCN. But in the Southern part of Nigeria, the LCN has local documents and members are more informed than in the LCCN.

### **4. In your view what is the relationship between gospel and culture with regards to justification by faith alone?**

TCNN FG: Cultural world view emphasizes the idea of works that is why we offer sacrifices but the gospel is good news of what Christ has done – he has offered the sacrifice that brought our justification. Culture stresses on doing which influences our Christianity.

### **5. What is the church's policy on the theological education of clergy and laity?**

TCNN FG: the church is trying in training clergy by encouraging them to go to Bible schools and seminary. Lay people are also encouraged to undertake theological education not for ordination alone but could serve as teachers.

**6. What are the means put in place by the Church to provide theological education to the congregants?**

TCNN FG: Baptism class, teaching, preaching, Bible schools, Seminary, conferences, Bible studies. The Lutheran church of Nigeria has Documents on justification by faith as a devotional for the year prepared by the out gone president of the LCN is used as one of the means.

**7. How has the doctrine impacted your day to day life experiences?**

TCNN FG: More confident in God and not living in fear again but faith and trust in God. I am hopeful and relate well with others as God's creatures that deserve to be loved. I no longer operate on eye service looking for praise from people.

**8. What are the challenges you encounter in connection to the doctrine of justification by faith?**

How to appropriate this doctrine in real critical life situations especially coming from a context that lays much emphasis on reward for hard work. Another challenge is how to embrace both grace and law without neglecting any yet depending on God's grace that justifies as the only means of salvation not my own effort.

**9. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted on the (Christian) spirituality of members?**

TCNN FG: the doctrine of justification by faith alone has helped prepare me for the challenges of the world. It has opened my eyes to see the folly of relying on my efforts. Draws me to the need of daily praying to know more of what God requires of me.

**10. What is your assessment of the church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in relation to the following -:**

**a. Teaching of the scriptures**

**b. Official Confessional documents of the church and**

**c. How it encourages the development of Christian spirituality?**

TCNN FG: The interpretation of the LCCN is scripturally based; faithful to Lutheran confessional documents and promotes Christian spirituality. Another participant said, but I am not sure whether it enhances Christian spirituality because there is lack of proper understanding of the doctrine.

**Suggestions:** TCNN FG: The church should revisit its teaching role and teach or organize teachings on essential topics. Baptism classes are not properly handled, this should be revisited and mere memorization should be reduced. There is need for pamphlets on this topic. Let there be evaluation of what is taught to members so that they are guided properly. This topic should be given genuine concern and interest by the church so that it features during seminars and conferences.

## **G. Transcribed Focus Group discussions with Boys/Girls Brigade Yola Town**

### **1. Are you aware of a doctrine call Justification by faith alone?**

Yes we are aware of the doctrine of justification by faith alone

### **2. Briefly state what you understand to be the meaning of justification by faith alone.**

It means to trust and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour sent by God not by your works. Our works cannot save us except faith in Christ alone. Faith comes from God through preaching and reading the Bible.

### **3. What is the difference between Justification by faith and justification by works?**

By faith means by your spirit faith alone cannot justify. By works on the other hand means your physical activity which helps you make heaven. You need to add works for you to be justified. Faith alone can never justify. Faith cannot stand alone, faith is the foundation works is the building. We are justified by what we believe. We are justified by faith but for it to be complete works are important. Other voices that emerged from the discussion are: faith alone justifies, works cannot justify and you need faith and works to be justified.

### **4. How do you relate this understanding with the concept of salvation and sanctification?**

Obedience leads to salvation and holy living or sanctified life.

### **5. What is the role of Christ in the doctrine of Justification by faith alone?**

Christ is the source of our justification because he died to save or justify us.

### **6. What is the Church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

That we are saved by believing in God's grace offered in Christ accepted by faith as Martin Luther boldly stated against the Roman Catholic position of faith and works.

### **7. What are the means put in place by the church to provide theological education to Church members?**

The LCCN provide theological education to its members through revivals and seminars.

**8. How do you relate the doctrine of Justification by faith alone to your cultural world view?**

Culture is work centred the issue of sacrifice for appeasement.

**9. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted your life in the society?**

It has opened my mind to trust and depend on God in every situation I find myself.

**10. How has the understanding of this doctrine shaped your Christian spirituality?**

It helps me to desire to be in the house of the Lord always. I am committed to the church; gives me hope that I will make heaven with this faith. We would also like to suggest that pastors should teach this doctrine after every three Sundays and during Wednesdays' midweek prayers. We have been hearing about this doctrine, but we are ignorant about the meaning of this doctrine.

**H. Transcribed FocusGroup discussions with Women Fellowship**

**1. Are you aware of a doctrine call Justification by faith alone?**

Yes we are aware of the doctrine of justification by faith alone

**2. Briefly state what you understand to be the meaning of justification by faith alone.**

It means we are justified by faith and works not faith alone.

**3. What is the difference between Justification by faith and justification by works?**

The two work hand in hand, faith without works is dead, you cannot separate the two, when you do faith becomes barren. Justification is 50% faith and 50% works.

**4. How do you relate this understanding with the concept of salvation and sanctification?**

If you believe in Christ you must live a sanctified life through works and faith.

**5. What is the role of Christ in the doctrine of Justification by faith alone?**

Jesus is our means of justification he worked our justification.

**6. What is the Church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

The church's interpretation of justification by faith is that we cannot be justified by faith alone but by faith and works.

**7. What are the means put in place by the church to provide theological education to Church members?**

The following are the means the church uses to provide theological education to its members: Baptism classes, Bible schools, Brønnum Lutheran Seminary Mbamba, TCNN Bukuru, TEE, Bible studies, seminars, and teaching.

**8. How do you relate the doctrine of Justification by faith alone to your cultural world view?**

There is no concept of eternal salvation in Kilba culture it is works centred, but for Margi and Bachama there is direct link with the concept of justification by faith through the intermediaries. There is no direct link with the concept of justification by faith alone in culture.

**9. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted your life in the society?**

It helps create healthy relationship with my neighbours and makes me forgive when offended. Creates trust and hope and always removes doubts. Sometimes we are tempted to revenge when offended by others, our faith is put to test occasionally, we are looked down upon, but patience is what we need in order to keep this faith alive which is not easy but God is helping us.

**10. How has the understanding of this doctrine shaped your Christian spirituality?**

Whenever I am facing difficulties I look up to God for help. When I am troubled and come to the church, I get peace when the word is read or preached. I emulate the example of Abraham in trusting God.

As women we would like to call upon our pastors to endeavour to educate members through seminars; they should also live by example in conduct. They need to endure and be patient and be prayerful as well. They should have listening ears and discerning hearts. There should be periodic interaction between pastors and their members. Organize seminars on different topics such as marriage seminars and also embark on visitations to members' houses. There is need for Bishops to educate pastors on this doctrine and instruct them to do same to their members.

**I. Transcribed Focus Group discussions with Men Fellowship**

**1. Are you aware of a doctrine call Justification by faith alone?**

They responded that they are aware of the doctrine call justification by faith alone

**2. Briefly state what you understand to be the meaning of justification by faith alone.**

It means one cannot be saved by works except through believing in God alone not by works. It means doing God's work. Faith through works will make one justified.

**3. What is the difference between Justification by faith and justification by works?**

No salvation through works, salvation is a gift from God not on the basis of one's merit, only faith justifies. The two are different, salvation by works is merit centred, while by faith is grace centred based because it is a gift from God. I believe one cannot be saved by works without faith; only faith justifies.

**4. How do you relate this understanding with the concept of salvation and sanctification?**

Good living builds up faith. If people say they are saved then they must live holy lives.

**5. What is the role of Christ in the doctrine of Justification by faith alone?**

Jesus is our means of justification he worked our justification.

**6. What is the Church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

That there is no other way by which we can be saved except through faith in what Christ has done for us. That our works cannot justify us, we are justified by faith alone. Justification is a gift from God to all who believe.

**7. What are the means put in place by the church to provide theological education to Church members?**

The following are the means which the church uses to provide theological education to its members: Baptism classes, Bible schools, Seminary, TCNN, TEE, Bible studies, seminars, and teaching.

**8. How do you relate the doctrine of Justification by faith alone to your cultural world view?**

Gospel is faith centred culture is works centred and there is no eternal salvation in culture.

**9. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted your life in the society?**

It creates in me the spirit of compassion, love and healthy living with my neighbours; to be of help to those in need with a caring attitude.

**10. How has the understanding of this doctrine shaped your Christian spirituality?**

Makes me more loving, creates in me the spirit of compassion, caring attitude the sense of being of help to those in need, the desire for fellowship and gives me a sense of belonging. We would also like to suggest that our leaders and pastors should encourage and teach all groups the importance of unity.

**J. Transcribed Focus Group discussions with Lutheran Youth Fellowship (LYF)**

**1. Are you aware of a doctrine call Justification by faith alone?**

Yes we are aware of the doctrine of justification by faith alone

**2. Briefly state what you understand to be the meaning of justification by faith alone.**

It means one is justified by faith in Jesus Christ as recorded in Romans 1: 17. It means deliverance from sin and salvation.

**3. What is the difference between Justification by faith and justification by works?**

Faith trusts in another person's merit as able to grant salvation. Works cannot save because the scripture says we have been saved by grace through faith.

**4. How do you relate this understanding with the concept of salvation and sanctification?**

Salvation is through faith in Christ works cannot save a person.

**5. What is the role of Christ in the doctrine of Justification by faith alone?**

Christ is the source of our justification because he died to save or justify us.

**6. What is the Church's interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone?**

The church teaches that there is no other way where we can be saved except through faith in what Christ had done for us. That our works cannot justify us we are justified by faith alone.

**7. What are the means put in place by the church to provide theological education to Church members?**

The church uses the following means to provide theological education to members: Baptism classes, Bible schools, Seminary, TCNN, TEE, Bible studies, seminars, and teaching.

**8. How do you relate the doctrine of Justification by faith alone to your cultural world view?**

There is no salvation in Lunguda culture, only when we become Christians by faith that we can be saved. The Gospel is faith centred while culture is works centred and there is no eternal salvation in culture.

**9. How has the doctrine of Justification by faith alone impacted your life in the society?**

Helps me to be loving and caring to others and how to live with others peacefully; It gives me peace and helps me relate well with others. It gives me confidence; make me patient and forgiving just as Christ forgave me.

**10. How has the understanding of this doctrine shaped your Christian spirituality?**

Dependence on God; have confidence in God, zeal to pray to God , trust more in God, makes me humble and accommodating of others just as Christ accepts me; helps me reverence God in my life.

We would like to suggest that Pastors should endeavour to teach this doctrine in conventions and other church gatherings. They should also work toward publishing books for students in public schools to read and understand this and other doctrines. The church constitution should be reproduced and made accessible for all to study.

## Appendix 9

### Tables showing distribution of the participants

**Table 1: Church Leaders**

| Position                 | Academic qualification | Year of ordination | Gender | Age    |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| Archbishop emeritus      | MA                     | 1972               | Male   | 76- 79 |
| Archbishop               | MA                     | 1985               | Male   | 59- 61 |
| Former bishop            | MA                     | 1977               | Male   | 68- 71 |
| Bishop                   | MA                     | 1983               | Male   | 60- 62 |
| Administrative secretary | MTh                    | 1994               | Male   | 44- 46 |

|                         |           |      |      |        |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|------|--------|
| Secretary to Archbishop | MTh       | 1995 | Male | 43- 45 |
| Education Secretary     | <i>BD</i> | 1989 | Male | 66- 67 |
| Director of TEE         | BD        | 2000 | Male | 54- 56 |

**Table 2: Seminary lecturers**

| Position               | Academic qualification | Year of ordination | Gender | Age    |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| Provost                | MA                     | 1972               | male   | 63- 66 |
| Lecturer               | PhD                    | 1994               | Male   | 51- 53 |
| Lecturer               | MTh                    | 1994               | Male   | 46- 48 |
| Lecturer               | MTh                    | 1998               | Male   | 56- 58 |
| Lecturer               | MTh                    | Not yet            | Male   | 40- 43 |
| Principal Women School | Dip. Th                | 1998               | Female | 38- 42 |

**Table 3: Clergy**

| Position | Academic qualification   | Year of ordination | Gender | Age    |
|----------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| Clergy   | Vernacular (Certificate) | 1975               | Male   | 77- 79 |
| Clergy   | Vernacular (Certificate) | 1994               | Male   | 77- 79 |
| Clergy   | MTh                      | 1996               | Female | 53- 56 |
| Clergy   | BD                       | 1996               | Male   | 45- 47 |

|        |         |      |        |        |
|--------|---------|------|--------|--------|
| Clergy | BTh     | 1998 | Female | 38- 41 |
| Clergy | BTh     | 1998 | Female | 36- 38 |
| Clergy | BTh     | 1998 | Female | 41- 44 |
| Clergy | BD      | 2001 | Male   | 43- 46 |
| Clergy | Dip. Th | 2001 | Male   | 36- 37 |
| Clergy | MTh     | 2003 | Male   | 42- 46 |
| Clergy | Dip. Th | 2005 | Male   | 40- 42 |
| Clergy | BA      | 2006 | Male   | 35- 38 |

**Table 4: Laity**

| Position | Academic qualification   | Gender | Age    |
|----------|--------------------------|--------|--------|
| Laity    | NCE                      | Female | 53- 56 |
| Laity    | BA                       | Male   | 43- 47 |
| Laity    | Undergraduate student    | Female | 30- 34 |
| Laity    | Diploma                  | Male   | 42- 46 |
| Laity    | SSCE/WAEC                | Male   | 34- 38 |
| Laity    | Vernacular (Certificate) | Male   | 40- 44 |
| Laity    | Vernacular (Certificate) | Male   | 42- 45 |
| Laity    | JSSCE                    | Male   | 50- 53 |

**Table 5: Seminary Students**

| Position | Year of study | Gender | Age    |
|----------|---------------|--------|--------|
| Student  | BTh 4         | Female | 29- 32 |
| Student  | BTh 4         | Female | 33- 35 |
| Student  | BTh 4         | Male   | 44- 46 |
| Student  | BTh 3         | Female | 38- 42 |
| Student  | BTh 3         | Male   | 42- 45 |
| Student  | BTh 3         | Male   | 35- 38 |
| Student  | BTh 2         | Female | 40- 43 |
| Student  | BTh 2         | Male   | 37- 40 |
| Student  | BTh 1         | Female | 30- 32 |
| Student  | BTh 1         | Male   | 33- 35 |

**Table 6: Focus Groups**

| Name of Group | Number of participants | Number of male | Number of female | Age    |
|---------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------|
| Women         | 11 participants        | -              | 11               | 34- 76 |

|                    |                 |    |   |        |
|--------------------|-----------------|----|---|--------|
| Fellowship         |                 |    |   |        |
| Men Fellowship     | 10 participants | 10 | - | 33- 67 |
| Youth Fellowship   | 10 participants | 5  | 5 | 20- 33 |
| Boys/Girls Brigade | 12 participants | 6  | 6 | 20- 46 |
| BLS students       | 11 students     | 5  | 6 | 29- 43 |
| TCNN students      | 14 students     | 8  | 6 | 30- 48 |

**Appendix 10**  
**Ethical clearance letter**



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08 JUNE 2010

**REVEREND JAMES J REYNOLDS (208529058)**  
**SCHOOL OF RELIGION AND THEOLOGY**

Dear Reverend Reynolds

**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0316/010D**  
**PROJECT TITLE: A critical Analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of Justification by faith alone by the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese.**

In response to your application dated 04 May 2010, the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.**

**PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.**

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

cc. Supervisor Prof. Isabel Phiri  
cc. Mrs. Beulah Jacobsen

## Appendix 11

### Ordination questions for LCCN (pastors) ordinands

1. Do you believe it is God who has called you to be a pastor, to glorify Him and to serve his people? *Answer: Yes, I believe.*
2. Do you believe in God almighty our maker, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and do you now reaffirm that our Lord Jesus Christ is your Lord and Saviour? *Answer: Yes, I believe, and do reaffirm.*
3. Do you believe the word of God; that is, the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament as the sole rule in matters of faith and practice? *Answer: Yes, I believe.*
4. Do you pledge with God's power to live your life in the fear of God, and conduct your affairs in truth, and also bring up your children in obedience and fear of God; admonishing them so that you and your family shall be a good example to all God's people in the way you serve them? *Answer: Yes, I do pledge, God is my helper.*
5. Do you pledge with God's power to seek for the lost and bring them to salvation; and also seek to bring back the backslidden to repentance and faith in God? *Answer: Yes, I do pledge, God is my helper.*
6. Do you pledge to read the books of the Old Testament and New Testament to people who assemble to worship God? *Answer: Yes, I pledge to do so.*
7. Will you administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion to deserving members only? *Answer: Yes, I will do so.*
8. Will you be courageous to rebuke sin and evil deeds, and show your disapproval of all wrong teachings, divisions in the church and also expose such acts? *Answer: Yes, I will do so, God is my helper.*
9. Do you pledge to be obedient to all constituted authorities in the church and the Constitution of LCCN? *Answer: Yes, I pledge to do so.*
10. Do you pledge to establish true Christian fellowship among God's people, and to carry out all church activities as expected of you? *Answer: Yes, I do pledge, God is my helper.*
11. Do you pledge to abide by the teaching and practices of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria wherever you may be posted? *Answer: Yes, I do pledge, God is my helper.*
12. Do you accept this Call to become a pastor in LCCN, and also pledged with God's help to show yourself a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ among people? *Answer: Yes, I do pledge, God is my helper.*