

A pastoral response to child sexual abuse in Ghana: An interdisciplinary study informed by a relational view of the Trinity

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ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a sin, and a crime. It has devastating and long-term adverse effects on the child, family, community, and the nation. In Ghana, the Children's Act of Ghana 1998 (Act 560) defines children as all persons below the age of 18. However, the legal age for consent to sexual activity is 16 years. Child abuse is not uncommon in the Ghanaian society. It is reported that approximately 94% of children in Ghana have experienced some form of abuse, which can be physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect. CSA is in need of theological reflection and pastoral responses, based on a theology of relationship informed by a relational view of the Trinity. The study aims to construct a theological pastoral response to CSA in the context of Ghana through the lens of a relational view of the Trinity. This is an interdisciplinary study, broadly situated in the field of public theology. The study adopts the pastoral circle methodology in order to integrate practical theology with the study of the doctrine of the Trinity, with the focus on transforming ministry praxis and Christian spirituality of faith communities to respond to CSA. The findings reveal that faith communities could hold views of children that can be liberating and consistent with a Christian understanding of human beings when those views are conceptualised from the paradigm of the Trinity. In addition, pastoral care informed by a relational view of the Trinity is consistent with the African concept of uBuntu, as well as the current global understanding of pastoral care as care to the whole community by the whole community. That is, pastoral care as resistance; pastoral care as nurturance; pastoral care as empowerment; and pastoral care as liberation are deeply grounded in a relational view of the Trinity. The study concludes that the relational view of the Trinity provides a thicker foundation, which helps shape both a strong pastoral anthropology of children and a strong understanding of the church that emphasize mutuality, equality, and interconnectedness, aimed at flattening the power gradient, thereby using, and shifting power in life giving ways amongst parties that enjoy equal worth.

Keywords: child protection; child sexual abuse; child theology/theologies and theologies of childhood; faith community; pastoral care; relational view of the Trinity.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAPSC	African Association for Pastoral Studies and Counselling
CDWs	Child Development Workers
CFWP	Child and Family Welfare Policy
CPP	Child Protection Policy
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRI	Child Rights International
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
DOVSU	Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit
EDNA	Exploratory, Descriptive, Normative and Action
ESV	English Standard Version
FBO	Faith-Based Organisations
FCPs	Frontline Church Partners
GHS	Ghana Health Service
GLSS	Ghana Living Standard Survey
GMA	Ghana Medical Association
GNA	Ghana News Agency
GNCRC	Ghana NGOs Coalition on the Rights of the Child
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research
JHS	Junior High School
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PSG	Paediatric Society of Ghana
PTDS	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SHS	Senior High School
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNVAC	United Nations Global Study on Violence against Children
WCC	World Council of Churches
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Clarification of Key Concepts

Child protection

In Ghana, the Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana observes that “child protection seeks to guarantee the right of all children to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect” (2014:iv). Further, it states that child protection has several players such as children and youth, families, communities, government, civil society, and private organisations. Consequently, all institutions, including the church, is called upon to institute measures to ensure that children are not harmed (Child and Family Welfare Policy 2014:22). In this study, child protection is construed as measures, policies, structures, and activities undertaken by all stakeholders, aimed at preventing and responding to all forms of abuse and exploitation of children.

Child Sexual Abuse

My understanding will be built on the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) concept of CSA as “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or still that violates the laws or social taboos of society” (WHO 2014). Child sexual abuse (CSA) can be connected with abuse of power since it usually occurs where children are in some form of power relationship with adults, either in the church, home, or school (Reynaert 2015:189; Farley 2006:163-164; Ganzevoort & Veerman 2000:39). From a theological perspective this implies that CSA is based on the reverse of a relational view of the Trinity.

Faith community

A community could be considered as a group of people who share same cultural norms and values and are bound by some form of geographical boundaries. Dinham (2010:530) asserts that a faith community could be considered in terms of “community of location,

community of shared history and values, community of common activities and community of solidarity”. In this study, a faith community is conceptualised as a group of people who share the Christian faith, engage in common activities, and exhibit a sense of interdependence. A faith community is also referred to as a church in this study.

Pastoral care

According to Lartey (2006:14), pastoral theology is the “reflection on the caring activities of God and human communities”. Pastoral care could be conceptualised to include both the proactive and reactive functions of ministry of care undertaken by faith communities. Molla (2018:194) opines that pastoral care, aimed at addressing the holistic needs of children at risk, could be described as pastoral care in the living web. She argues that pastoral care in the living web “examines traditions, cultures, structures, and ideologies that oppress groups on the basis of age, sex, gender, race, and physical ability” (Molla 2018:194). Molla described pastoral care as a ministry of “resistance; nurturance; empowerment; and liberation” (2018:200).

That is, the concept of pastoral care moved from the care of exclusively individuals to communal care. Pastoral as communal care is consistent with a relational view of the Trinity. Pastoral care in this notion aims at flattening the power gradient, as well as critically engaging with language and practices in order to create life-affirming worlds, developing mutuality and reciprocity that promotes worlds of flourishing.

Relational view of the Trinity

Catherine LaCugna opines that “the primacy of communion among equals, not the primacy of one over another” (1991:391) is the relationship observed with the Triune God. She further argued that the reverse of this relational view is the source of dominion and abuse of power in our society. In this study, a relational view of the Trinity is conceptualised as a communion of mutual love, equality, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness observed among God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Tanner 2010:207; LaCugna 1991:391).

Child theology/theologies and theologies of childhood

In theologies of childhood, sophisticated understandings of children and childhood and our obligations to children are investigated. Theologians “can serve the entire church by crafting ‘theologies of childhood’: biblically-informed and sophisticated reflection on children and adults’ obligations to them” (Bunge 2016:97).

“Another child-related, yet new and distinct, area of theological reflection that builds on ‘theologies of childhood’, is what some are calling ‘child theologies. The task of ‘child theology’ is to re-examine or rethink fundamental doctrines and practices of the church in the light of attention to children and in solidarity with them” (Bunge 2016:98). Child theology investigates the whole field of theology and all the practices of the church and the Christian life through children as the hermeneutical lens in order to propose new insights into the fundamental subjects within the Christian faith (Bunge 2016:98). There is also a movement on international level that is furthering the cause of child theology. This movement is also active in Africa and its vision is stated as follows: “The vision of Child Theology Africa is to advance a child-friendly continent by doing theology with, for, about and through African children” (Weber & De Beer 2016:1). In South Africa as well, as Bunge indicates, “there is clear and urgent need for articulating sound and complex understandings of children and our obligations to them” (2016:96).

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Background

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a sin, and a crime. It has a devastating and long-term adverse effect on the child, family, community, and the nation (Rudolfsson 2015:1). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), CSA is “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or still that violates the laws or social taboos of society” (WHO 2014). Although this definition is comprehensive and also takes the social taboos into consideration, others have argued that it does not account for the psychosocial and emotional effect on the victims later in life (East, Central and Southern African Health Community 2011:26). Additionally, the United Nations Global Study on Violence against Children (UNVAC) defines CSA as “any kind of sexual activity to which children are subjected, especially by someone who is responsible for them, or has power or control over them, and who they should be able to trust” (East, Central and Southern African Health Community 2011:26).

The statistics of CSA are alarming and varies across countries (WHO 2014). Globally, WHO estimated that in 2002, 73 million boys and 150 million girls experienced various forms of violence before age 18 (WHO 2014). Additionally, Africa is considered to have the highest prevalence rate of CSA at 34.4% (Behere & Mulmule 2014; Wihbey 2011). In Ghana, there is no clear national data on CSA. However, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service (cited in Mohammed 2014:3), revealed that defilement and rapes cases are rising; defilement cases increased from 755 in 2003 to 1207 in 2009, while rape cases jumped from 150 in 2003 to 422 in 2009. Similarly, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) reports that 53% of sexual abuse cases occurred in the school environment, while 47% happened at home. The Report further states that 67% of the victims of CSA are in Senior High School (SHS), 28% in Junior High School (JHS) and 5% in Primary School (Plan Ghana 2009). In spite of lack of adequate data on prevalence, there is evidence that even a prevalence rate of CSA as low as 1% in a population is a serious concern due to the devastating effect and the complexity of its effect on the victims and their families. It is reported that CSA is a public

health concern, and all stakeholders, including faith communities, are called upon to act (WHO 2014).

It is estimated that 70% of the population of Ghana are Christians (United States Department of State 2015:1). In Ghana, churches are spread all over, and almost every community houses at least one church denomination. This situation makes the church a very powerful agent of transformation; consequently, some government and NGOs partner with the Christian faith communities for developmental agendas. For example, the Department of Social Welfare collaborates with Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) to implement the Child and Family Welfare Policy in some communities (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection 2014:12). This is simply because the policy provides space for the active role of FBOs. In addition, the laws of Ghana require institutions, including the church, to play active roles in the safeguarding of children.

Pastoral theology is concerned with the quality of care created and extended by faith communities in their ministry. According to Lartey, pastoral theology is the “reflection on the caring activities of God and human communities” (2006:14). This implies that pastoral theology should inform a ministry that rallies faith communities to live in ways that are consistent with the caring and protecting nature of God towards the vulnerable. Pastoral ministry belongs to God; consequently, it is primarily about the nature and the works of God (Purves 2004:3). As a result, the pastoral response of faith communities should take their roots in theological resources. Purves (2004:xviii) argues that Christian pastoral theology should be rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity. It is observed that the Trinity is a critical and powerful doctrine that should influence human relationships in faith communities and society at large (Volf 1998:73; Zizioulas 1985 17; Karkkainen 2007:xv). Similarly, Charry (1997:viii) believes that doctrines are truths about God, the world, and humanity; consequently, they should influence our lives, as well as our world. This implies that if we believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, it should have concrete practical implications for how we live our Christian spirituality. As LaCugna remarks, “the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life” (1991:1).

1.1.2 The Trinity as a Model for Human Community

The Trinitarian understanding of God and its connection with the beliefs and the life of the church has sparked lots of attention. Rice (2014:101) observes that understanding the doctrine of the Trinity has implications for the understanding of the Christian faith. Consequently, this has practical implications for the everyday life of the Christian faith community. Rice opines that the way we encounter God in the faith community should reflect our understanding and the application of the Trinitarian God in the life of the church. In recent times, one aspect of the practical life within the faith community that has received some attention is the quality of human relationships and the caring attitude that should exist in faith communities, also extended to the larger society. The concept of the Trinity as a model that should inform the quality of relationship within the Christian faith community and society has been explored by different scholars (Volf 1998; Moltmann 1991; LaCugna 1991; Baukham 1995). This relational view of the Trinity argues that the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit presents a relational view of God that should characterise the life of Christians.

LaCugna (1991:338) also opines that the Trinity presents a relational concept in which there is no subordination between the Father and the Son or the Spirit. It is a kind of relationship of equality, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness (Tanner 2010:207; LaCugna 1991:391). This relationality observed in the Triune God offers no place for dominion and hierarchy. According to LaCugna, “the primacy of communion among equals, not the primacy of one over another, is the hallmark of the reign of the God of Jesus Christ” (1991:391). Furthermore, the argument put forth relates that, the reverse of this relational view is the source of dominion and abuse of power in relation to moral and sexual issues in our society (LaCugna 1991:393). Although LaCugna’s thesis was informed by the social injustice of the period, she believes this relational view of the Trinity is rooted in what is revealed about God in Scripture (1991:397).

The practical implication is that if this relationship exists in faith communities, children will not be seen as less important. As a result, they will receive humane treatment. Similarly, Patricia Wilson-Kastner (cited in LaCugna 1991:270-278) believes that the Trinity presents a divine relationship of mutuality, reciprocity, and freedom as the key

characteristics, and argues that these elements should be the pattern for communion with one another. Tanner, in her social Trinitarianism, suggests a relationship of love and mutuality among God, the Father and God, the Son (2010:207). Tanner emphasises that, in living out this relationship, Christ becomes the model that should be followed (2012:370). LaCugna agrees with this position, stating that “living Trinitarian faith means living as Jesus Christ lived” (1991:60). Thus, the life and teachings of Christ provide the practical framework in which human relationships should be fashioned by the people of God. This concept is significant in understanding the Christian faith; Christ came to show us how the Father looks like, how He wants us to relate to Him, and to our fellow human beings. The Bible attests to this notion and confesses Christ as the exact representation of God (Heb.1:3; Col. 1:19). The relationship observed between God the Father and God the Son, as Tanner notes, is more of a service and devotion to the Father in dutiful worship and obedience to Him as His Father. This idea leads to another important theological concept, that of being the ‘children of God’ (Tanner 2012:370).

We are the children of God (Rom. 8:15-17); thus, God is our parent (Jn. 20:17). This concept can be seen clearer when we reflect on the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son. As a result, Jesus, the Son, demonstrated this love towards his followers (Rice 2014:107). He demonstrated this love by living among them as the great shepherd (Jn. 10:10-11) who watches over the flocks at the peril of his life (Kpalam 2019:14). This implies that Jesus expects the love of the Father, which flowed through him towards his disciples, to flow also through his followers (Jn. 16:27; 14:21). God displays love, care, and protection to His children. His shepherding role brings contentment to the one who is being shepherded (Ps. 23:1). This quality of relationship of love, care, and protection is expected to be reflected in Christian faith communities. It could serve as a framework for the caring activities created and extended. It should also guide how the church relates to children, as well as the quality of care provided to and with children in pastoral ministry.

Although proponents of social Trinitarianism differ in some respects, they all emphasise the significance of a relational view of the Trinity that is worth emulating in the Christian life (Campell 2016:148). Kotzé and Noeth (2019:1) describe this relationship as

“friendship”. Thus, this friendship should serve as the model for the relationship that should exist in faith communities. This calls for respect for the dignity and equality of all human beings. It can therefore be argued that where this relationship exists, it influences the quality of care created and extended by communities to all their members, including children. Consequently, a community of mutual care, love, and protection is promoted.

Research in social sciences is consistent with theological discourse and Scripture that the church is more of a community than just an institution. A community is a network of relationships in which there is mutual love, inclusiveness, and genuine concern for one another. When the church becomes a true community as God intended, she is expected to show concern for, and participate in every aspect of the lives of her members, not just the spiritual (Resane 2019; Oladipo 2000:148; Westerhoff III 1985:78-79).

When God is experienced in communities of faith, caring for one another, the community becomes a ‘family’. Thus, the church can also be considered a family in this relational view of God. The church as a family, is expected to care for and support her members. Couture (2003:28-40) presents a social work family system model, which supports the idea that churches are valuable in child protection.

This model includes churches as one of the important layers in the protective cover for children. It is also observed that child protection traces its earliest commitments to communities of faith, with many Protestant congregations and Catholic religious orders providing the majority of services related to child protection and family support (Garland & Chamiec-Case 2005:22-43). Similarly, the church is also a valuable resource for those recovering from abuse (Carothers, Borkowki, Burke & Whitman 2005: 263-275). Is this still the case today for faith communities in Ghana? This implies that pastoral ministry of faith communities in Ghana should be consistent with a relational view of the Trinity as a model for human relationships within communities.

Allowing this view to reflect in the life of Christian communities means that all members of the faith community are equally important, and they require equal attention with regard to the quality of care created and extended by the faith community. This will influence how

we respond to the menace of sexual abuse of children in Ghana. As a result, the inter-trinitarian relationships, particularly the Father-Son relationship, could also be a useful theological resource for reflecting on how we view children and respond to their needs.

1.1.3 Pastoral Ministry

Pastoral care could be conceptualised to include both the proactive and reactive functions of ministry of care undertaken by faith communities. Molla (2018:194) opines that pastoral care, aimed at addressing the holistic needs of children at risk could be described as pastoral care in the living web. She argues that pastoral care in the living web “examines traditions, cultures, structures, and ideologies that oppress groups on the basis of age, sex, gender, race, and physical ability” (Molla 2018:194). Molla described pastoral care as a ministry of “resistance; nurturance; empowerment; and liberation” (2018:200). That is, the concept of pastoral care moved from the care of exclusively individuals to communal care. Pastoral as communal care is consistent with a relational view of the Trinity. Pastoral care in this notion aims at flattening the power gradient, as well as critically engaging with language and practices in order to create life-affirming worlds, developing mutuality and reciprocity that promotes worlds of flourishing.

In addition, this pastoral ministry entails bringing healing, restoration, relief, and coping with anxieties (Dykstra 2005). It implies responding to victims of CSA through pastoral care and counselling to ensure that wholeness and growth in faith is attained (Rudolfsson 2015:1). CSA is one area that results in deep brokenness and devastating level of stress. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, the Bible attest to this deep level of brokenness.

This calls for pastoral ministry which involves a Christian spirituality and faith praxis that produces a theology of relationships to influence systems, structures, and practices of faith communities to undertake a ministry of caregiving with regard to CSA. Viewing this action from a relational view of the Trinitarian understanding of God could provide a thicker foundation for a ministry of caregiving based on respect for the human dignity of all people, regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, and religion. It is therefore imperative to investigate the pastoral response to CSA by faith communities in Ghana,

informed by a relational view of the Trinity.

1.2 Research Problem

1.2.1 Child Sexual Abuse

CSA is a global public health concern due to the devastating effects. It has a lifelong effect on victims, families, and society at large. It can be described as a sin that affects both spirit and body (1 Cor. 6:18). This position is affirmed in most societies, where CSA is considered a crime. However, it is argued that moral theology has been silent on the subject matter for a long time. Dorr (2000:523-524) observed that this sin was not mentioned in moral programs in schools, seminaries, or theological materials. This implies that little or no discussions and reflections were conducted on the subject, although CSA is a complex situation across the globe. In South Africa, Rakoczy laments:

The magnitude and frequency CSA in Southern Africa will never be known with certainty. Many women and children are afraid to report how they have been treated due to shame or the fear of having to testify in court. Speaking about what has happened to them would bring back all the pain, which they would rather forget (Rakoczy 2000:7).

It is observed that CSA makes girls live in fear and anxiety for a long time. They suffer pain physically, emotionally, and spiritually, especially where help cannot easily be sought (Phiri 2001:85). For example, Van Rensburg (2013:82) cited a story on the News24 website in mid-April 2012, revealing news of a seventeen-year-old girl with mental disability in Johannesburg being gang-raped by a group of young men, including two minors. This implies that these minors were largely influenced by the older men and that shows this horrific level of crime could be perpetuated across generations.

In Ghana, the media is replete with frightening stories about CSA. It is reported that approximately 33% of children experience some form of sexual abuse, such as molestation, touching of private parts, watching pornography, or the use of inappropriate language (Boakye 2009:952-953). Sexual exploitation occurs in different settings such as

homes and schools. Sexual exploitation and sexual violence in or around schools is a serious and pressing problem throughout West Africa. UNICEF (2013) indicated that 27% of girls in Ghana get married before age 18, and that 17% of girls between age 15 and 19 experience sexual violence.

1.2.2 Pastoral and Church Response to Child Abuse

Where child abuse exists, an urgent and appropriate response is required from relevant stakeholders, including Christian faith communities (Kpalam 2019:5). In recent years, there is a growing concern on what role religious institutions can play with regard to childhood and child welfare. Yates (2010:168) contends that religious institutions make a valuable contribution towards the wellbeing of children. This responsibility can be harnessed in a way that makes these institutions strategic partners in government's efforts towards the welfare and safeguarding of children. Where government efforts are combined with other key stakeholders, such as faith communities, the results are enormous. Ghana was among the first few countries that ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Consequently, the country has laws that ensures the safeguarding of children. Recently, the government introduced the Child and Family Welfare Policy. This policy seeks to synergise the efforts of all players to ensure that gaps in child protection and welfare are addressed in the country. In spite of government's effort to partner with Christian faith communities, there is limited research on the response of faith communities to CSA. It is observed that faith communities can respond in several ways in their ministry to the needs and rights of children; not only their own members, but also of other children in the communities they serve (Yates 2010:164).

Eyber, Kachale, Shields and Ager (2018:31) recognise that faith leaders are strategic partners in child protection efforts in the communities in which they serve. They further argue that faith communities can be effective, and in some cases are in the frontline due to their shared beliefs and practices imbedded in their ministry. This is because some of them are already involved in providing programs such as the provision of education and health to communities as part of their ministry to children. The role of faith communities

in ensuring the welfare of children, especially those who are sexually abused, can be expressed in several manners. For instance, faith communities are not homogenous. They vary in size, have different resources and diverse influences in the communities where they serve (Eyber, Kachale, Shields & Ager 2018: 31). Researchers are interested in examining critical ways in which Christian faith communities could take their rightful place in society, as the people whom God commissioned to respond to the whole person.

The literature reveals extensive data on CSA. CSA has been explored from several perspectives such as sociological, economic, and anthropological, and this was done extensively from the Western world (Behere & Mulmule 2014; Wihbey 2011). Although CSA has been investigated in pastoral ministry, this has largely been conducted in the Western context and from Western perspectives (Rudolfsson 2015; Rudolfsson & Tidefors 2014; Rudolfsson & Tidefors 2013; Meninger 2009; Parkinson 1997). In Africa, and Ghana for that matter, investigations so far have focused on socio-cultural, psychological, and political dimensions (Mohamed 2014; Ige & Fawole 2012; Tetteh-Yankey 2009; Ampofo *et al.* 2007; Brown 2003).

The extensive data on CSA from other perspectives as discussed above revealed a theological challenge; that is, the limited space children have occupied in African theological discourse. Mtata (2009:90) expresses deep concern about this phenomenon and calls for child-sensitive African theological reflections. Although African theological reflections focused on men and later factored women at some point, children were largely ignored by the entire theological agenda. He further argues that where children were mentioned, this was partly in relation with childbirth and fertility issues. Bunge (2012:4) also suggests that the field of theology and ethics have not given serious attention to issues of children in Africa. What could have accounted for this great omission? According to Mtata (2009:85), African theology is imbedded in the African culture. As a result, it is influenced by the cultural construction of personhood.

In this way, African theology was initially centred on men, until the emergence of feminist theology. Better still, with the emergence of African feminist theology, children were mentioned with regards to taboos about barrenness (Mbiti 1969:109). Another reason could be due to the marginalization of children in African communities. African theologies

are increasing becoming contextual; that is, theological reflections in the continent are sparked by issues of concern in the African context. Since children are pushed to the margins of society, issues affecting children do not take centre stage. Mtata (2009:97) observes that in some African communities, children are construed as not yet full human beings. Accordingly, this marginalization and dehumanization is also observed in faith communities, for example, in the exclusion of children from the Eucharist and other sacraments. This could have contributed to the limited attention theological reflections have paid to contextual issues such as discrimination, violence, and injustice that have become daily lived experiences of children in some African communities. In recent years, there has been gradual awakening to child theologies on the continent and the need to engage such issues of children theologically (Grobbelaar 2016:11). This development also saw the formation of the African Child Theology Movement, which seeks to promote African child theological reflections by Africans in their own contexts.

In spite of growing interest in theologies speaking to the issues of children, there is limited discourse on the views of children and how the church should respond pastorally. Knoetze (2016: 220) relates that there are still different views emerging on the status and value of children in faith communities in Africa. These different views inform the response of churches to issues affecting children. In Ghana, there is no clear direction with regard to Christian theological views on children or a pastoral theological response to the plight of children as victims of child sexual abuse. However, Knoetze (2016: 238) suggests that we cannot talk about theologies without talking about the Trinitarian God as revealed in Scripture and God's missional living in the world; that is, child sexual abuse is in need of theological reflections informed by the Trinity.

Child abuse as viewed from an African theological perspective may possibly be connected to "the social position children have occupied in the hierarchy of the construction of personhood in African thought" (Mtata 2009:85). Child abuse is connected to the abuse of power (Reynaert 2015:189). In Africa, abuse of power could be linked with the hierarchical construction of personhood and societal structures. Mtata (2009:85) argues that African theological perspectives have followed this hierarchical ordering in ministry as well as theological reflections. He observes that "a faulty anthropology produces a faulty theology, and a faulty theology produces a skewed anthropology" (2009:85). He advances the argument that "marginalisation of children in the African

communitarian ethos is sometimes rationalised by using the language of 'care' and 'protection' while the real value of childhood is not recognised" (2009:97). According to Mtata (2009:99), the hierarchical construction of personhood, which influences theological discourse in African, could contribute to the marginalisation of not only children and women but "all those considered as not being fully human, such as the physically or mentally disabled or those considered different". It is believed that the current debate of CSA could be influenced by the African theological discourse on the construction of personhood. As a result, Mtata concludes that "only once African theology has come to terms with this reality of the hierarchical construction of the African person will it start effectively to address the needs of children and other marginalised persons in the African church" (2009:101).

CSA is a denial of the value and personhood of childhood and children. Therefore, CSA demands/necessitates theological reflection and pastoral responses. There is a need to investigate theological resources that can inform a pastoral response to CSA in the context of Ghana.

1.3 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that a relational view of the Trinity can serve as a theological resource to inform the pastoral response of faith communities to CSA in Ghana.

Child abuse is connected to the abuse of power (Reynaert 2015:189). In Africa, abuse of power could be linked to the hierarchical construction of personhood and societal structures. Mtata (2009:85) argues that African theological perspectives have followed this hierarchical ordering in ministry as well as theological reflections, particularly in relation to children. According to Reynaert "when an adult abuses a child, there is always power through the adult's position and possibilities" (2015:191). The implication is that the abuser has more power over the abused. This abuse of power occurs in relationships, and usually relationships of power. Consequently, CSA is a form of abuse of power in the context of relationships, in which there is a power imbalance. For instance, in Ghana, it is reported that the majority of perpetrators of child abuse are those in positions of power such as parents/guardians, teachers, religious leaders, and community opinion leaders

(Child Research and Resource Centre, 2009). This unequal and imbalance of power contributes to the lived experiences of violence and injustice towards children like CSA. It could be argued that subordination, domination, and abuse of power in the relational space in which CSA occurs is incongruent with the notion of a fellowship of equals that the triune God presents. The relational view of the Trinity is conceptualized as a communion of mutual love, equality, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness observed among God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Tanner 2010:207; LaCugna 1991:391). This quality of relationship could inform the foundations upon which community life could be construed. In the Trinity, there is a relationship of equality, interconnectedness, reciprocity, mutual love, and care. Therefore, CSA could be seen as the denigration of the image of the Trinitarian God in children, which is the same image of God in adults. In other words, CSA points to views of children that are inconsistent with the Christian God - the Trinity. Consequently, the relational paradigm of the Trinity offers a thicker foundation for addressing CSA as it lends itself the potential to inform both a strong pastoral theological anthropology of children and a strong understanding of the church with faith praxis of mutuality and reciprocity, aimed at flattening the power gradient, thereby using, and shifting power in life giving ways amongst parties that enjoy equal worth.

1.4 Research Question

1.4.1 Research Question

How can a relational view of the Trinity inform the pastoral response of faith communities to CSA in the context of Ghana?

1.4.2 Sub-questions

- What is the reality of CSA in Ghana, also in faith communities?
- What is the theological motivation for utilising doctrine in responding to CSA?
- What does a relational view of the Trinity mean and imply for a pastoral response from faith communities?
- What could a pastoral response to CSA based on the relational understanding of the Trinity be?

1.5 Research aims and objectives

1.5.1 Research aim

The main aim of this study is to construct a pastoral response to CSA in Ghana based on a relational view of the Trinity.

1.5.2 Research objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Examine and describe the reality of CSA in Ghana, also in faith communities.
- Reflect on the theological motivation for utilising doctrine in responding to CSA.
- Explore and describe a relational understanding of the Trinity.
- Develop a theological pastoral response based on a relational understanding of the Trinity to CSA as a form of dehumanisation in Ghana.

1.6 Research methodology

This is an interdisciplinary study. It is broadly situated in the field of public theology due to its focus on transforming ministry praxis and Christian spirituality of faith communities to respond to CSA, which is an issue of public concern. John de Gruchy observes that “public theology is a Christian witness” (2007:40). It involves “critical theological reflections” aimed at addressing issues of public importance in a particular context (2007:40). This implies that public theology extends the borders of theological reflections to the day-to-day expressions of Christian beliefs and values in the public space (Juma 2015:3). Public theology challenges faith communities to leave the church walls and be actively visible in the public space (Magezi 2018:6).

As part of an interdisciplinary approach, the study integrates practical theology with the study of the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as with insights from human sciences to construct a pastoral response to CSA. As observed by De Gruchy (2007:40), theological reflections sparked by public issues of importance should be rooted in Christian faith traditions. These traditions include doctrines like the Trinity. Similarly, Koopman grounds his public theology on the assertion that “God so loved the world” or “on the thick

description of the content of the Christian faith traditions” (Smit 2009:526). This confessional belief has three dimensions, namely the inherent public nature of God’s love, the rationality of God’s love for the world, and the meaning and implications of God’s love for every facet of life (Smit 2009:526). In Koopman’s view, this way of describing the Christian faith should be done in a Trinitarian manner.

Another motivation for this approach is based on the argument that doctrines are truths about God that form the basis of the Christian faith. Consequently, what we believe should reflect in our Christian life and spirituality (Charry 1997:viii; LaCugna 1991:1). In addition, doctrines are based on Scripture, tradition, and other theological and non-theological resources, and can therefore be used to address public issues where Scripture offers little guidance (Kotzé 2013:104). This implies that what we believe should inform our mode of being and spirituality in both private and public spaces. Consequently, it should inform our response to a public issue such as CSA. Approaching this study from the point of doctrine will allow for a broad-based theological discourse that gives adequate attention to both the priority of Scripture and retrieval of traditions (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:20).

The study finds affinity with a diaconal approach within the practical theological paradigm. This is because of its focus on faith communities, who are the extension of God’s reign on earth through Christ (De Beer 1998:15). Faith communities are channels of God’s resources to bring hope to communities. They have what it takes to respond holistically to deep brokenness like CSA (1 Cor. 6:18). They function in ways that make them present in the suffering of people (Resane 2019:1; De Beer 1998:15).

Practical theologians in Africa have used approaches of contextual, confessional, and correlational nature (Dreyer 2014:505-514; Pieterse 1998:159). My study fits into the framework of the contextual approach due to the fact that my interest is in ministry praxis within the context of faith communities in Ghana.

The study adopts the pastoral circle approach, as formulated by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot (1984). In this practical theological approach, “pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections are integrated into an on-going process in the life of the church” (1984:7). According to Cochrane, De Gruchy and Petersen (1991:13), insights from this approach have been found of great help with studies in the South African context. They later made some contextual adjustments to the model. This approach emanates from the tradition of contextual theology and liberation theology, with strong emphasis on action and change with the context in mind (De Beer 1998:15).

Holland and Henriot (1984) identified four moments in their process, namely: moments of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning. On the other hand, other approaches in the contextual-hermeneutics tradition to practical theological enquiry that could have been considered include Browning (1991), Osmer (2008), and Woodbridge (2014).

Browning (1991) developed a practice-theory-practice model that draws on the ideas of philosophers like Aristotle’s practical wisdom, Gadamer’s hermeneutical theory, and Habermas’s critical theory (1991:103-126). Browning’s fundamental practical theology has four sub-movements of descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology. This approach produces a useful integrated mode of doing theology (Smith 2013:89).

Osmer (2008) also expanded on earlier models like Browning, Gerkin, and Van der Ven, and proposed four tasks, namely the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic (Osmer 2008:viii). Osmer’s inclusion of models of good practice under the normative phase is a useful bridge between the normative task and the strategic task (Smith 2013:104). Similar to Osmer’s approach is the EDNA model proposed by Woodbridge (2014). This model also presents four phases with the acronym EDNA: Exploratory, Descriptive, Normative and Action (2014:89-121). Woodbridge opined that in order to contain a better understanding of the situation, the interpretive task should precede the descriptive task (2014:92).

In the end, considering these other approaches of theological reflection in practical theology, I am convinced that the pastoral circle by Holland and Henriot (1983), when compared with others, is the most suitable approach for this study (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:195; Ballard and Pritchard 2006:82-83). This is due to its emphasis on the integration of pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections in an on-going process with the aim of transformation in the life of the church in a particular context (Holland & Henriot 1984:7).

1.6.1 Moment of insertion

This is the first phase of this approach. It entails the experiences of individuals and communities in which pastoral responses find their place. The experiences, feelings towards these experiences and the perceptions formed, generate the primary data from the context (Holland & Henriot 1984:8). Cochrane *et al.* (1991:17) refers to this phase as “beginning in the context”. This points to the fact that all theological reflections begin by taking seriously the present day-to-day experiences, either individually or socially, in a particular context (Cahalan & Mikoski 2014:48). In Ghana, faith communities are either called upon to provide support for victims of CSA or are confronted with reports of CSA taking place in their own church’s ministry or in the community at large. My personal experience as a clinical psychologist have seen either families knocking on my door for help for their children who were victims of CSA, or church leaders calling to ask for help to respond appropriately to CSA. This moment of reflection of my own experiences and that of the struggle of faith communities is the point of departure for research focusing on the implications of CSA, and what an appropriate pastoral response in the context of Ghana could be.

1.6.2 Social analysis

This is an attempt to understand the situation. Holland and Henriot believes that this is the moment to analyse causes, factors contributing to the problem, and the consequences the situation brings. This makes it possible to gather the pieces in order to obtain a clearer picture of the situation (1983:14). I concur with Cochrane and colleagues (1991:19) that social analysis should include an analysis of the church’s role in the community, and the factors that influence the role of the church. They further argue that

this 'ecclesial analysis' should be extended beyond ones' own faith tradition. To achieve this, an extensive literature search will be conducted to obtain data from human sciences such as sociology, psychology, politics, and law on the complexities of CSA. This moment will help answer the research question: What are the realities of CSA in Ghana, and also in faith communities?

1.6.3 Moment of theological reflection

This is "an effort to understand more broadly and deeply the analysed experiences in the light of living faith, scripture, church social teachings, and the resources of tradition" (Holland & Henriot 1984:9). It calls for a comprehensive theological reflection, with Scripture as the authoritative source. However, this theological reflection also includes tradition and other resources. Cochrane and colleagues observed that comprehensive and extensive theological discourse should engaged in a critical manner in order to arrive at a sound operative theology (1991:20).

In this study, the theological reflection is rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity. As already stated previously, emphasis is on the practical implications of aa relational view of the Trinity in the life of faith communities. Insights from social Trinitarianism by key theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna, Miroslav Volf, and others are gleaned. These perspectives of the doctrine of the Trinity collates with Scripture, other theological resources, and non-theological sources to construct a pastoral response to CSA that is relevant to the context of faith communities in Ghana. This ensures that a theology is constructed, which is comprehensive enough to respond to CSA. That is, a response emanating from our beliefs, mode of being, and spirituality in the public space like CSA. This moment addresses the question: What does a relational view of the Trinity mean and imply for a pastoral response from faith communities?

1.6.4 Moment of pastoral planning and praxis

This is the final phase in Holland and Henriot's pastoral circle approach. This is the moment where the faith community discerns the will of God and restates it for their current context (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). It is the point at which a decision is made with regard

to what actions are expected by God from His chosen people, who are the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). This also refers to “making witness concrete” (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). At this stage, all the information gathered from the moment of insertion, analysis, and theological discourse is brought to the fore to construct an appropriate pastoral response to CSA. This implies that this response is not based on spontaneous action, but rather a praxis informed by a set of normative considerations (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). It will be a praxis informed by the result of filtering all the information through the theological lens, in this instance especially the doctrine of the Trinity. The question answered in this phase is: ‘What could a pastoral response informed by the Trinity be?’ It is believed that these strategic understandings and actions formulated from a relational view of the Trinity can help faith communities to address CSA holistically in the Ghanaian context.

1.7 The value of the study

Pastoral ministry with regard to CSA has been extensively explored from the West. In Africa, and Ghana in particular, the phenomenon has been investigated from the sociological, psychological, and anthropological point of view. There is a need for theological reflection on CSA that may result in contextual pastoral action within and through Ghanaian faith communities. Consequently, this study will make a unique contribution to the understanding of the complexity and implications of CSA for a pastoral ministry of faith communities in the Ghanaian context through the lens of a relational view of the Trinity.

1.8 Ethical considerations

Although this research does not include empirical data gathering, the researcher follows all the ethical guidelines outlined by the North-West University with regard to obtaining literary data. In addition, the literature is fairly presented, also when dealing with opposing viewpoints. There is minimal risk in this research since it is a literature study.

1.9 Classification of chapters

The study generally follows the phases of the Holland and Henriot's pastoral circle approach to theological interpretation:

Chapter two describes the whole approach to this study as interdisciplinary, integrating practical theology and insights from Christian doctrine to respond to a public issue. This chapter is guided by the question: What is the theological motivation for utilising doctrine of the Trinity in responding to CSA?

Chapter three unpacks the moments of insertion and social-ecclesial analysis. It presents the contextual description and analysis of the complexity of CSA in the context of Ghana. The chapter answers the question: What is the reality of CSA in Ghana, also in faith communities?

Chapter four addresses the moment of theological reflection. It discusses a relational view of the Trinity. It synthesises insights from notable theologians in the field of systematic theology in order to develop an understanding of a relational view of the Trinity. The chapter answers the question: What does a relational view of the Trinity mean and imply for a pastoral response from faith communities?

Chapter five addresses the final moment of pastoral planning and praxis in the pastoral circle. It emphasises discerning the will of God with regard to the Trinity, and what specific pragmatic actions are required by God from His people in the world. That is, the practical guidelines and actions that could be undertaken by faith communities in Ghana to respond holistically to CSA. This chapter answers the question: What could a pastoral response to CSA based on the relational understanding of the Trinity be?

Chapter six presents the summary and conclusions of the whole study. It also highlights the key contributions of the study to current literature on a pastoral response to CSA. In

addition, it undertakes an evaluation of the pastoral circle as an approach to theological reflection and makes recommendations for future research.

The chapter division is therefore as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation to the study.

Chapter 2: Research methodology

Chapter 3: CSA in Ghana

Chapter 4: A relational view of the Trinity

Chapter 5: A contextual pastoral response to CSA

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

1.9.1 Schematic representation

Research question	Objective	Methodology
What is the reality of CSA in Ghana, also in faith communities?	Explore and describe the reality of CSA in Ghana, also in faith communities	Data obtained from the moments of insertion, contextual description, and social-ecclesial analysis is gleaned to form a better picture of CSA and its implications for pastoral ministry in Ghana.
What is the theological motivation for utilising the doctrine of the Trinity in responding to CSA?	Reflect on the theological motivation for utilising the doctrine of the Trinity in responding to CSA.	Insights from the practical implications of Christian doctrine to pastoral and faith praxis to public issues like CSA are gleaned.
What does a relational view of the Trinity mean	Explore and describe aa relational view of the	Exploration and synthesis of perspectives from

and imply for a pastoral	Trinity.	notable theologians in the
response from faith communities?		field of systematic theology to develop an understanding of a relational view of the Trinity.
What could a pastoral response to CSA based on the relational understanding of the Trinity be?	Develop a theological pastoral response to CSA in Ghana based on a relational understanding of the Trinity.	Perspectives gleaned from the moments of insertion and social-ecclesial analysis is corroborated with insights from the relational understanding of the Trinity with the aim of developing a theological pastoral response to CSA in Ghana.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the methodological processes used in this study. In addition, it seeks to answer the question: what is the theological motivation for utilising doctrine of the Trinity? The chapter has two main parts. The first part describes the methodological approach as interdisciplinary. This is because current developments in pastoral care and its implications for research favour the need for interdisciplinarity. In addition, child sexual abuse (CSA) is multi-faceted. The complex nature of CSA implies non-simplistic interpretations and responses. The chapter provides detail description of the pastoral circle as an approach to theological discourse and is considered the most suitable for this study when compared with other approaches in the contextual-hermeneutics paradigms. The second part focuses on the theological motivation for utilising the doctrine of the Trinity to influence a pastoral response to CSA. It provides some key theological justifications that CSA could benefit from a theological reflection and pastoral responses, informed by a relational view on the Trinity. Prior to providing specific reasons for engaging with the doctrine of the Trinity, a brief discussion on the current development in Trinitarian theology was explicated.

CSA is recognised by both international and national communities as a global public health issue, affecting approximately one in eight children worldwide (Mathews & Collin-Vezina 2016:304). The realities of CSA are complex and multi-faceted. As a result, researchers in social sciences have advocated for creative interdisciplinary approaches due to the multi-faceted nature of the problem of CSA (Mathews 2017:90; Mathews & Collin-Vezina 2016:304). Consequently, approaching the current study in an interdisciplinary manner is in accordance with research within the field of CSA. This study is broadly situated in the fields of practical theology and systematic theology due to its focus on transforming ministry praxis and Christian spirituality of faith communities to respond to CSA, which is an issue of public concern.

Practical theology has often been associated with interdisciplinary approaches. Some scholars believe interdisciplinary approaches involves intentional and conscious efforts to integrate theology with non-theological disciplines such as philosophy, history, psychology, and even physical sciences (Kim 2007:419). On the other hand, some also consider interdisciplinarity as integrating insights from other theological disciplines such as systematic, biblical, and historical theologies as well as non-theological sources like the philosophy and physical and human sciences (Smith 2013:57; Graham 2012:4; Osmer 2008). In this study, interdisciplinary approach considers the arena where, perspectives from theological sources within practical and systematic theology and non-theological perspectives such as human sciences are gleaned. This implies that the study is not from one discipline in theology where the possibility of 'silo' theological discourse is high. As Mercer (2016:163) observed "*interdisciplinarity is constitutive of practical theology*". Understanding the interdisciplinary approaches have become an integral part of practical theological discourse. Graham (2012:4) advocates that interdisciplinarity is a unique characteristic of the current sphere of practical theological inquiry. This is because of its attempt to creatively engage in a dialogue with theological, biblical, and social as well as human sciences. Graham further proposes that the contemporary efforts to take the context seriously, coupled with the complexity in the field of practical theology should compel theologians to aimed at interdisciplinary engagement (2012:4).

Interdisciplinarity creates a space for mutual interaction between theology and non-theological sources, with the aim of engaging and influencing each to critical, practical theological reflections (Kim 2007:425; Smith 2013:57). This calls for careful methodological processes that seek a fine combination of theological and non-theological perspectives. It is argued that such combination promotes a 'hermeneutical-praxis' paradigm (Kim 2007:421).

The pastoral circle is one useful approach in the hermeneutic-praxis paradigm. Macallan and Hendriks (2012:194) posit that this approach is interdisciplinary, and a logical way of doing a practical theological study. The pastoral circle lays strong emphasis on the integration of pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections in an on-going

process with the aim of transformation in the life of the church in a particular context (Henriot & Holland 1983:7).

2.2 Current developments in pastoral care and implications for research methodology

Historically, pastoral care denotes the concept of shepherding. It encompasses the responses of a shepherd. God is a shepherd and his chosen people as the sheep (Ezekiel 34). Thus, Jesus is a good shepherd, and the church is his flock (Jn. 10:10-11). Pastoral care was considered the 'cure for souls' according to Clebsch and Jaekle (cited in McClure 2012:270) and later focus largely on situations of human vulnerabilities such as death, grieving, marital issues and racism (McClure 2012:270). As a result, pastoral care was considered to have four main functions namely healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciliation, according to Clebsch and Jaekle 1975 (cited in McClure 2012:270). This notion, although begun with the shepherding concept, has later on shifted to pastoral care to be defined and conceptualised in the terms of psychology, social work, and therapy (Purves 2004 :5). This has resulted in concerns with the fact that the discipline has been detached from theological and liturgic frameworks. As a result, calls were made to consider pastoral care as a concept deeply rooted in the theological understanding of the gospel. In Purves' vision, pastoral theology "is principally concerned with the practice of God" and secondarily as reflection on "the participative practice of the church within that theological perspective through our union with Christ" (2004: xxii). In other words, theology of pastoral care "is principally concerned with theological reflection on actual churchly practice" (2004: xxii).

This shift calls for a pastoral response emanating from the love of God. As observed by McClure (2012:269) "pastoral care indicates various responses of a person or persons motivated by God's love for another or others". This implies that pastoral response to existential issues should flow out of the love of God and can be undertaken by those who love God. Similarly, Koopman believes that pastoral responses should rest on the assertion that "God so loved the world" (Jn.3:16). This confessional belief has three dimensions, namely the inherent public nature of God's love, the rationality of God's love for the world, and the meaning and implications of God's love for every facet of life (Smit

2009:526). This development ushered pastoral care into the arena of public theological discourse. This promoted a shift in pastoral care from attention to exclusively individuals' needs to a response to a whole community. This new dimension of pastoral response challenges the whole faith community to assume the responsibility of corporate caring for all by the whole congregation as compared with the traditional notion of care for an individual by privileged, ordained leaders (McClure 2012: 275). This could be considered as living out ones' belief to the watching world. God, therefore, expects that this relationship of love is expressed in and among believers, and in the communities they serve. These new frontiers of care call for a Christian spirituality that mobilises the faith community to create a space in which wounded and broken people will find a haven. As they receive healing, their lives become another tool for promoting and ministering healing to other suffering members of the faith community and of the larger society (Resane 2019; Gunderson, Magnan & Baciú 2018: 236; Gunderson 1997:8). In the words of McClure, it is the "care for the community and its members by the community and its members" (2012:275). Pastoral response to a community by her members implies that pastoral care has entered the space of contextual theology. McClure observed that pastoral care moved from the traditional model of caring for individual to become "communal-contextual". The concept puts the obligation on faith communities to rally their congregations to find God and one another in a caring community. As was observed by Lartey, pastoral theology is concerned with the caring activities created and extended by faith communities to their members. These caring activities are contextual. Pastoral responses should take her root from the culturally specific context (Lartey 2004: 90). Consequently, the ministry of care could be directed towards societal transformation and helping to alleviate suffering. In the light of this, it is argued that theological reflections on pastoral responses should be placed in particular contexts (Duncap 2009:12). This supports the assertion that all theology is contextual. Working from this paradigm calls for critical analysis of the context through an interdisciplinary approach. Social analysis of the context in which a pastoral response is carried out could be gleaned through sociological, cultural, and psychological lenses.

Additionally, recently development in the field of pastoral care has prompted a practice that is placed in the public space. That is, pastoral theology adorning the cloth of public theology. McClure (2012:276) opined that critical reflections on the policies and

sociocultural factors that influence the suffering, and also liberation has attracted the attention of pastoral theology. Similarly, it is noted that there are implications of public issues for pastoral theology, and that in the same vein, pastoral responses have public implications (Miller-McLemore 2004). This discourse implies that pastoral care is both private and public. Although historically, pastoral care has been predominantly focused on individual needs, recent development calls for attention to issues in the public arena. De Gruchy observes that “public theology is a Christian witness” (2007:40). It involves “critical theological reflections” aimed at addressing issues of public importance in a particular context (2007:40). The implication, therefore, is that public theology extends the borders of theological reflections to the day-to-day expressing of Christian beliefs and values in the public space (Resane 2009:1; Juma 2015:3). Public theology challenges faith communities to leave the church walls and be actively visible in the public space (Magezi 2018:6). This active visibility of the church in society is often considered ‘Christian praxis’ according to Kim (2007:424).

In this light, it is argued that current developments in pastoral theology, resulting in a shift from clinical care of individuals to care for the community by the whole community, have prompted pastoral theologians to undertake an interdisciplinary discourse about Christian praxis (Maynard, Moschella, & Hummel 2010:6). This implies that pastoral care is context-specific and rooted in local theologies. In order to achieve a theological reflection that is contextual and congruent with the daily expression of Christians in a particular context, there is the need to adopt theological processes that integrate insights from both theological resources such as Christian doctrine of the Trinity and non-theological sources such as sociology and psychology. As a result, the study adopted the pastoral circle approach, as formulated by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot (1983).

Osmer (2008) also expanded on earlier models like Browning, Gerkin, and Van der Ven, and proposed four tasks, namely the descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic (Osmer 2008: viii). The descriptive-empirical task answers the question: what is going on? It provides a thick description of the situation or the context that call for interpretation. Osmer believes that qualitative research is better placed to provide adequate description of the context (Smith 2013:99). The interpretative task answers the

question: why is it going on? This task draws on theories to explain the reasons behind the observed situation. The normative task (what ought to be going on?) undertakes theological and ethical reflections to discern the will of God for the present situation. Finally, the strategic task (how might we respond?) describes how the church should respond to the current situation in order to remain faithful to the will of God. Smith (2013:104) observed that Osmer's inclusion of models of good practice under the normative phase is a useful bridge between the normative task and the strategic task.

Similar to Osmer's approach is the EDNA proposed by Woodbridge (2014). This model also presents four phases with the acronym EDNA: Exploratory, Descriptive, Normative and Action (2014:89-121). Woodbridge opined that in order to obtain a better understanding of the situation, the interpretive task should precede the descriptive task (2014:92).

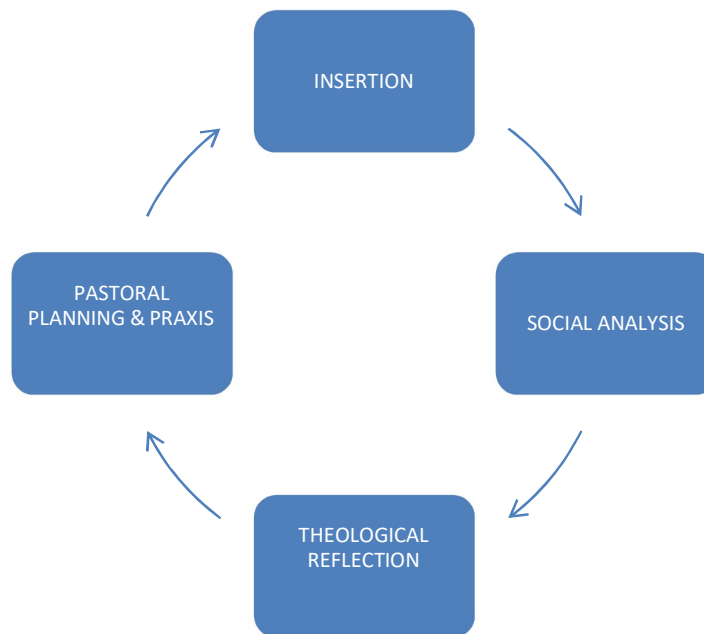
Ballard and Pritchard (2006:82-83) suggest that a pastoral circle methodology should take the centre stage of any contemporary reflection on practical theological perspectives. This is due to its emphasis on the integration of pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections in an on-going process with the aim of transformation in the life of the church in a particular context (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:195; Ballard & Pritchard 2006:82; Holland & Henriot 1983:7).

2.3 A pastoral circle approach to theological interpretation

This method of doing practical theology was developed by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot (1983). This approach presents a broader vision of pastoral theology and faith praxis. In this approach to practical theology, "pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections are integrated into an on-going process in the life of the church" (1983:7). This approach emanates from the tradition of contextual theology and liberation theology, with strong emphasis on action and change with the context in mind (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:196; Ballard & Pritchard 2006:82; De Beer 1998:15). Holland and Henriot (1983) identified four moments in their process, namely: moments of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning. The pastoral circle has been a common

choice of theologians and practitioners who follow doing theology with the emphasis on the context (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:195; Ballard & Pritchard 2006:82-83; De Beer 1998:70).

The diagram below is the summary of the four phases in the pastoral circle:



It is observed that practical theological discourse in the context of South Africa, especially, in the space of pastoral theology and faith praxis, with the aim of transformation of society have found great insight and help from this approach (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:13). However, further development in research in South Africa resulted in the adjustment to this model due to realisation that it has not been entirely contextual for South Africa (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:13). Cochrane and colleagues offered some proposals to bring some additions to the model. In the first place, they argued that although the proposed additions are implied in some of the phases, others are entirely new. As a result, they believed that their additions should be treated as separate elements in the pastoral cycle.

“The additional elements which we have added to this process are:

- i) Faith-commitment, i.e., the pre-understanding and the perspectives which is brought to the task and which proceeds the moment of insertion.
- ii) Ecclesial analysis, i.e., a form of social analysis which locates the church and its ministry within their social context as part of the over-all social dynamics of that context.
- iii) Retrieval of tradition which forms part of theological reflections but in a particular way.
- iv) Spiritual formation and empowerment, a vital moment which locate theological reflection to pastoral planning and praxis. Also, of vital importance is the setting of the pastoral hermeneutical circle within (v) an eschatological framework, a framework determined by the Biblical concept of the Kingdom of God. This provides the process with direction just as the confession of Christ provides it with the point of departure” (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:14-15).

In the first place, faith commitment is expected to precede the moment of insertion, which is the first phase in a pastoral circle methodology. They remarked that “*no one does theology from a position of neutrality*” (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:14-15). Theological discourses are often engaged in with certain pre-existing commitments, understandings and agenda, and these things can influence the whole theological process.

Secondly, the moment of social analysis is divided into two, that is, social and ecclesial analysis. Social analysis takes cognisance of the need to examines the social context, paying special attention to factors that contributed to the problem, and also the relationships that exist among those factors. On the other hand, ecclesial analysis involves a “*form of social analysis which locates the church and its ministry within their social context as part of the over-all social dynamics of that context*” (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:14).

Thirdly, spiritual formation and empowerment is included in the phase of theological reflection, including the retrieval of tradition. This is to serve as a bridge, connecting the theological reflection to pastoral planning and praxis. In this case, it is aimed at helping the faith community to get a grasp of the spirituality of the Kingdom of God. That is,

adopting the resources that enable the Christian spirituality and faith praxis to be rooted in seeing with the eyes of God and living to the standard God expects from his chosen people (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:14, 23). In this vision, both Christian spirituality and faith praxis should prompt a pastoral response to address CSA, and other dehumanisation of children in our society.

Find below the full pastoral circle process, based on the proposal by Cochrane, De Gruchy and Petersen (1991):

1. Prior commitment: A direction, towards the 'Kingdom' of God
2. The moment of insertion
3. Social analysis
4. Ecclesial analysis
5. Theological reflection: retrieval of the tradition
6. Spiritual formation/empowerment
7. Pastoral planning and praxis

In this study, I will follow the four phases proposed by Holland and Henriot (1983). The additional elements introduced by Cochrane and colleagues will not be considered as separate elements as they suggested. However, careful steps will be taken to integrate their insights into the four phases. The faith-commitment is integrated into the moment of insertion. This means that my point of departure as I immersed myself into the situation is the pre-understanding (my faith understanding) I bring to bear with regard to my vision of the Kingdom of God. Ecclesial analysis will be included in the social analysis in phase two. This implies that, in phase two, socio-ecclesial analysis is conducted. In addition, socio-cultural, legal, and psychological aspects have been explored to grasp a thicker description. Finally, the spiritual formation and empowerment have been incorporated into the theological reflection, and also pastoral planning and praxis. This is done with the aim of transformed and resourced Christian spirituality that will also result in a transformed pastoral response. A detail description is provided at the beginning of each chapter.

The table below provide a brief description of the four moments in the pastoral circle that I will follow in this study:

No.	Moments	Description
1	Insertion	Description of the current situation. That is, my own experiences and the experiences of the faith community in Ghana.
2	Social analysis	On the basis of phase 1, questions are formulated in this moment and adequate socio-cultural, legal, psychological, and church analysis is conducted.
3	Theological Reflection	Theological reflection informed by the doctrine of the Trinity. Insights from other sources is brought to bear in the reflections.
4	Pastoral planning and praxis	In this moment, a pastoral planning for action is undertaken. This plan includes transformed spirituality and faith praxis to respond adequately to CSA

2.3.1 Moment of insertion

As I am an Evangelical Christian, and for that matter from the Reformed tradition, I believe and confess Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord. This presupposition that Jesus Christ is the redeemer, liberator and Lord of all creation is what I bring to bear on the moment of insertion, and all the other moments in the pastoral circle.

The moment of insertion is the first phase of this approach. It entails the experiences of individuals and communities in which pastoral responses find their place. The experiences, feelings towards these experiences and the perceptions formed, generate the primary data from the context (Bevan 2018:31; Holland & Henriot 1984:8). Cochrane *et al.* (1991:17) refers to this phase as “beginning in the context”. This points to the fact that all theological reflections begin by taking seriously the present day-to-day experiences, either individually or socially, in a particular context (Bevan 2018:31; Cahalan & Mikoski 2014:48). The realities of CSA in Ghana are complex. Studies in the last decade recognise CSA as a major concern of the public and called on all stakeholders, including faith communities to institute measures to address the menace (Kpalam 2019; Agu, Brown, Issah & Duncan 2018; Böhm 2017; Child Research and Resource Centre, 2009). Other studies also indicate that faith communities have become frontline helpers with regard to mental health as well as in times of crisis situations (Osafo 2016; Osafo *et al.*, 2015; Asamoah *et al.* 2014; Attindabilla & Thompson 2011). This implies that, in Ghana, faith communities are either called upon to provide support for victims of CSA or confronted with reports of CSA taking place in their own church’s ministry or in the community at large. My personal experience as a clinical psychologist have seen families knocking on my door for help for their children who were victims of CSA. In addition, some church leaders call on me to ask for help to respond appropriately to CSA. This moment of the description of the context of victims of CSA and their families, and also the struggle of faith communities is the point of departure for a research focusing on the realities of CSA, and what could be an appropriate pastoral response in the context of Ghana.

Usually, in the reflections on the description by some researchers, an empirical study is undertaken to achieve this purpose of answering the question: What is happening? This brings empirical approaches to the fore. However, in this particular study, I chose not to conduct an empirical study for two reasons. Firstly, as clinical psychologist, I believe that CSA is a traumatic event that results in brokenness both psychologically and spiritually. Consequently, undertaking an empirical study, which requires children, their families, and other caregivers to share their experiences might lead to what is commonly described as secondary trauma. Secondary trauma is considered as indirect exposure to trauma as a

result of a first-hand account or narrative of a traumatic event (Zimering & Gulliver 2003). This recounting of the event might result in a set of symptoms and reactions that are categorised as a form of post-traumatic stress. This kind of trauma is also referred to as compassion fatigue (Figley 1995) and vicarious traumatisation (Pearlman and Saakvittne 1995). There is evidence that secondary trauma could occur post the incidence for victims, and also for professionals who engage with victims (Masilo & Davhana-Maselesele 2016:1; Durona & Cheung 2016:347; Capri, Kruger & Tomlinson 2013:365; Perron & Hiltz 2006:216).

Secondly, the primary aim of the study is to construct a pastoral response to CSA in Ghana. There is available secondary data that can be considered, as these data already existed in carefully collected and analysed forms for other purposes such as research and policymaking (Martins, Da Cunha & Serra 2018:1). As already indicated, the issue of CSA has been explored, but investigations so far have focused on socio-cultural, psychological, and political dimensions in the Ghanaian context (Mohamed 2014; Ige & Fawole 2012; Tetteh-Yankey 2009; Ampofo *et al.* 2007; Brown 2003). I collected and analysed the existing data with a critical attitude to allow a thicker description of context.

In addition, my masters research investigated the understanding of church leaders of child protection, why the church should be involved in child protection and what measures are put in place by the churches to protect children from abuse. It was observed that although the church leaders understood child protection and believed that churches ought to institute measures to safeguard children, there were no references to biblical resources to motivate their responses, as a result, there were no concrete measures put in place by the churches to minister to the needs of children vulnerable to sexual abuse, and neglect (Kpalam 2019:39-42). Although the study was done in one municipality in Ghana, it is important to note that these local congregations, which are spread across the length and breadth of the country, serve as a representation of the situation in Ghana. This is because, the theologies, policies, as well as programs and activities of these local churches are directed from their headquarters. In my opinion, the findings of my master's research partly fit into the moment of insertion.

2.3.2 Social Analysis

This is an attempt to understand the situation. Holland and Henriot (1983:14) believe that this is the moment to analyse causes, factors contributing to the problem, and the consequences the situation brings. This makes it possible to gather the pieces in order to obtain a clearer picture of the situation (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:196; Hendriks 2004:27; Bevans 2002:72). In an attempt to understand the issues of CSA in a context, Miller-McLemore (1996:14) proposes a contextual-social examination of suffering, exploitation, and marginalisation. This analysis affords a deeper understanding of the individual as well as the corporate needs. This calls for a pastoral response that extensively engages the “personal, internal, social, political, and cultural structures” with the aim of understanding the dynamic relationships that exist (McClure 2012: 276). In this study, this thick analysis brings an appreciable insight into the personal and “socially derived” suffering of CSA. Couture (2012:154; 1996:14) believes that a pastoral response should be informed by the ability to discern the dynamics of the complex interaction between the suffering of individuals and the structures and policies of our “social ecological web”.

I concur with Cochrane and colleagues (1991:19) that social analysis should include an analysis of the church’s role in the community, and the factors that influences the role of the church. This examination will help identify the existing paradigms of theory and praxis of the faith with regard to pastoral ministry with children vulnerable to CSA. They further agree that this ‘ecclesial analysis’ should be extended beyond ones’ own faith tradition to the entire Christian body within a particular context.

To achieve this, an extensive literature search be conducted to obtain data from human sciences such as sociology, psychology, politics, and law on the complexities of CSA. This is because, the current discourse on CSA in Ghana has been largely from the above human sciences. The interdisciplinary engagement with these critical disciplines is more likely to provide an adequate understanding of the situation of CSA in the Ghanaian context, consequently, leading to a contextual pastoral response. The task of this analysis is guided by the quest to obtain an adequate and context-specific picture of CSA in Ghana.

This is the moment of reading the signs of the times. The importance of this analysis could also be inferred from Scripture. For instance, the Bible indicates that “*of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do....*” (1 Chronicles 12:32, ESV). The children of Issachar contributed to the exploits of Israelites due to the understanding of the times and seasons. This supports the idea that proper understanding of the problem at hand could lead to a more effectual solution. Understanding the scope of the problems of CSA in the Ghanaian context will assist in knowing what kind of pastoral responses will most responsibly address the menace of CSA.

Finally, this comprehensive engagement with the context is carried with hope that theories and praxis of pastoral responses is sensitive and consonant with the socio-cultural context within which caring activities of faith communities are carried out (Lartey 2004:90). The result is presented in the next chapters.

2.3.3 Moment of theological reflection

This is “*an effort to understand more broadly and deeply the analysed context in the light of living faith, scripture, church social teachings, and the resources of tradition*” (Holland & Henriot 1983:9). It calls for a comprehensive theological reflection, with Scripture as the authoritative source. However, this theological reflection also includes tradition and other resources. Conchrane and colleagues observed that comprehensive and extensive theological discourse should aimed at transformation of faith praxis and Christian spirituality (1991:20).

In this study, the theological reflection will be rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity. As already stated, emphasis will be laid on the practical implications of a relational view of the Trinity in the life of faith communities and its response to CSA. The proponents of a relational view of the Trinity argue that the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit presents a relational view of God that should characterise the life of Christians. As Pembroke puts it “since the relational element is at the very centre of

pastoral work, it seemed to me that the doctrine of the Trinity must have the potential to make a major contribution to pastoral theory and practice” (2006:7).

Insights from social Trinitarianism by key theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna, Colin Gunton, and others will be gleaned. These perspectives of the doctrine of the Trinity will be integrated with other theological resources, and non-theological sources to construct a theological pastoral response to CSA that is relevant to the context of faith communities in Ghana.

It was observed that although faith communities are aware of the menace of child abuse, and also the fact Ghana laws mandate institutions like the church to respond to child protection, little is known regarding concrete church-based child protection measures (Kpalam 2019:40-41). In addition, the findings indicate that many churches have weak theological frameworks to motivate and sustain appropriate response. This could partly contribute to a lack of concrete measures by faith communities to respond to CSA. Consequently, the theological reflections in this study ensures that an interdisciplinary theological response is constructed, which is comprehensive enough to respond to CSA. That is, a response emanating from our beliefs, mode of being, and spirituality in the public space. This is in relation with the assertion that “the word of God brought to bear upon the situation raises new questions, suggest new insights and open new responses” (Henriot and Holland 1983:9). It is believed that subjecting the understanding of the situation to the doctrine of the Trinity will produce fresh insight that can invariably result in a reformed response to CSA. This moment will address the quest to understand a relational view of the Trinity and its practical implications to a pastoral response to CSA in the context of Ghana. To achieve this vision, the moment will be guided by the following questions:

- How can the bi-directional and circular movements in the pastoral cycle be applied to the use of Christian doctrine and Christian praxis in relation to the public issue of CSA?
- What contextual issues related to CSA in the Ghana pose new questions / challenges to Christian theological reflection?

- Can a relational view on the Trinity imply that a pastoral response – Christian praxis and spirituality - may include a critical theological reflection on the denomination's use of Christian doctrine which may stimulate processes of doctrinal development within the particular denominations?

2.3.4 Moment of pastoral planning and praxis

This is the final phase in Holland and Henriot's pastoral circle. This is the moment where the faith community discerns the will of God and restates it for her current context (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). It is the point at which a decision is made with regard to what actions are expected by God from His chosen people, who are the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). This also refers to "*making witness concrete*" (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). At this stage, all the information gathered from the moment of insertion, analysis, and theological discourse is brought to the fore to construct an appropriate pastoral response to CSA. This implies that this response is not based on spontaneous action, but rather a praxis informed by a set of normative considerations (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). It will be a praxis informed by the result of filtering all the information through the theological lens, in this instance especially the doctrine of the Trinity. This moment will be driven by the efforts to construct a context-specific theological pastoral response that is rooted in a relational view of the Trinity. These strategic actions will include both preventive and curative interventions by faith communities to address CSA holistically in the Ghanaian context.

As Kritzinger states, "The praxis will remain incomplete unless the cumulative effect of the earlier dimensions of involvement, context analysis, theological reflection, and spirituality leads to concrete projects - and unless those projects in turn lead to a renewed cycle of involvement, analysis, etc., spiralling onwards into a progressively more rooted and winged mission praxis" (2002:171).

Now that the methodology has been clearly set out, I turn my attention to discuss the theological motivation for utilising the doctrine of the Trinity in responding to CSA. The focus of the discussion is the various theological arguments that lay the foundation for

the relevance of Christian doctrine in the theological discourse on pastoral response to CSA.

2.4 The theological motivation for utilising the doctrine of the Trinity

Theology is the study about God and Christian theology is the discourse about God from a Christian perspective (McGrath 2018:xxviii). It can also be expressed as faith seeking understanding. Christian theology studies the basic doctrines. Doctrines are the general statement of beliefs of the Christian faith. It refers to general statements of truths about the nature of God and His relationship to his creation. It encapsulates timeless truths about the issues of life - the Christian life (Erickson & Arnold 2015:4). Since Christian doctrines deal with the fundamental issues of the Christian faith such as the nature of God, his works and relationship to humanity, it cannot be devoid of the daily Christian life. For example, the doctrine of salvation, creation, Trinity, second coming of Christ, all has implications for how Christians should live their lives. Consequently, apostle Paul encourages the Thessalonians to comfort and encourage themselves with the doctrine of the second coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

The doctrine of the Trinity is central to Christianity and the way it conceptualises answers to other practical questions for Christian spirituality (Erickson & Arnold 2015:108). Karl Barth's conviction sets for the claim that the doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian view of God, and that is what distinguishes the Christian view of God from other religious perspectives of God (Kärkkäinen 2006:236-328). Also, Ware (2010:107) consents with this understanding when he argued that there are no other possible ways to conceptualise the Christian God except as the Trinity. This argument implies that reflections on the nature and the work of God in human history and creation cannot be void of the Trinitarian thinking about God. This makes the doctrine of the Trinity critical in systematic theological reflections. In addition, it makes the Trinity essential when reflection on the impact the belief in the Christian God should have on the day-to-day expressions of Christian spirituality.

2.4.1 Current developments in the doctrine of the Trinity

Although, the Trinity is not a biblical term, the early church formulated the concept due to certain historical developments. The rise of philosophical ideas during the period of the church fathers focused primarily on the need to differentiate the spiritual from the material (Pembroke 2007:8). There were calls to clarify the relationship between the spiritual and the material. Consequently, a controversy over the divinity of Christ arose, including concerns about the relationship between Jesus and God. Questions such as how is Jesus the son related to God the father? Is Jesus fully divine? Who exactly is Jesus, both in His Person and work on the cross? Efforts to respond to these questions resulted in different ideas, paving the way for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

One of the early positions on Christ was adoptionism or monarchism, associated with people like Theodotus and Artmon. This view holds that Jesus is a human being whom God adopted as His son at the instance of baptism. Another position, attributed to Noetus, praxeas and Sabbelius was called Sabellianism or Modalism (Marmion & Nieuwenhove 2011 :16-17). They opined the Father; Son and the Spirit are different 'modes' or 'faces' by which the one God acts. In an attempt to maintain the uniqueness and transcendency of God, Arius (250 – 336 AD), who was a teacher in Alexandria opined that no being could rival God. Jesus must be something less. Contrary to this view, Athanasius (296 – 373 AD) a Bishop of Alexandria posits that Christ is fully divine (God) and fully human. This, in his opinion is the only way Christ could qualify as the saviour of the world (Phan 2011:6).

This development led to the first ecumenical council for Christianity, the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The Nicene council rejected the Arius's position and accepted the proposal of Athanasius. It was resolved the substance of God the son (Jesus) is the same (homo) as that of God the Father. That is, same substance (consubstantial). Consequently, the Nicene Council set the stage for the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity - oneness of the three (Phan 2011:7).

The doctrine of the Trinity has historically been concerned with the issues of substance. Some have argued that the articulation of the doctrine has made it sound mystical and detached from the Christian life (Marmion 2004:104). Others have also opined that it is an old mystical concept developed to respond to a challenge in Christianity that outlived its period (Pembroke 2006:6). Karl Rahner observed that the Trinity was devoid of the Christian life to the extent that no significant change will occur in Christian literature if it is considered false. He argued that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract nature of God. It is more about God and the life of humankind, and humans in relationship with others (1970:10-11).

The place and value of the doctrine of Trinity in theology and Christian faith has been a matter of contention across history. There are arguments as to whether the Trinity can be subjected to human reasoning or it should be considered only as matter of faith and revelation (Kärkkäinen 2006:236-328). Prominent theologian such as Augustine, Aquinas, Gilbert de La Porrée advocated for the Trinity as a matter of faith and revelation, however, this idea has not been consistent in history as others believe the doctrine could also be inferred from reasoning (Kärkkäinen 2006:236-328; Olson & Hall 2002:55-57). The Trinity as matter of faith insists on the inner life of God. It asserts the 'immanent Trinity'. On the other hand, the Reformation era saw a move towards a Trinitarian understanding of God that advocates for the focus on the works of God in salvific history. This proposes that the Trinity is by and large 'economic' (Kärkkäinen 2006:236-328; Olson & Hall 2002:77-79).

However, it is believed that later theological reflections have shifted from the 'economic' in the salvation history as contained in the testimonies of Scripture to what is called the 'inner life of God', consequently, the Trinity became silent and irreverent to the practical Christian life (Kärkkäinen 2006:236-328). For instance, Kant remarked the doctrine of the Trinity has "no practical relevance at all, even when we think we understand it," and we do not, since "it transcends all our concepts (Kant 1979:65-66). The implication of this concept of the Trinity could render it detached from the daily expression of Christian spirituality and faith praxis.

It is noted that recent Trinitarian reflections have advocated the movement away from substance to relationality. This resulted in the move to replace substance with relationality (Pembroke 2006: 7). Today, some theologians have concluded that the doctrine of Trinity is not an abstract concept but a practical one. As Pembroke puts it “since the relational element is at the very centre of pastoral work, it seemed to me that the doctrine of the Trinity must have the potential to make a major contribution to pastoral theory and practice” (2006:7). The idea of relationships opens us up into the concept that the relationship that exists in the Godhead could have practical implications for Christian spirituality in contemporary times. The love inherent within the Godhead and extended in God’s relationship to humans could inform the daily Christian life.

Catherine LaCugna observed that “Trinitarian theology could be described as par excellence a theology of relationship, which explores mysteries of love, relationship, personhood and communion within the framework of God’s self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit” (1991:1). Pembroke argued that critical reflections on the interpersonal relationships revealed that the Trinity has traces that could inform pastoral theory and praxis. It should form a framework from which faith communities should fashion the care extended to all her members. It asserts that the need for communion, love and care in our relationship should be the motivation for pastoral response. Pembroke termed this “paralleling” (2006:7). The concept of paralleling asserts that positive relationship of love in human lives can be seen as a replica of the mutual relationship that exist in the Triune God.

In effect, relational Trinitarian thinking calls humans to share in the communion with God, and to allow the imprint of the fellowship of love in the Trinity to inform the kind of life Christians are called to live (Pembroke 2006:15). It is, therefore, an invitation into fellowship of mutual love with the Triune God, and the ultimate creation as well as the extension of this mutual love in human relationships.

2.4.2 *The Trinity as a model for human community*

Human beings live in a web of relationships. As the popular African concept '*uBuntu*' teaches "a person is a person through other persons", or "I am because of you". It carries the notion that, one is a human being because of other human beings. This implies that our humanity is revealed in our relationship with other humans. Ackermann observed that one's humanity is 'shaped and nurtured' in the quality of relationship maintained with other human beings, consequently, this community-mindedness is what produces growth and development in the individual (1998:17). Desmond Tutu held similar idea when he asserted that "we are made for complementarity. God designed us with unique gifts and ability, and we are made to live in a networked of relationship with others so that we need each other in order to fully express our humanity" (Tutu 1995:xiv). This concept of human community is worth theological reflections, especially, from the African context. This is because Africans are noted for strong sense of community. To achieve this sense of belonging, communities are therefore, faced daily with the need to respond to weaknesses and abuses in the relationships that exist. Faith communities are of no exception. Those communities that create and extend personal relationships devoid of abuses and oppressions could be described as strong. It is believed that faith communities have the potential to be that strong communities (Ackermann 1998:19).

The Trinitarian understanding of God and its connection with the beliefs and the life of the church has sparked a lot of attention. Rice (2014:101) observes that understanding the doctrine of Trinity has implications for the understanding of the Christian faith. Consequently, this has practical implications for the everyday life of the Christian faith community. Rice (2014:101) opines that the way we encounter God in the faith community should reflect our understanding and the application of the Trinitarian God in the life of the church.

The concept of the Trinity as a model that should inform the quality of relationship within the Christian faith community and society has been explored by different scholars (Moltmann 1991; LaCugna 1991; Baukham 1995). This relational view of the Trinity argues that the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit presents a relational view of God that should characterise the life of Christians. The

Trinitarian understanding of God, and the implication for the Christian faith community has taken centre stage in theological reflections. For instance, Volf (1998:67) commenting on Ratzinger's understanding of the Trinity and ecclesiology, observed that the whole being of faith communities, that is, the structures as well as the daily expression of the Christian spirituality should be rooted in the understanding of the Trinity. This points to the fact that churches should be organised in such a way that the daily actions and behaviour of her members reflect their understanding of the Trinitarian God. Similarly, Zizioulas argued that ecclesial communion should followed the pattern of the Trinitarian communion, since the church is '*imago trinitatis*' (1985:23). The church is not a mere organisation but a way of being, and this mode of being should take on the flesh of God's being. This being of God is a relational being, thus, the Trinity (1985:15-17). Commenting on Zizioulas's '*imago trinitatis*', Maslov opined that there is the need to undertake critical reflections on the anthropological communion at the ecclesiological levels through the understanding of the relationality that exist in the Triune God. And that, "the connection between the Trinitarian communion and ecclesial communion can be better understood through critical examination of the communality observed in the life and teachings of Christ" (1998:67).

LaCugna (1991:338) also opines that the Trinity presents a relational concept in which there is no subordination between the Father and the Son or the Spirit. It is a kind of relationship of equality, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness (Tanner 2010:207; LaCugna 1991:391). This relationality observed in the Triune God offers no place for dominion and hierarchy. According to LaCugna, "the primacy of communion among equals, not the primacy of one over another, is the hallmark of the reign of the God of Jesus Christ" (1991:391). Furthermore, the argument put forth relates that, the reverse of this relational view is the source of dominion and abuse of power in relation to moral and sexual issues in our society (LaCugna 1991:393). Although LaCugna's thesis was informed by the social injustice of the period, she believes this relational view of the Trinity is rooted in what is revealed about God in Scripture (1991:397).

The practical implication is that if this relationship exists in faith communities, children will not be seen as less important. As a result, they will receive humane treatment. Similarly,

Patricia Wilson-Kastner (as cited in LaCugna 1991:270-278) believes that the Trinity presents a divine relationship of mutuality, reciprocity, and freedom as the key characteristics, and argues that these elements should be the pattern for communion with one another. The concept of mutuality emphasises a relationship of love, which values each person as well as focus on the need for one another. It is believed that 'reciprocal interdependence' promotes vital community virtues such as forbearance, forgiveness, considerateness, care, and protection, and also ensures the absence of focus on self at the peril of others (Ackermann 1998:18-19). It could be deduced from the nature of CSA as the tendency of others, especially, adults to use children for their sexual gratification. This often occurs in a relationship of power, which is the opposite of mutuality and reciprocity (Tracy 2005:67). This could be described as oppressive and abusive relationships. Ackermann hinted that mutuality and reciprocity is the framework within which quality human relationship should be fashioned (1998:18).

Tanner, in her social Trinitarianism, suggests a relationship of love and mutuality among God, the Father and God, the Son (2010:207). Tanner emphasises that, in living out this relationship, Christ becomes the model that should be followed (2012:370). LaCugna agrees with this position, stating that "living Trinitarian faith means living as Jesus Christ lived" (1991:60). Thus, the life and teachings of Christ provide the practical framework in which human relationships should be fashioned by the people of God. This concept is significant in understanding the Christian faith; Christ came to show us how the Father looks like, how He wants us to relate to Him, and to our fellow human beings. The Bible attests to this notion and confesses Christ as the exact representation of God (Heb.1:3; Col. 1:19). The relationship observed between God the Father and God the Son, as Tanner notes, is more of a service and devotion to the Father in dutiful worship and obedience to Him as His Father.

2.4.3 Public theological discourse and Christian doctrine

Another motivation for the utilising doctrine in this study is the relationship between Christian doctrine and public theological discourse. Public theological discourse focuses on the interplay between theology and the general society and how they influence each other (Graham 2020:10; Bedford-Strohm 2007). As observed by De Gruchy (2007:40),

theological reflections sparked by public issues of importance should be rooted in the Christian faith traditions. These faith traditions include doctrines like the Trinity. This understanding could partly inform the scholars like De Villiers (1995:566) who argues that in this pluralistic nature of the public, it is imperative to reflect theologically on issues of public concerns through what he described as ‘thick theological’ convictions. In this vein, social problems like CSA should be examined through the lens of Christian faith traditions. De Villiers (1995:566) observed that one thick foundation of the Christian faith is love. Christians confess who God really is and believe that God is love (1 John 4:7). It is therefore expected that this confession of God as love, is a thicker conviction of the Christian faith that should form the framework of faith praxis and Christian spirituality (Koopman 2012:6). De Villiers (cited in Koopman 2012:5) relates that the love of God revealed in the sacrificial death of Christ should form the ethos of public discourse on the notion of justice. Koopman describe this as ‘moral discernment’ in a pluralistic society. In Koopman’s argument this moral discernment should be rooted in the Christian view of God as ‘God is love’.

It is believed that love is the distinguishing element of the Christian faith from other religions, and that this love is embedded in the very nature of the Christian God. Consequently, it is argued that the importance of love can be found in Jesus’ remark on the greatest commandment: *“You shall love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and the first commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets* (Matthew 22:37-40, ESV). Critical reflections on Jesus’ answer could partly lead to a conclusion that this nature of God could provide ‘thick theological foundation’ for Christian faith praxis and spirituality. The character of love expressed in the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the Son also demonstrated this character in the relationship between Him and his disciples (Schwöbel 1998:307). God’s love becomes the common character of the relationship that exist in the Triune God, and it is expected to exist in faith communities (John 15:9). This is a relationship of mutual love and reciprocity (LaCugna 1991:270-278), which should form the ethos of public theological reflections, as well as a Christian response to a public concern like CSA.

The concept of love is central to the Christian perspective of God, life and ministry of Christ, and life in the Christian faith community (Schwöbel 1998:308). The love espoused in the nature, and the works of God, according to Ware (2010:107), can only be conceptualise in a Trinitarian manner.

Similarly, Koopman grounds his public theology on the assertion that “God so loved the world” or “on the thick description of the content of the Christian faith traditions” (Koopman 2012:6; Smit 2009:526). In Koopman’s view, this way of describing the Christian faith should be done in a Trinitarian manner. The Trinitarian view of God throws more light on this notion of love. God demonstrated this love by sending his Son to sacrifice his life for our sins, so that through faith in the Son, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life that pleases the father (Schwöbel 1998:309).

In our effort to live in ways that please the father, it calls on Christians to practice love among themselves as well as in the communities they serve (John 13:34-35). The call to live a Christ-like life, that is life flowing from God’s love should be the motivation for our Christian response to issues of public concern. Koopman asserts that in order for the Christian faith to actively participate in the life of the public and contribute meaningfully to public discourse, her theology should be rooted in the Christian tradition (2010:56). That is, our public theology should provide theological directives and guidelines informed by thick traditions of the Christian faith for responding to injustice in our society. One critical injustice towards the poor and vulnerable in the Ghanaian context is CSA. Our Christian response should stem from the reconstruction of the God’s love in the relationship that exist in the Christian community and extended to the larger society. God’s being as love, and his works of love revealed in sending the Son for the sins of mankind and sending the Spirit to empower us can be better understood through a Trinitarian lens (Schwöbel 1998:312).

From the on-going discourse, it could be concluded that the essence for utilising doctrine could be linked to the understanding that God’s being (love) is expressed in his relationship of love (works of love). This implies our being, in this case Christians should reflect love in our daily lives. This is because, God’s being of love is manifested in the

relationship observed between God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit - the Trinity. This Trinitarian view of God is reflected in his relationship towards mankind. The God, whose being is love demonstrated love towards us by sending His Son as sacrifice to save mankind, and through faith in the Son, has given us the Spirit to impact us in a way that we could live lives in God. This act of love of the Father through the atoning works of the Son has changed our being into what is referred to as 'Christians. This 'new being' is expected to be express in the lives of individual Christians as well as the corporate life of the faith community (2 Corinthians 5:7). Approaching this study from the assertion that our being must inform our Christianity spirituality is a key factor for utilising the doctrine of the Trinity.

2.4.4 Use of doctrine where Scripture offers little guidance

Christians always look to the Bible to draw inspirations for their daily lives. The Bible is the source of authority and the gauge, yardstick and the framework within which Christians make meaning of life and their sense of the situations they encounter on daily basis (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:20). It is believed that for Christians in the Reformed tradition, one of the 'solas' is the 'Sola Scripture' (Kotzé 2013:104; Cochrane *et al.* 1991:20). This implies that the Scripture alone should be considered in all matters of life. This could explain the reason why some Christians, especially, those in the Reformed tradition are critical with other forms of revelation, and in some cases reject those revelations besides Scripture (Kotzé 2013:104; Verhey 2003:31-37).

In spite of this understanding, it is observed that Scripture does not directly speak to some ethical issues of contemporary times. As observed by Herold (2006:131) and Jones (2001:26), some ethical issues, especially, those in current bioethical discourse like therapeutic cloning and stem cell research were absent during the time Scripture was compiled. In addition, it is argued that where Scripture even speaks about ethical issues, it may be read differently (Kotzé 2013:104; Verhey 2003:31-37). In instances where using Scripture becomes problematic, one proposal is to turn to Christian doctrine.

It is important to underscore the fact that the Bible gives some direction with regard to God's perspective and heart for children (Psalm. 127:3-5; Matthew 18:1-14), and the onus God places on his chosen people towards children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm. 78:1-8; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6: 4). In addition, some references and inferences can be made from the Bible (Proverb 31:8; Mark. 10:13-16) with regard to child protection, which could be considered the general umbrella under which this study falls. Some scholars (Zelyck 2017:37; Grobbelaar 2016:136; Willmer & White 2013) have argued that Matthew 18:1-14 provides a strong framework for theological discourse on the ministry to children. That is, a critical exegetical analysis of this Scripture could provide theological resources for faith communities with regard to ministry to children. Consequently, it might be argued that the current study should consider working from this frame of reference. However, the researcher is convinced that instead of making reference to a collection of biblical texts as outline above, turning to Christian doctrine will be arguably helpful in an attempt to construct an interdisciplinary pastoral response that is communal-contextual to Ghana. The choice of a Christian doctrine, the Trinity will permit an opportunity to arrive at a response from a thicker foundation, informed by a Christian doctrine that is widely held among the Christian faith.

Kotzé explicates that Christian doctrines are not detached from the influence of Scripture (2013:103). Further, she believes that Scripture is the main source of doctrines, although, there are contributions from tradition, reason, and experience. This is in support of Kasley's argument that Scripture still remains the chief source that shape theological resources with which we respond to issues (cited in Kotzé 2013:103).

In analysing theological hermeneutics, Smit (2006:171) observes that Scripture informs our views about God, and that what we know about the Triune God is what is largely revealed in Scripture. This implies the doctrine of the Trinity reflects God who is revealed in Scripture, therefore, the use of the doctrine of Trinity in responding to a public issue like CSA is not a deviation from Scripture. It is, rather a critical integration of insight from Scripture, and other sources. For instance, commenting on the Scripture and doctrine, Durand (1976:46-48) proposes that all doctrines are products, first of all, of what Scripture reveals about God. This is also true for the doctrine of the Trinity, as Durand further

indicates, the doctrine of the Trinity is formulated as a result of the church's attempt to put forth her belief based on what the Scripture teaches about the person of God, the Triune God who calls us into a relationship with Himself, and into His own image. We are created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), and through faith in Christ we become like Him (John 1:12). If we become like Him, it must be seen in our individual Christian lives, as well as the corporate religious activities undertaken by the faith communities. This image, the nature of God or the personhood of God, which is based on the witness of Scripture, is expected to become our 'being' since we believe in the Trinity.

Commenting on the idea that human beings are created in the image of God, Tracy (2005:67) indicated, although this concept is complex in Christian theological reflections, it can be described in three aspects namely the relational, likeness of God and the functional aspects. The 'relational' aspects point to the fact that humans are created for relationship, as such has deep longing for the reception, and extension of a caring relationship. The 'likeness' of God depicts the visible manifestations of the character of the invisible God. And the third is the 'functional' aspect of the image of God. That is, God made humans in his image so that they can function as his representation on earth. Tracy further argues that this image is maintained when human beings care for God's creation and create relationship of nurture. On the other hand, this image of God can be dented when humans use their power to grossly dominate the creation of God. In Tracy's opinion, this leads to complete misrepresentation of God. It could be said that the ability of humans to eschew misrepresentation of God's image could be determined by the views held about God. Schwöbel (1998:312-313) opined that "in Christian theology all discourse about God and God's relationship to us cannot be abstracted from the way God's being is disclosed to us in his relationship to us through Christ in the Spirit".

As a result, Kotzé (2013:103) argues that the doctrine of the Trinity can offer a suitable theological resource, serving as a framework which can guide and direct Christian response to issues where Scripture offers little guidance, and still remain faithful to Scripture, which is the chief source of Reformed Christian theological discourse. That is, the use of doctrine will always bring us back to Scripture (Douma 2003:40).

In conclusion, it is argued that doctrines are products of a systematic theological discourse, integrating insights from Scripture, tradition, and other theological and non-theological resources, and can therefore be used to address public issues where Scripture offers little guidance (Kotzé 2013:104). Christian doctrine can provide a thicker and broader foundation upon which to construct an interdisciplinary pastoral response to CSA.

2.4.5 Doctrines inform practice

Theology is faith seeking understanding. This means that theology is a 'practical discipline' as it engages in systematic reflections of the faith shared and practiced in a faith community, within a certain cultural context (Graham 2000:10; Grenz 1993:17–18). The faith that is shared in a given context is grounded in a set of belief systems. That is, the faith praxis is rooted in the doctrines of that faith community. For instance, one common doctrine of the Pentecostals is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the 'glossolalia' as the initial evidence (Kgatle 2020:1; Musoni 2014:134; Yong 2007:248). As a result of this belief system, one common practice among this strand of the Christian movement is praying in 'tongues'. Consequently, in their individual and corporate expression of Christian spirituality with regard to prayer, one is more likely to hear a Pentecostal praying in 'unknown tongues'. It is believed that our faith commitment and expressions is rooted in our doctrines. Poon (2013:5) and Grenz (1993:17-18) asserts that our effort to live as God's people in the world and to the world is grounded in faith in God. Thus, Christian spirituality and faith praxis is informed by the beliefs that are held about God.

Practical theology came from a tradition that theory inform practice and practice inform theory. As Browing (1991) observed, practical theology uses the 'practice-theory-practice' paradigm. In other words, underneath all Christian praxis is a set of body of knowledge or system of belief or body of wisdom. Graham (2017:4) argues that doctrines are the 'meaning-making that serve practice'. If doctrines are the theories upon which Christian practice is based, it is imperative that any theological reflection on the Christian response to CSA should factor in the contribution of the doctrine of the Trinity. Furthermore,

Graham argues that with recent developments, practical theological thinking is moving away from the work of the few ordained to a broader sphere where there is a need for more comprehensive theoretical frameworks for theological reflections in order to investigate the 'action-guiding world views' of Christian communities' (2017:4). In this line of argument, it implies that practical theological discourse, should adopt methodologies that takes a critical reflection on the world views (doctrines) that guide praxis of faith communities, in order to live up to the standards.

Similarly, practical theology in recent times is concerned with the interplay between doctrine and praxis. This ushers the discipline into an arena where emphasis is laid on the extent to which doctrines are lived out in the Christian life. Graham observes that doctrines are expected to inform activities of Christians such as relating to one another in the community, worship, ritual as well as spirituality (2017:3). She further opined that practical theological thinking through the lens of doctrine helps to determine the extent to which faith communities 'practise what they preach' (Graham 2017:3; Graham 2000:106).

Critical theological reflection in this way supports the idea that pastoral responses are the "body languages" of the Christian doctrines and traditions (Graham 2017:4). This position is taken further in the argumentation that practical theology is 'bidirectional' in a way that, on one hand, doctrines inform and shape Christian praxis, and on the other hand, Christian praxis reform doctrine (Stoddart 2014:xii). In the same vein, Nieman (2002:202), examining the religious activities performed by faith communities, indicate that those activities are products of their theologies. In other words, the doctrines that are adhered to, determine performative roles of congregations. For instance, Cahalan (2011:90) reflecting on Catholic theology remarked "Catholic theology has largely been based on the assumption that getting the doctrines right will ensure right practice". It could be argued that any pastoral response should be guided by the doctrines that are held by the faith community. This interplay between Christian faith praxis and doctrine is another motivation for utilising the doctrine of the Trinity in this study.

Additionally, the relationship between pastoral care and Christian doctrine has been explored. Ellen Cherry (1991) is one of the key voices when it comes to the relationship between Christian doctrine and pastoral function. According to Cherry (1991:240) there is the need to revive the understanding that Christian doctrines guide the Christian life. This will make us eschew the situation where doctrine and practice are separated from each other, partly due to how academic curricula were organised. She further argued that pastoral functions such as 'spiritual and moral healing' are determined by a body of knowledge derived from Christian doctrines (1991:12). This implies that faith communities engage in careful interpretations of the Christian doctrines, and these interpretations serves as the body of knowledge that inform Christian spirituality and pastoral praxis. The word 'pastoral' historically has been connected with ordained ministers or the clergy. However, recent developments have shifted it from this traditional notion to a wide arena to consider faith communities' response to the larger society. It is believed that pastoral *"entails the Christian spirituality and faith praxis that is aimed at transforming society"* (Cahalan 2011:89). The second Vatican Council was instrumental in the shift of focus in the concept of 'pastoral'. Pope John XXIII referred to the Second Vatican Council as a 'pastoral council'. In this document, pastoral is concern with the relationship of faith communities to the outside world (Cahalan 2011:89). Furthermore, the Council opined that, 'pastoral' means "resting on doctrinal principles" (Cahalan 2011:89; Flannery 1987:903). This is an indication that doctrines set the agenda for the way the church relates to the world. As Cherry (1991:240) observed, Christian doctrines are the chief of all Christian instruments that should guide the Christian living, including pastoral functions. In other words, pastoral responses to the problems of society rests upon the doctrinal principles adhered to by the church. The way the church engages with social problems like CSA is influenced by her doctrinal principle.

2.4.6 Liberation theology and Christian doctrine

Another motivation for utilising Christian doctrine relates to the emergency of liberation theology, which seeks to reflect on Christian praxis aimed at promoting justice and addressing the needs of the poor and vulnerable in society (Rowland 2007:5). The importance of liberation theology for this study rests on the argument that CSA is in need of theological reflection and pastoral responses. This response is based on a theology of

relationship informed by a relational view on the Trinity, in which there is using and shifting power in life giving ways amongst parties that enjoy equal worth.

Liberation theological thinking, therefore, calls the church to rise up to the realities of the daily lived experiences of the poor and marginalised. This is also an invitation into a way of theologising, with the resultant Christian spirituality and faith praxis that show real commitment to the needs of the vulnerable. Rowland (2007:4) argues that liberation theology also involves the everyday lived experiences of the vulnerable in society and is grounded in the life and witness of the church to promote the common good.

With the shift of pastoral theology from the care of the individual by the few ordained or clerics to a response to the wider community, pastoral responses are expected to promote the good of society. That is, serving the larger communities within which faith communities operate. As a result, public pastoral theological response should aim at addressing suffering, injustice, and promoting reconciliation in society (Thompson 2008:276). This response, according to Miller-McLemore (2004:62-63), should promote healing, guidance and, in effect promotes liberation in society. Similarly, Bidwell (2015:137) observes that public pastoral response should engage the responsibility of people and rally faith communities to create caring attitudes towards one another. Bidwell further argues that, for public pastoral response to achieve this vision, it should be embedded in religious resources including texts, traditions, and beliefs. Bidwell claims that these religious resources should not be based only on Christian sources in order that it is not rejected by other religions, thereby closing up on the current religiously pluralistic environment. However, it is argued that faith communities are more likely to be motivated to create and sustain faith praxis and Christian spirituality that are grounded in their doctrine. Miller-McLemore (2012: 5), reiterates for Christian spirituality and praxis to be sustained, it must be rooted in doctrines and traditions. That is, if their actions, especially, towards the good of society are detached from their Christian convictions, and therefore, are not reflective of their faith, they are highly unsustainable. This implies that theology in its basic form finds its root in the faith praxis of the Christian community (Ward 2017:25).

One doctrine that occupies space when it comes to the concept of quality of human relationship in faith communities, and also extended to the outside world, is the doctrine of the Trinity (Kärkkäinen 2014:23-24; Charry 1997:viii; LaCugna 1991:1). The doctrine presents a relationship of mutual love, care, and reciprocity. The relationship that exists in God the Father, the Son and the Spirit could inform a framework. As LaCugna remarks, the “Trinitarian theology could be described as par excellence a theology of relationship, which explores mysteries of love, relationship, personhood and communion within the framework of God’s self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit” (1991:1). Consequently, a pastoral response to a public issue such as CSA, could be informed by the doctrine of the Trinity.

There is evidence that CSA thrives in relationship of trust, especially, where abuse of power is more likely to occur. Tracy (2005:67) observed that in Scripture, and throughout human history, abuse of power has been underneath sexual abuse of children and women. For example, in Scripture (Micah 2:9; 3:1-3; Isaiah 10:1-2; Ezekiel 22:6-12), the abuse of power by those in leadership was observed. This abuse of power was often perpetrated by men. Tracy argues that abuse of power is as a result of the fallen nature of human beings.

Jesus was making reference to the fact, in the new nature (Christianity), abuse of power in human relationship is unacceptable. This is because, human relationships are grounded in a Christian understanding of God. Christian spirituality and faith praxis should seek to address this problem. In other words, if the relationship in the Triune God becomes the basis of pastoral responses to CSA, this abuse of power will be reduced, if not completely prevented in faith communities and the society at large.

In the nutshell, it can be concluded that my motivation for utilising doctrine stems from the idea that practical theological discourse and Christian doctrine are inseparable. That is, theological reflection on Christian spirituality and faith praxis with the aim of transformation of the Christian witness in the public space has to be rooted in our belief system. As observed by Miller-McLemore, *“Practical theology refers to an activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in the everyday”* (2012:5). This implies

that pastoral response should be motivated and sustain by our being, which is our doctrine.

Approaching this study from the point of doctrine will allow for an interdisciplinary theological discourse that gives adequate attention to both the priority of Scripture and retrieval of traditions (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:20). It could provide useful theological resources for reflections on pastoral responses of faith communities. This is because faith communities are the extension of God's reign on earth through Christ (De Beer 1998:15). They are channels of God's resources to bring hope to communities and have what it takes to respond holistically to deep brokenness like CSA (1 Cor. 6:18). They function in ways that gives them the potential to be present in the suffering of people (De Beer 1998:15).

2.5 Summary and conclusion

This chapter described in detail the methodology and it is presented in two parts. The first part presents the interdisciplinary approach to this study and the description of the pastoral circle as an approach to practical theological discourse. The chapter described the methodological process as mainly interdisciplinary. In this sense, interdisciplinarity is a unique and creative engagement in a dialogue with theological, biblical, and social as well as human sciences, with the context in mind (Graham 2012:4). Secondly, a brief discussion was carried out with regard to key approaches of practical theological discourse in the contextual-hermeneutics paradigm. Mention was made of Browning (1991), descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology; Osmer (2008), descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic; and Woodbridge (2014), Exploratory, Descriptive, Normative and Action. The researcher is convinced that the pastoral circle by Holland and Henriot (1984), when compared with others, is the most suitable approach for this study. This is due to its emphasis on the integration of pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections in an on-going process with the aim of transformation in the life of the church in a particular context (1984:7).

Part two of this chapter focused on the motivation for utilising Christian doctrine of the Trinity. A comprehensive reflection was undertaken to identify key reasons for the choice of a Christian doctrine as the framework from which to construct an interdisciplinary pastoral response. First of all, it was noted that Christian doctrine provide a thicker foundation and a broader frame of reference to theological reflections, especially, those aimed at transformative Christian spirituality and faith praxis to respond to issues in the public space. Also, where Scripture offers little or no direct guidance, turning to doctrine is highly encouraged. In addition, it was argued that the choice of doctrine fits into the on-going discourse in practical theology that theory (doctrine) inform practice, and practice also influences theory. Furthermore, the relationship between public theology and doctrine as well as the interplay between liberation theology and doctrine were cited to motivate the choice of utilising doctrine in this study. To conclude, it was argued that the motivation for utilising doctrine stems from the idea that practical theological reflection and Christian doctrine are inseparable. And that, approaching this study from the point of doctrine will allow for an interdisciplinary theological discourse that gives adequate attention to both the priority of Scripture and retrieval of traditions (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:20). It could provide useful theological resources for reflections on pastoral responses of faith communities in Ghana. Now, I proceed to the moment of insertion and social-ecclesial analysis of the pastoral circle to undertake a contextual description and analysis of the complexities of CSA in the context of Ghana.

CHAPTER 3: CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN GHANA

3.1 Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global public health issue, and Ghana is not an exception. In order to construct a pastoral response to this menace, it is imperative to obtain extensive contextual data as a pragmatic point of departure. This chapter presents a contextual analysis and description of the realities of CSA in Ghana. The chapter has two main sections and contains the first two moments in the pastoral circle approach to practical theological enquiry. The first section is the moment of insertion which outlines my personal experience of the realities of CSA. The second section is the moment of socio-ecclesial analysis of the situation of CSA in the context of Ghana.

3.2 Moment of insertion

The moment of insertion is the first phase of the pastoral circle as a way of doing practical theology. This moment describes experiences of individuals and communities in which pastoral responses find their place. The experiences, feelings towards these experiences and the perceptions formed, generate the primary data from the context (Holland & Henriot 1983:8). This phase could also be considered as “beginning in the context” (Bevans 2018: 30; Cochrane, De Gruchy & Peterson 1991:17). This points to the fact that all theological reflections begin by taking seriously the present day-to-day experiences, either individually or socially, in a particular context (Cahalan & Mikoski 2014:48).

The value of experience in theological discourse cannot be overemphasised. This is because, it is believed that theology begins in the daily ‘realities’ and ‘experiences’ of individuals as well as communities (Bevans 2018:31; Macallan & Hendriks 2012:196; Cochrane, De Gruchy & Peterson 1991:17). Experience as a source of theology has been a long -debated concept. In commenting on the John Wesley’s quadrilateral, Macallan and Hendriks (2012:198) indicated that Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience are the four sources of theology. This implies that Christian experience is considered as a source of theology (Cronshaw 2011:6). However, Grenz (1994:17) hinted that experience should not necessarily be considered as in itself but rather as a means to an end.

Macallan and Hendriks (2012:199) believe that, although Grenz is critical with experience as a source, his reference to culture as a source of theology brings back the argument to experience.

In this study, I support the argument that ones' own experiences and the experience of others in the community could serve as a point of departure in practical theological discourse (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:199; Cochrane, De Gruchy & Peterson 1991:17; Jones 1990:23). This implies that personal experience or that of others underline the pastoral concern, which is the point of departure in the pastoral circle as a way of doing practical theology. Macallan and Hendriks (2012:199) postulate that practical theological reflections cannot be embarked on without some form of engagement with the local realities by the 'theological reflector' or the theologian.

As already stated, I begin this section with my own personal experience with regard to CSA. Although, these experiences are not verified, and therefore cannot be considered a source of my theological reflections, I believe they provide some pointers to the description of the context. My experience with CSA spanned over a period of a decade. For the purpose of this research, I describe my experiences with regard to CSA from my engagement with organisations such as Counselling and Support Foundation, Compassion International Ghana, Kinder Foundation, the Church of Pentecost, and other Church denominations in Ghana. Cochrane, De Gruchy & Peterson (1991:19) suggest faith commitment as an addition to the pastoral circle and proposed that it should precede the moment of insertion. As I indicated earlier, in this study, faith commitment is integrated into the moment of insertion. Consequently, my description is made from the presupposition that Jesus Christ is the redeemer, liberator, and lord of all creation. This is the faith commitment I bring to bear on the moment of insertion, and all the other moments in the pastoral circle.

My experiences with CSA begun when I became interested in counselling. In August 2008, I started my master's degree training in clinical psychology. As part of the program, each student was expected to undertake internships in the area of counselling and

psychosocial support. As a result, in August 2009, I started my internship with Counselling and Support Foundation in Accra, Ghana.

3.2.1 Counselling and Support Foundation

Counselling and Support Foundation is a local Christian Charitable organisation. The mission of the foundation is to assist young people identify their God-given potential and work towards full realisation of those potentials. My role was mainly providing counselling and psychoeducation to young people usually between the ages of 12 and 22 years. The work of the organisation targeted mainly junior high and senior high schools. Besides schools, the organisation also targeted churches' teen and youth ministries. During outreaches to these schools, I am offered the opportunities to conduct individual and, in some cases, group counselling sessions. I observed that the most common disturbing issues these adolescents bring into counselling were related to sexual abuse. It also became evident that the abuse usually starts years back as they were children. Although, some of the victims were no longer going through the abuse at the time of my interaction with them, I took notice of the pain and hurts associated with their narratives. I realised the complexities of emotions experienced by the victims. It was observed that the perpetrators were often people in close relationship of trust with the victims, often they are family members, teachers, and volunteers in religious based programs.

My personal vision of the church is that the church is the only hope for society.¹ The church as the hope for society is also an aspect that Moltmann emphasises time and time again. Moltmann indicates that the cross of Jesus Christ is "not only the theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth" (1973:204). Accordingly, "all Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and sanctification, about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ" (1973:204). This does not only stress the relationship between different aspects of Christian doctrine, but also the church, as the Body of Christ, as the sign of Christian hope.

¹ More attention will be given to the notion of the church in society under the section on ecclesial analysis in this chapter. It will also be discussed in the next chapter, which is the theological reflection through the paradigm of the Trinity.

I have always thought the church should be able to respond to the needs of these victims of CSA. I thought the church should be able to hear their cries and respond by bring healing to their pains. With this belief, I was always interested in finding out where faith communities fit into the narratives of victims of CSA. Consequently, I was interested in finding out if someone in the church was aware of their plight and what was done to bring healing as well as prevent the occurrence.

In summary, my experiences at Counselling and Support Foundation reveal that victims of CSA were still carrying the pains and hurts. The church was not aware of their pains, and even where they confide in someone in the local congregations, confidentiality is often broken in some cases, leading to further hurts. I realised that some of the perpetrators were Christians, and also leaders in their local congregations.

As I reflect on this experience, two questions occupied my attention:

- Are churches aware of the realities of child sexual in the communities where they serve?
- How can faith communities respond to the realities of CSA to bring healing and prevent the abuse of children?

3.2.2 *Compassion International Ghana*

Compassion International is a Christian not-for-profit Child Development Organisation working in more than 25 countries across the globe. The mission of the organisation is captured in a short phrase as “*releasing children from poverty in Jesus’ name*”. Compassion goes into formal partnership with local congregations as known as Frontline Church Partners (FCPs). This implies that Compassion’s holistic child development program is carried out through the local church in the communities. The children, who registered into their program undergo training in holistic child development with the aim of building their cognitive, physical, spiritual, and socio-emotional dimensions. Compassion International commenced operation in Ghana since 2004, and currently serve approximately 82,000 children. In addition to the support for children, there is also

capacity building for church leaders and parent/caregivers in the area of child development, parenting as well as economic empowerment.

My work with Compassion span between November 2011 to August 2013. I joined the organisation as the health specialist. My key role involved providing health technical advice to program staff at the country office, Child Development Workers (CDWs) as well as caregivers at the Child Development Centres. Compassion's health program is comprehensive, and it is based on the biopsychosocial model. This model believes that there are biological and psychosocial factors that influence the health of individuals (Havelka, Lucannin & Lucannin 2009:303). As a result, these factors must be factored into the treatment plan.

In addition, child protection has taken the centre stage of the work of Compassion International in the countries they operate. The organisation will go any length and breadth to ensure that children in their program are safeguarded. They have a comprehensive child protection policy. All staff, volunteers and partners receive child protection training after which they signed a statement of commitment to child protection. All project staff, known as Child Development Workers (CDWs), church leaders as well as volunteers working with the church partner in the communities are expected to report all CSA cases to the health specialist at the national office. As part of my role, I am expected to follow up the case at the project level to obtain relevant data for the purposes of accessing health care and legal redress. As a clinical psychologist, I am also responsible for providing counselling and psychological support to the victim and family. My experiences in this regard have been full of complex emotions.

In the first place, my excitement comes with opportunities to help the victim and their families. In most cases, I am amazed at the role counselling and psychological supports play in alleviating the pain and hurts of the victims and parents. Another satisfaction is the commitment on the part of the project staff and volunteers who displays the courage to go every length to assist in gathering relevant data. Also, I am impressed with the roles of the families play in providing social support to the victim and their commitment to work with the church partner, as well as the role of Compassion to bring healing to children and

families and ensuring the law takes its course.

On the other hand, I observed other issues that raise concerns for me as a Christian and also a clinical psychologist. Firstly, I observed that the leadership of the church partners are not comfortable with the incident of CSA, especially, the abuse being reported to the health specialist at the country office. One reason often cited for this challenge is the fact that their congregations will be stigmatised by members of the community. This has resulted in a sort of tension among project staff/volunteers and the leadership of the local church. Another issues of concern for me are the fact that in most cases, perpetrators of CSA are key personalities in the communities such as family members, teachers, church leaders, opinion leaders, and sometimes the law enforcing agents. This could partly explain the church's fear to pursue such cases. In a related development, it was observed that, where the perpetrator is a church leader, it is more complex, and the issues is kept secret between the family and church leaders. In some instances, the victim is accused and blamed for a conspiracy to tarnish the image of the church. As a psychologist, I have seen the emotional trauma or the effects thereof during counselling with children who have had these experiences.

It is important to state that these form part of my own experiences with CSA cases in the Compassion Ghana programs. They are not systematically tested and verified as the general situation. The next section of this chapter will present a more comprehensive description of the situation based on relevant, carefully collected, and analysed data. However, these experiences in the Compassion program kept me wondering, and I had these questions:

- Why are the church partner's views about child protection different from Compassion when they are in partnership to promote Christian holistic child development?
- What resources informed Compassion's approach to dealing with CSA that is not in agreement with the beliefs of the local church?
- What are the gaps in the training on child protection received by church partners from Compassion?

3.2.3 *Kinder Foundation*

This section outlines my experiences with regard to CSA during my work with Kinder Foundation. This is a local Christian NGO. The mission of Kinder is to provide counselling and psychological services for children to navigate through life successfully. With this mission, the organisation specialises in providing counselling. As a result, the counselling team receives calls from families of children who needs counselling. In addition, there are referrals from churches, schools, and other organisations such as Compassion International, International Needs, and Street Children Empowerment Foundation.

My role as a consulting psychologist was to conduct initial psychological assessment of children and determine the treatment plan. In this role, I had more opportunities to hear the stories of children. Using narrative approaches and other tools to help children talk through the trauma, I observed several children with histories of some form of sexual abuse. I took noticed of the pains, and hurts. Also, of special mention is the struggles of families, community leaders and church leaders to respond when the abuse occurs. Judging from my personal experience, I realised several gaps in the help offered by church leaders before professional help is sought at our outfit. Sometimes, the response of significant others resulted in putting the victim through more pain and hurt. In this, I pay special attention to the role of local congregations and their leaders. I had special interest in the extent of the involvement of faith communities. In most cases, I would like to find out if someone in the local church was aware, and what role they did play.

3.2.3.1 Healing Community Camps

Healing community camps is one of the services of Kinder Foundation. In this service, children and teenagers are often taken into a residential camp meeting away from their communities. Although this appears to be like a camp meeting, the 'healing community' denotes our idea to intentionally create trusting relationships with children during camping (a new community) to promote emotional and psychological healing during the events and beyond. The camp usually spans from three to five days depending on the focus. There are usually two main foci of the camp, namely, dealing with trauma in children as well as dealing with career assessment and counselling. The focus of this camp is relationship, and the purpose are change and growth in the lives of the participants. As a

result, we collaborate with parents, schools, and churches to select children who have been identified as those with dysfunctional behaviour by either parents or school authorities and volunteers in children ministry programs. In this camp, a group of five to six participants are assigned to one counsellor, who will intentionally build relationship with them with the aim of identifying their trauma and start a process towards change and growth in the life of each child, using both one-on-one and group counselling sessions to achieve this goal. These counsellors have received special skill-based training on the use of effective tools such as therapeutic storytelling, STOP (**S**tructure, **T**ime to talk, **O**rganised play and Parenting) model, sandbox and free play and drawings to enhance the counselling sessions. In some cases, where we are also focusing on career, assessment tools such as Multiple Intelligent Test and Vocational Personality inventories are used. Due to the prime focus on identifying underlying trauma of observed dysfunctional behaviours in children, extensive effort is made to get into the life of children through the quality of relationships created. Consequently, certain key observations were made.

In the first place, some of the underlying trauma in children in the camp were related to CSA. It was interesting to note that, in all those camps, more than half of the children with dysfunctional behaviours have experienced CSA, and the resultant effects were connected to the dysfunctional behaviours observed by parents and teachers. Secondly, more than half of these cases of CSA were found among children and teenagers who participates in church activities at least once in a week. Once again, I sought to find out if someone in the church was aware of their plight. It was noted that some of the victims did not inform anyone. Others also indicated that they told someone at church, usually those who work in children's ministry. It was also realised that some of the perpetrators were volunteers in children's ministry or church leaders, especially, those who have oversight responsibilities over them in the church setting. The question therefore remains: what could the church do to address this menace in faith communities and society as a whole?

3.2.3.2 Child sexual abuse training

With our experience with several cases of CSA, and the gaps identified in the responses of the church and the larger society, I lead the counselling team at Kinder Foundation to

design a three-day training titled “helping sexually abused children”. This was a skill-based training, which focuses on helping participants to understand the complex nature of CSA, and the steps they can take to respond in order to bring healing as well as institutional measures to prevent the occurrence in the communities. The main target group for this training was leaders and volunteers involved in ministry with children, teachers in formal schools, CDWs in the context of the Christian faith.

This training ran for almost three years by the Foundation. The training attracted participants from across 141 local congregations from different communities. Participants were mainly church leaders in children’s ministry of their local congregations, CDWs from mostly Christian organisations such as Compassion Ghana and International Needs. It was observed that the CDWs with these charitable organisations were also people involved in ministry with children in their local congregation.

This particular training attracted the attention of the media because this was happening alongside the fact that the media was replete with reports of child sexual. As a result, one of such training sessions was reported in the media by the Ghana News Agency (GNA) on 24th February 2016 titled, *‘Kinder foundation holds workshop on child sexual abuse’*. (See addendum II for the reportage).

My observation with this experience indicated a number of things. Firstly, I observed the training experience resulted in secondary trauma for some of the participants. My team and I noticed a number of participants shared tears from their own pain and hurts as a result of CSA. Consequently, my team and I spent several hours after each day’s training to provide counselling and psychological support for these participants whose ‘old wounds’ were uncovered. Secondly, I noticed that the participants acknowledged the realities of CSA as evidenced by the numbers of cases they witnessed in their various communities. It was evident that in some of the cases, the perpetrators were people who professed to be Christians. Other cases were perpetrated by opinion leaders and people who were considered ‘powerful’ in the communities. Some of the participants also expressed anger about the fact that they expected their local congregations to do better, although they were not sure what should constitute an appropriate response. Finally,

based on the narratives of participants, I observed the struggles of the churches to respond in ways that ensure healing and prevent the occurrence of the abuse. Similarly, it became evident that awareness of the complexities of CSA was poor among some local congregations. For instance, some participants mentioned that some of their leaders do not believe that children can be sexually abused.

3.2.3.3 Child protection training for the Church of Pentecost

The Church of Pentecost contracted Kinder foundation to conduct child protection training for her children corks (the leaders and volunteers who are directly involved in ministry with children) in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. This Region houses the government seat of Ghana. Also, the headquarters of the Church of Pentecost is in this Region, and it has the largest population of the church members. The training was expected to assist the participants to understand the realities of child abuse, appreciate God's heart for children, and to identify appropriate measures to ensure the safeguard of children in their ministry. During the training, participants were taken through types of child abuse, biblical mandate to protect children, and the churches response to child abuse. The response includes both reactive measures such as reporting and seeking help for the child as well as proactive measures which seeks to put structures in place to prevent abuse from occurring. Approximately one thousand, two hundred (1,200) children ministry workers of the church participated in several sessions of the training over a period of nine months.

I made some observations from this experience. First of all, as we discussed the types of abuse, CSA became the most common example cited by participants in their communities. Of course, this could be partly due to the fact that the Ghanaian culture finds it difficult to describe emotional and physical abuse. Secondly, I noticed that children workers were confronted with CSA in their ministry, and the communities in which they serve. However, they were not sure what the appropriate response from the church could be, as their local congregations had no guidelines for appropriate responses. It also became clear that, where the cases are reported to churches, they only pray for families. In addition, they discouraged their leaders to report CSA to the law enforcement agencies like the police in their communities due the complexities associated with the problem.

As usual, these observations raised some questions:

- Are faith communities aware of CSA?
- What theological resources are available for faith communities to inform appropriate faith praxis and Christian spirituality?

3.2.4 Engagement with local churches in Ghana

As a certified clinical psychologist, who is also a Christian, it is normal in Ghana to get invitations to speak in church activities. These included giving talks on psychosocial issues such as anxiety, depression, domestic abuse, and other mental health promotive activities. With my experience in issues related to child development, I am also often invited to speak on issues such as parenting, child abuse and protection.

During some of these talks on parenting and child development issues, I often get some parents who would share their problems with regard to some of their children. Some of these discussions with parents often lead to parents of bringing their children for counselling. In some of the cases, during counselling, I noticed their problems were manifestations of CSA. Some of the cases involved fathers and stepfathers. I was often concerned about the devastating effect that CSA has on these children. As I listened to the stories of CSA from the children's perspective, I became aware of the realities and the complexities of the circumstances under which CSA occurs in the Ghanaian context.

One example of such talks was reported in the news by Seth Bokpe on 27th October 2015 in Graphic Online under the caption: 'Don't shield perpetrators of child abuse in churches'. Bokpe (2015) reported that "Mr Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam, the Founder and President of the Kinder Foundation, a Christian non-governmental organisation (NGO), urged churches to have child protection policies that protect children from abuse, and stressed that "Although the church is a place where children are sometimes abused, it is also a place where abuses are not reported." The church should not handle cases of sexual abuse. Domestic violence cases are criminal in nature. Such cases must be reported," he said. He, however, stated that the church could offer emotional support to such victims because of the trauma they go through. He was speaking at the ninth anniversary

celebration of the Child Development Centre of the Trinity Parish of the Global Evangelical Church at Kotobabi in Accra” (see full reports in addendum III).

Another important area of my engagement with local churches is in the area of children and teen ministries. In Ghana, the period between late July and early September is the longest vacation period for schools. Consequently, it is a suitable period for annual children and teen camp meetings for children and youth ministries. Several local congregations organised camp meetings for their children and teens. In some of these meetings, I am often invited to speak to the participants. In addition, some camp meetings require that I spent a day or two to provide counselling services to those who might have needs for such services. As a result, after my talks, the children are informed that I would be in the camp to offer one-on-one counselling. I observed that more than half of the counselling cases were related to CSA. Although some of them share problems of poor school performance and emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation, it was observed that the underlying causes of some of these complaints is CSA. As it has always been my interest, I sought to find out if someone in the church was aware of the abuse. Reflecting on these experiences, I am wondering about the extent of the problem of CSA. I am often preoccupied with the extent to which the church’s ministry will address this menace that vulnerable children have to grapple with, some of them for years.

3.2.5 District pastor of the Church of Pentecost

The Church of Pentecost is the largest Pentecostal church in Ghana (Pew Research Centre, 2006). With its headquarters in Ghana, it has external branches in over 100 countries across the globe. The vision of the church is to become a global Pentecostal church that is vibrant in church planting and evangelism. Consonant with its vision, the Church of Pentecost is aggressive in evangelism and church planting. As a result, the church has her presence in most communities in Ghana.

Since December 2016, I have been engaged as a full-time pastor of the Church of Pentecost. I am responsible for overseeing nine local congregations spread across nine

rural communities in the Central Region of Ghana. I work in collaboration with nine other lay leaders (called Presiding Elders) who are responsible for the day-to-day running of each local congregation under my supervision. These lay leaders are in direct contact with congregants as they usually live and work in the same community. I pay regular and scheduled visits to these congregations to minister to their needs in addition to what is being done by the lay leaders. My experience with this role has been threefold.

Firstly, I observed emotional disturbances and dysfunctional behaviours in some of the children in some congregations. As much as possible, I tried to engage such children in counselling. As of now, all those that received counselling have experienced CSA.

Secondly, I had cases of CSA that some of my lay leaders observed and reported to me. A careful observation of the way the cases were handled by leaders of the local churches raised some issues for further analysis. It became evident that there were inconsistencies in the way the lay leaders responded even before the issues come to me. I have also observed significant gaps in their responses. For instance, in some cases, after praying for the victims and their families, nothing else follows. Sometimes, the way and manner issues such as the interrogation of the child, confidentiality and stigma were handled also calls for a critical reflection. My analysis of the situation leads to the discovery that my own church denomination has no clear directions of the church's response to CSA. This has prompted me to explore what other church denominations are doing by way of responding to CSA. Further discussion of this will be done under the ecclesia analysis in the sections to follow in this chapter.

Thirdly, other pastors called on me for help. As other members of the clergy get to know about my professional training and experiences as a clinical psychologist, some of them call on me when confronted with cases of CSA. In some instances, pastors would call me to assist them to offer appropriate help. However, in other situations, pastors would like to refer the cases to me for assistance. In all these circumstances, I am interested in how the pastors got to know about the incident, and what has been done by way of responding. I took notice of the frustrations expressed by pastors and other church leaders with regard to the complexities of CSA, which most of them reckoned that they feel inadequately

prepared to handle. It was observed that some of the pastors revealed that their churches have no guidelines with regard to their response to CSA. In addition, other pastors have expressed their fears in relation to the influence and power that some of the perpetrators have in their communities. In addition, some have raised concerns about legal issues surrounding CSA. I also realised through my conversations with some of these church leaders that they see the need to respond to CSA but have difficulties with arriving at what should be done. This could partly be due to the fact that their churches have no framework within which to respond to this menace in our Ghanaian communities.

In the nutshell, the analysis of my own immersion in the problem revealed that CSA is real in the Ghanaian context, and also in faith communities. In addition, I observed that the problem is complex and present a multi-faceted reality with legal, socio-cultural, psychological/mental health and also spiritual dimensions. Another important observation is that in more than half of the cases, the children were not able to confide in someone, including church leaders and those volunteers assigned to minister to, and with children. This could partly be due to the fact that the churches have no clear guidelines on the response to CSA. Finally, the devastating effects of CSA on the children became real to me as I continuously observed different children within varied circumstances.

Reflecting critically on these varied experiences of CSA in the Ghanaian context, I am convinced that these questions required further investigation:

- What is the reality of CSA in Ghana, and also in faith communities?
- What kind of faith praxis and Christian spirituality is required by faith communities to respond to CSA?
- How could a relational view of the Trinity inform responses of faith communities to CSA, and the dehumanisation of children in the context of Ghana?

The need to embark on a practical-systematic theological discourse to find answers to these questions is the motivation for this study. The rest of the chapters will unfold the details of the theological journey. Now, I turn my attention to the socio-ecclesial analysis of the situation to obtain further data in order to grasp an adequate picture of the situation.

3.3 Socio-ecclesial analysis

This moment conducts extensive analysis and description of the social and ecclesial context with which CSA occurs in Ghana. This calls for a pastoral response that extensively engages the “personal, internal, external, social, political, and cultural structures” with the aim of understanding the dynamic relationships that exist (McClure 2012:276). In this study, this thick analysis will bring an appreciable insight into the personal and “socially derived” suffering of CSA. The ecclesial analysis includes the examination of the church’s role in the community, and the factors that influences the role of the church. This examination will help identify existing paradigms of theory and praxis with regard to pastoral ministry with children vulnerable to CSA.

3.3.1 *Child Sexual Abuse in Ghana*

In Ghana, the Children’s Act of Ghana 1998 (Act 560) defines children as all persons below the age of 18. However, the legal age for consent to sexual activity is 16 years. As a result, any sexual activity involving children 15 years and below is considered CSA. Child abuse is not uncommon in the Ghanaian society. The realities of the situation of abuse of children have attracted the attention of both international and local organisations working to promote the protection of children. It is reported that approximately 90% of children in Ghana have experienced some form of abuse (UNICEF 2018). This includes various forms of abuse such as physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. In 2015, UNICEF conducted a research to determine the cost of child abuse in Ghana. The findings indicated that the cost of CSA is huge, not only to the victim and family, but also to the nation. The report further concludes that Ghana spends between GH¢ 926 million to GH¢ 1.442 billion annually on child abuse (UNICEF 2015:iv). The realities of CSA could be described as a huge burden on the national budget.

CSA, which is the focus of this study has been cited as one of the common forms of abuse. The data from the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service indicated that the number of cases officially reported had increased from 1,128 in 2002 to more than 1,600 in 2009. The report further indicated that the incidence of CSA is significantly higher than what is formally reported to the Ghana Police Service (Ghana Health Service 2018:20).

Additionally, it was reported that between 2010 and 2014, a total of 5,752 children were sexually abused in Ghana, with 342, constituting about 17% of the cases perpetrated by members of the victims' family (Ghana Health Service 2018:20). With reference to data from the DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service, the report further indicated that 1,298 cases were reported in 2014, a total number of 1,230 in 2013, case reported in 20112 stood at 1,097, those recorded in 2011 was 1,159 and in 2010, a total of 968 cases were recorded. A critical analysis of the report from DOVVSU between 2010 and 2014 revealed a steady rise in the sexual violence against children over the years. In 2015, the reported cases of defilement were 1198. Although, a slight decrease from 1,298 in 2014 to 1198 in 2015, it is important to recognise that the problem of CSA is still a reality in Ghana. In addition, there is evidence, that the reported cases of CSA are below the actual situation due to the cultural factors that discourages disclosure and reporting of CSA in Ghana (Ghana Health Service 2018:20).

Although, it is difficult to obtain current national data on the prevalence of CSA in Ghana, earlier studies provide some pointers. For instance, a national survey by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), revealed that 6.3% of women and 5.3% of men reported they had engaged in sexual intercourse before the age of 15 (ISSER, 2011). This data is similar to an older national survey of 3,041 participants, in which, 6% indicated they had experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15 (Pappoe & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1998).

Some studies have also focused on examining CSA among school children. For instance, a 2009 study conducted in selected schools by an NGO reports that 53% of sexual abuse cases occurred in the school environment, while 47% happened at home. The report further states that 67% of the victims of CSA are in senior high school, 28% in junior high school and 5% in primary school (Plan Ghana 2009). Similarly, in a descriptive and exploratory survey, information collected from 490 school children, 116 parents and 49 head-teachers from 4 out of the 110 districts in the country, showed the incidence of CSA in Ghanaian public schools. About 11.2% of the children who participated in the study had been victims of either rape or defilement (Agu, Brown, Adamu-Issah & Duncan 2018:122). Further, the data suggested that gender plays a role in the severity, as the

incidence showed that 92% of the victims were females.

Ghana launched a Child Welfare and Family Policy in 2015 as part of reforms in her child protection efforts. This policy calls on all stakeholders to institute evidence-based measures to respond to child abuse in the country. In line with this, the Ministry of Health through the Ghana Health Service (GHS), with support from UNICEF conducted a study to ascertain the capacity and gaps in the health sector's response to child abuse. The study was carried out in six (out of the then ten) regions of Ghana; Upper West, Northern, Ashanti, Western, Volta, and Greater Accra regions.

In order to obtain nationwide and relevant data for effective decision making, the study lead engaged in discussions with strategic partners in child protection including government, NGOs, UN agencies, health professional training institutions, and other relevant stakeholders in health and child protection at the national and sub-national levels (2018:22). This study represents perhaps the most recent and comprehensive research on child abuse in Ghana. Consequently, this study is extensively cited in this section of my study.

In the first place, the study revealed that CSA is a serious public health problem in the regions where the study was conducted in Ghana (2018:35). The study further indicated that child marriage is another form of CSA, and it was common in all the study areas. It was observed that girls as early as nine years are betrothed, and given out to such men, who engage in sexual activities with them (GHS 2018: 35). The research team obtained narratives from the communities visited on sexual abuse and defilement of girls by men and older boys.

The situation of child abuse in Ghana extends beyond the abuse of only girls. Some studies also cited the abuse of boys as well. It was noted that boys were also sexually abused by other boys and men, especially, in boarding schools (GHS 2018: 37). According to the study by the Ghana Health Service, *“both young boys and girls were lured by older adults,*

or peers, into viewing pornography and other sexual materials in video centres, on the internet, on social media, and other sources” (2018:36).

3.3.2 Socio-cultural perspectives

In an effort to understand CSA from the Ghanaian context, it is imperative to reflect on the circumstances under which CSA occurs in Ghana. That is, undertaking an exploration of the socio-cultural factors that influence CSA in the context of Ghana. This is because there is clear evidence that the multi-factorial nature of CSA implies that socio-cultural factors can contribute to the occurrence of CSA on one hand, and on the other hand, it can influence any interventions or programs aimed at responding to the menace. It is argued that perspectives about the concept and cause of CSA are rooted in socio-cultural factors, and these perspectives influences what is considered as appropriate intervention approaches for both victims and perpetrators (Bohemn 2017: 820; Boakye 2009).

It is observed that although CSA is a global phenomenon, it is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and economic factors in the context in which it occurs (GHS 2018: 80; Krug *et al.* 2002). A recent study in Ghana observed that socio-cultural and economic factors have contributed to the sexual violence against children, as well as their inability to come out of such abuse. The study found that the majority of the respondents “agreed that culture of the victims and perpetrators accounted for domestic violence against women and children (Azumah, Onzaberigu & Manfred 2017:23).

In the first place, the societal perception of what constitute CSA is key in defining the problem, as well as instituting measures to address it. In Ghana, it is recognised that there is a difference between what is regarded as CSA among professionals and lay people (Bohm 2017:820). Whiles professionals define CSA in legal terms, lay people examine it in the light of whether the abuse is associated with violence and or whether there are possibilities of gains or financial compensation. The lay persons’ concept could be derived from the perception of the girls involved or their families. Some children may not consider their experiences as abuse when violence is not associated with the sexual encounter, and in other cases when there is financial gains or support from perpetrators (Adomako

Ampofo *et al.* 2007; Sika-Bright & Nnorom 2013). Other studies revealed that sexual exploitation such as prostitution of young girls is seen as a moral failure on the part of girls and their families. It is not considered child abuse because of the material gains such as money, mobile phones, food, and shelter (GNCRC, 2015; Böhm, 2017: 820). In addition, a Child Research and Resource Centre (2009) reported from their survey that younger children may consider sexual abuse as normal. Some children hold this view because they were stigmatised for disclosing the abuse, and in some cases, nothing was done to the perpetrators. This situation of gaps in the concept of CSA among stakeholders such as the professionals, families and the children call for great concern. It was observed that this phenomenon has resulted in significant differences between what is legally accepted and what is socially accepted as CSA in Ghana (Child Research and Resource Centre, 2009; GNCRC, 2015). Consequently, a significant number of cases of CSA occur without the appropriate legal redress and societal response (Bohm 2017:821-822; Ohene 2015).

When Agu and colleagues (2018:127) investigated the perception of school children about actions taken by school authorities against perpetrators of CSA, it was reported that more than half of the participants (52.7%) were dissatisfied with the actions taken by authorities. The report further indicates that 29.8% of the children cited that no action was taken by authorities whilst 22.9% could not tell whether or not the incident was reported by the school authorities to the law enforcement agencies. This perception could partly contribute to the fact that some children may not consider the abuse as a problem, thereby may not disclose it.

Another important socio-cultural issue in Ghana that influences CSA is the family system. In Ghana, children are defined in the context of a family as indicated by the Child and Family Welfare Policy (2014). This implies that what affects the family affects children and vice versa. In Ghana families function as extended systems, which widens the social protection network for children. On the contrary, it also widens the occurrences of CSA. This is because there is evidence that the majority of the cases of CSA in the Ghanaian context are perpetrated by family members, and also those in close relationship with children (Child Research and Resource Centre 2009). When sexual abuse of children is

perpetrated by family members, it may go unnoticed by authorities for a very long time since it is a forbidden area for conversation (Bohmn 2017:821-822). Commenting on this scenario, Boakye (2009:960) observed that in the collectivistic nature of the Ghanaian culture, it is difficult to talk about intrafamilial sexual abuse of children because of what he described as “collective shame”. This implies that the entire family share in the shame of CSA when the issue is in the public domain. Consequently, there are two main choices for the family members with regard to CSA. Boakye indicated that on one hand, the family keeps abuse secretly in order to prevent the child from stigmatisation and public ridicule. This is aimed at protecting the interest of the child. On the other hand, the family will keep the abuse in secret to prevent shame that will be brought to the family. In this case, the interest of the family takes precedence over that of the child. This situation results in the possibilities of families focusing on alternative ways of resolving the issue such as financial compensation from the perpetrator, and because of this, family members will not report the case to the police for redress (Bohmn 2017:819-820; Sossou & Yogtiba 2009).

With regard to family system influence on legal redress, a recent nationwide study on the gaps in the health sector response to CSA, revealed that in some instances, even when CSA is reported, families may withdraw the case or abandoned the case due to societal expectations (GHS 2018:80). The report further observed that “even in rape cases the victims’ families sometimes agree with influential perpetrators to withdraw the case from the police” (GHS 2018:81). Consequently, the family may never follow up on the case with the police, leading to complete abandonment, that is, the perpetrators being free.

Some families will also pursue the case until justice is administered when the police are slacking in their duties for several reasons such as bribery, and when the perpetrator is highly influential in society. For instance, a recent media report contained the sexual abuse of a 14-year-old girl, continuously for three days by three young men. The report indicated that police arrested the men and later released them and advised the family to seek out of court redress. However, the family of the victim insisted that justice will be pursued to the letter. The victim’s father lamented “my daughter was raped by three young men. After we reported the incident to the police the boys were arrested as my daughter was admitted for five days at a health facility in the community. I was later told the young men have

been released and the police are insisting we should do an out of court settlement. This was on my blind side; we will want the law to take its full course” (Badu 2020).

Another concern is the fact that in Ghanaian culture, maintaining the virginity of girls before marriage is the pride of families (Mansaray 2008:ii). As a result, when sexual abuse occurs, families are more likely to remain silent in an attempt to protect their girl of being level as a “bad girl” (Van der Geugten, Van Meijel, Den Uyl & Vries, 2013). Similarly, Boakye (2009:960) observed that girls who experience CSA may be labelled as ‘damaged’, and also blamed for acting in ways that attracted the attention of the perpetrator of the abuse. Mansaray (2008: ii) also noted that in some cases, the girl is “re-victimized by the stigma attached to her as the one who has brought disgrace on her family by virtue of her defloration outside of marriage”. The stigma or fear of the stigma of being a ‘bad’ girl may cause some victims to remain silent about the abuse. This implies that families will take steps to protect the honour with virginity and the risk of their girls being tagged as damaged, which also has implications for the marriage of the girls. That is, CSA may be concealed in order to keep their girls considered good candidates for marriage.

Further, the socialisation of girls in the Ghanaian culture has also been cited a socio-cultural norm that create an environment where girls are highly susceptible to CSA. Mansaray (2008:ii) observed that children are socialised to esteem adults’ instruction and carry it out without question, and the fact that “girls are socialized as helpers at home” give easy access to children by potential perpetrators of CSA. Similarly, Quampah (2014:37) observed that although respect is expected to be reciprocal between adults and children, the traditional idea of upbringing of children in Ghana is that children are socialised to be respectful and dutiful to adults irrespective of the treatment given to them. Quampah argues that this orientation contributes to the alarming state of child abuse in the country. This societal norm may contribute to reason CSA is usually perpetrated by adults in close relationship, and in the environment of children.

Poverty was considered a key socio-cultural factor that play a role in CSA. Poverty could be considered as a 'double edged sword' due to its role as contributing to the cause of violence against children, and also has implications for children seeking interventions (WHO, 2004). It was noted that some of the perpetrators, are often breadwinners since they are usually part of the child's family (Defence for Children International 2016:21). This implies that poverty can maintain the abuse since the victim may have no other options but depend on the abuser for daily living (Azumah, Onzaberigu & Manfred 2017:23).

Agu and colleagues (2018:125) observed that poverty has significant implications for the contextual understanding of CSA and indicated that the rising nature of poverty could contribute to the increasing levels of CSA, especially, sexual exploitation of children in the country. It is estimated that 25% of the population in Ghana live in poverty (Ghana Living Standard Survey 2014:19), and this makes poverty a key issue in the understanding and strategic response to CSA. For instance, reports from the Department of Social Welfare revealed that in 2009, out of the 10,000 cases dealt with, 49% were related to parents' inability to provide in the basic needs of children. Parents lack the financial ability to support the basic needs of their children (UNICEF Ghana 2011:22). Similarly, statistics from the DOVVSU also indicated that 67% were in the area of child maintenance (UNICEF Ghana 2011:22-23).

The implications of poverty for the contextual analysis of CSA are enormous. The Human Right Watch (2001) suggests that poverty could force children into offering sex in exchange for food, money, gifts, shelter, and protection. The poverty situation leads to some parents sending their children to sell after school, weekend, and sometimes in the night, in order to obtain income to support their families (Ghana NGOs Coalition on the Rights of the Child [GNCRC] 2015:22). In 2013, data from Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) showed that 23% of children aged 5-14 years were involved in some economic activity to supplement the low level of income of parents (GLSSS 2013).

Ghana NGOs Coalition on the Rights of the Child (2015:22) reported a case of how a 15-year old girl was sexually abused during selling:

“I walked round my community selling charcoal for my mother after school. One of the buyers did not pay me, instead asked me to come the next time for the money. When I got home and told my mother about it, she got angry and asked me to go for the money. It was around 6pm. When I got to my school on my way to collect the money, an old man approached me and asked what I was doing around the school at that time. I told him how I sold on credit and my mother has angrily asked me to go for the money. He promised to give me the money so I could go back home to give to my mother. He then held my hand and pulled me to the back of one of the classroom blocks, pulled down my underwear and had sex with me. He told me to come to his house for the money, but I returned and told my mother what he has done to me. My mother and father both beat me up before sending me to DOVVSU to report the incident” (GNCR 2015:22).

This implies that the endemic nature of poverty in Ghana contributes to the complexities of CSA in Ghana; that is, influencing the cause of sexual violence, as well as intervention strategies (International Needs Ghana 2014:51).

Inadequate sexuality education is another socio-cultural factor cited. Education on sexuality has been identified a powerful tool in preventing CSA (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention 2015; Robinson *et al.* 2017). It is believed that comprehensive education on sexuality to children put them in a position to identify behaviours that can lead to CSA (Markwei 2019:131; Robinson *et al.* 2017). In Ghana, cultural factors consider sex education as a taboo, thereby making it difficult for parents and other adults to provide sex education to children (Stone, Ingham & Gibbins 2013). In a recent qualitative study, data was collected from 19 children who are victims of CSA and from parents in the Greater Accra Region to investigate the role of sexuality education by parents in preventing CSA. It was observed that many of the parents were unable to provide sexuality education, and those who attempted rather gave strong warnings to their children about sex (Markwei 2019:131). Further the study reports that lack of adequate education of sexuality resulted in children relying on information from peers and the media, leading to increase in the occurrences of CSA. According to a study by the International Needs Ghana, inadequate knowledge of sexuality and reproductive health are key socio-cultural factors that contribute to child sex tourism in Ghana (2014:51).

The relationship between socio-cultural factors and interventions strategies was considered in this contextual analysis. There is evidence that socio-cultural issues have also influence interventions, especially, in the area of disclosure, and reporting of CSA to authorities. The WHO (2009) maintains that certain socio-cultural factors and settings in our society makes sexual violence against children as a sensitive topic. As a result of this perspectives, it is considered a taboo of talking about sex, especially among children. This may lead to several cases of CSA not being reported. Consequently, perpetrators may escape the punishment, which is supposed to serve as deterrent to potential perpetrators (Defence for Children International 2016:22; Watts & Zimmerman 2002).

The culture of 'collective shame' has also been identified as having significant influence on the disclosure and reporting of CSA (Boakye 2009:951). The notion of collective shame refers to "the tendency for individuals belonging to a particular group (family, clan, or lineage) to feel or express a strong sense of embarrassment following an undesirable attitude or behaviour by a member of the group, particularly those that are considered potentially damaging or threatening to the reputation of the group" (Baokye 2009:961). The culture of collective shame has two main implications. On one hand, the victim may not disclose the abuse due to fear of shame and stigma by her family, and on the other hand, the family may also not disclose the abuse to relevant authorities due to family sharing in the stigma and shame of the victim (Boakey 2009:963). This implies that the shame that CSA brings to the victim will be shared by all the family members. Consequently, family members are more likely to concealed sexual abuse of children. This is even complicated in instances of intrafamilial abuse. It is important to note that when CSA is unreported, it often goes unpunished, and this phenomenon can contribute to the continuation of the abuse. In some cases, when the abuse is unreported, it also denies the victim access to a wide range of interventions such as medical, psychological, and legal services.

3.3.3 Legal perspective

This section explores the legal and policy framework of CSA in Ghana. The legal perspectives are a critical aspect of the intervention strategies in Ghana in that CSA is considered a crime in the Ghanaian society.

Ghana has laws, acts, protocols, ratified conventions, policies, and similar regulations that are supposed to protect children's rights and protect them from violence, exploitation, and abuse. Ghana's existing legal framework such as the acts, policies and regulations were informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989 (Agu *et al.* 2018:126). In 1990, Ghana ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which tasked every country to institute appropriate measures to safeguard children. As a result, certain laws, and policies as well as institutions were established to undertake appropriate measures to protect children from physical, mental, and sexual violence (GHS 2018:41; Agu *et al.* 2018:126).

Some of the key components of the country's comprehensive legal framework which protects children from sexual abuse are the 1992 Constitution, the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560), the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 1998 (Act 554) and the Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 732). With regard to the 1992 Constitution, chapter 5 outlines the fundamental human rights and freedom and Article 28 spells out the rights of children under the Constitution. The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, of 1998 (Act 554) describes different aspect of sexual offences such as rape, defilement, indecent assault, and incest as well as the punishment that those offences attract with various aspects of sexual offences (Agu *et al.* 2018:126-127). The section 98 defines rape as "the carnal knowledge of a female of 16 years or above without her consent." Section 97 states: "whoever commits rape shall be guilty of a first-degree felony and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than 25 years." Section 101, sub-section 1 defines defilement as "the natural or unnatural carnal knowledge of any child under 16 years of age." Sub-section 2 further states: "whoever naturally or unnaturally carnally knows any child under 16 years of age, whether with or without his or her consent commits an offence and shall be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term of not less than 7 years and not more than 25 years". The Children's Act 560 (1998) contains "reform and consolidate the law relating to children, to provide for the rights of the child, maintenance and adoption, regulate child labour and apprenticeship, for ancillary matters concerning children generally and to provide for related matters". This is a clear indication that there is a comprehensive legal framework that is expected to guide the institutions and agencies to implement strategies to promote the welfare of children, and protection from all forms of abuse.

The question as to whether these legal instruments are put to the best use in order to ensure a strong systemic approach to fighting child abuse is another issue for the ensued discussion. In spite of this comprehensive nature of the legal framework, there is evidence that the implementation of these laws to ensure adequate protection has been poor, resulting in limited success in the country's efforts to deal with CSA (Boakye 2009:951; GHS2018:81). Although Ghana has made some significant progress with regard to reforms in the child justice system, there are weaknesses in the policy frameworks that should guide the implementation of the delivery of justice to children (UNICEF 2011).

These comprehensive legal instruments paved the way for the establishment of agencies and institutions for effective implementation of programs and services to ensure the safeguard of children in the communities of Ghana. Some of the key institutions are the DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Department of Children; Gender-based Violence Court; and the Girl Child Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service (GHS 2018:41).

The DOVVSU is a department within the Ghana Police Service that deals with human rights abuses towards women and children. The DOVVSU plays a major role in protecting children from violence at district, regional, and national level (GHS 2018:42-43).

Furthermore, certain policies and interventions were also introduced to provide guidelines to stakeholders and institutions in the implementation of child welfare and protection programs and services in the country. Some of the policies and interventions include: Free Compulsory Basic Education (1996); Livelihood empowerment against the poor (2007); National Policy and Plan of Action on Domestic Violence (2009); Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) (2010); National Plan of Action on the Elimination of the Worst

Forms of Child Labour in Ghana (2011); and National Gender and Children's Policy (2013).

It is expected that these guidelines and policies will help consolidate the country's effort to address violence against children. However, it is recognised that in spite of this strong policy framework in place, the country is still yet to make significant progress in the fight against CSA. In the same vein, at the 69th Session of the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Geneva, Switzerland in 2015, it was indicated that Ghana is still behind in completing strategic policies and operational guidelines to ensure that the rights of children are protected (Donkor 2015). In response to some of the gaps in the child protection system in the country, the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection launched a Child and Family Welfare Policy (CFWP) in July 2015, with its prime focus on the establishment of a comprehensive and functional system of child protection in the country in order to meet the current global ideals for child and family welfare.

The policy presents a "child and family welfare system that comprise of laws and policies, programmes, services, practices and structures designed to promote the well-being of children by ensuring safety and protection from harm; achieving permanency and strengthening families to care for their children successfully. This Policy understands that a child is an integral part of the family, as such, a child's welfare cannot be separated from that of the family" (CFWP 2014:vi). This policy also calls on all stakeholders, including faith communities to institute measures to protect children. The government of Ghana is expected to provide adequate resources for the smooth functioning of the Child and Family Welfare services at all levels.

It is interesting to note that the comprehensive nature of the legal system for child protection, has resulted in the attainment of legal redress for a number of cases of violence against children, including CSA (GNCRC 2015:19). Also, the legal framework has paved the way for the establishment of relevant policies, institutions and agencies tasked with the welfare of children.

Notwithstanding, this comprehensive legal framework in Ghana for the protection of children, some concerns have been raised with regard to effective implementation to ensure children are safeguarded in our communities (GNCRC 2015:19; GHS 2018:81). In one study by the Ghana Health Service (GHS), it was reported that community members believed that enforcement of the law on child protection will inject a responsibility on people. The report further argued if perpetrators of child abuse are arrested and prosecuted, it will send a strong warning, and will serve as a deterrent to others (GHS 2018:79-80).

Another challenge in the legal redress is the institutional bureaucracy. It was observed that sometimes, it might take two years or more to bring one case of CSA to a close (GHS 2018:80). As a result, sometimes, families and community members might lose interest in pursuing the case to a logical conclusion. Further, when a case of CSA is reported to the police, they may ask for money and other resources from the victim to carry out investigations (GHS 2018:81).

Additionally, it was indicated that although CSA is a first-degree felony, sometimes, the police allow the case to be withdrawn for the purposes of settlement in the community. Sometimes too, whilst the law ensures the perpetrators are arrested, and prosecuted, it does not ensure that victims receive other essential services like medical and psychosocial support. Consequently, some victims' life situations may get worse off despite the fact that the perpetrators are punished by law (GHS 2018:80). For example, GNCRC (2015:23) contains a report of the frustration of respondents from an NGO:

“One of our projects seeks justice for children through the provision of support for victims of sexual abuse to report to DOVVSU. We have encountered so many challenges with the system and the process can be very frustrating, victims are expected to pay for the medical examination that prove the abuse to support prosecution and the cost is enough to stop victims from reporting. Secondly, victims and their families are sometimes expected to bear the cost of transportation for the arrest of the suspect. This is further compounded by the cost of transportation throughout the investigation and to court as well. It took us almost 18 months of trial before the judgement was passed on one of the

cases we supported. You can imagine how many people would be able to afford the cost and time to go through such a process. The reality is that sometimes the victims give up along the way truncating the entire process. Besides, a majority of the cases go unreported, and some offenders go on to abuse other children with all impunity. The laws are there beautifully but it cannot be enforced to the latter because the institutions with that mandate do not have what it takes to do so effectively.”

It is evident that more efforts are required on the part of government and other stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the legal and policy framework geared to child protection in the country.

3.3.4 Medical and psychological health

The health implication of CSA cannot be overemphasised. There is evidence that sexual abuse of child has adverse effect on their health. Some studies revealed that CSA has been associated with mental health problems such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders, depression, anxiety, and suicide (Kim, Park & Park 2017:372; Wilson 2010:56; O'Leary & Gould, 2009:950). Similarly, other studies also reported physical health implications of CSA such as autoimmune problems, sexually transmitted diseases, irritable bowel syndrome, asthma, fibromyalgia, and many others (Bohme 2017:823; Wilson 2010:56).

Due to the varied nature of health needs of victims of sexual abuse, and the fact that most countries are unable to meet these needs, the WHO developed guidelines to ensure adequate response to the health needs of the victims (WHO 2003). In Ghana, the laws on sexual violence against children, and the Child and Family Welfare Policy make provisions for free healthcare services. In addition, the policy mandates the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service to ensure comprehensive medical and psychological care, as well as supporting victims and their families to access other relevant services (GH 2018:85).

A recent study conducted in Cape Coast, in the Central Regional capital of Ghana, a situational analysis of the healthcare providers' response to sexual violence was

assessed. Both qualitative and quantitative data obtained from two health facilities, indicated that supplies such as pre-packed rape kits, post-exposure HIV prophylaxis, and informational handouts on medications and support services for survivors were not available in both facilities. Also, both management and staff of the hospital did not receive any training on the clinical management for survivors of sexual violence, including providers' role in reporting sexual violence to authorities, medical forensic exams, reproductive and sexual health services, and referral for mental healthcare. Furthermore, stigma and structural barriers, such as cost of medical supplies and lack of privacy within the healthcare facilities were cited as barriers to healthcare providers' response to sexual violence against children and women (Cannon *et al.* 2020:1-2).

Although, the legal and policy framework that protect children in Ghana made provisions for free healthcare for victims of CSA, a recent study in six regions of Ghana to assess gaps and capacity of the Ghana Health Service found out that there were no free health services in most cases. Further, the expenses relating to transport from and to different locations, as well as healthcare providers' request for laboratory investigations such as HIV tests, test for Hepatitis, test for STDs, and other tests were catered for by the victim and family (GHS 2018:86).

With regard to the initial standard protocol when CSA occurs, a report is made at the police station and a Police Medical Referral Form is obtained to be sent to health facilities. The form is filled and signed by a medical doctor after examination of the victim. This report assists both healthcare providers and the law enforcement agencies in handling the case. It was reported that in order for this protocol to be followed in instances of CSA, the victim should be prepared to compensate medical doctors for this service since the National Insurance Scheme does not cover the cost of these services relating to the medical examination and filling of the Police Medical Referral Form (GHS 2018:86). The implication of the current situation is that there is a significant gap between the legal and policy framework with regard to access to healthcare by victims of CSA in Ghana.

3.3.5 Media reportage on CSA in Ghana

This session takes account of contextual analysis of media reports of CSA in Ghana, and how this situation has influenced the response of stakeholders in Ghana. Media reportage has been the source of information for most communities on issues of public concern, and Ghana is not an exception. There is evidence that the knowledge, perception, and general attitude of the public with regard to CSA is largely influenced by the reports in the media (Popović 2018:752; Weathered 2015:16). Similarly, it is also argued that comprehensive media reportage of CSA is more likely to inform policy making and also appropriate responses (Mejia, Cheyne & Dorfman 2012:470; Weathered 2015:16). This indicates the important role that the media plays in the formation of people's perceptions, attitude, and feelings in this regard, as well as the formulations of policies and responses. Consequently, media reportage contributes to the primary data, aimed at obtaining an adequate picture of the situation in a particular context.

The media is replete with issues of CSA. In effort to investigate some epidemiological characteristics of victims and perpetrators in Ghana, Quarshie *et al.* (2017:121) conducted a qualitative analysis of media reports of 48 cases between 2008 and 2015. It was observed that father-daughter incest was most common, and that 45 of this case were female between the ages of 3 and 25.

Although this report focused on incest, which is one form of CSA, it contributes to the argument that CSA is a reality in Ghana, and a call on all stakeholders to respond. Similarly, in a joint press statement by the Paediatric Society of Ghana (PSG) and the Greater Accra division of the Ghana Medical Association (GMA), great worry of the significant rise in reported cases of child abuse in the country is expressed. The two associations further reiterated that *“there is a steady rise in children reporting to our various institutions with neglect, physical, sexual and psychological abuse”*. (PSG 2017). The two associations made reference to an example of the recent heart-wrenching story of a 4-year-old girl from Assin Adadientem in the Central Region of Ghana who was sexually abused by a resident of her community and some media reports of a delay in apprehending the alleged offender. Further, the press statement indicated that *“as associations concerned with the welfare of Ghanaians, especially children, the Paediatric*

Society of Ghana and the Ghana Medical Association resoundingly condemn all acts of child abuse and add our voices to the call on all stakeholders to ensure that justice is served” (PSG 2017).

Child Rights International (CRI) Ghana added her voice to the alarming rate of CSA reported in the media. The organisation indicated that “within the space of four years, 5,752 cases relating to sexual abuse against children have been reported, while several others are never brought to the attention of authorities” (CRI 2017). This report covers a period between 2014-2017, the organisation also indicated most of the perpetrators are people known to the victims and often live in the immediate environment of the victim. As a result, the organisation launched “SAY IT” campaign. The organisation recognised the challenges victims and their family face in bringing the incident to the awareness of authorities. The campaign provides a 24/7 helpline where both children and their families as well as others can phone in to report cases of CSA. As part of the campaign, the organisation will link victims to the necessary services to address their plight. It is believed that such media reports and campaigns enable the relevant stakeholders to take timely appropriate actions.

3.3.6 Ecclesial analysis

The state has key expectations of the church in when it comes to children. The church is expected to institute measures that will not only talk about the fact that CSA is a sin and a crime, but to take concrete steps in the area of strategic communication as well as to provide care and support to victims of CSA. Initiation of strategic communication should flow from the churches proactive measures to promote child protection and stop in our society. In order for the church to initiate such action and maintain this, it requires a Christian spirituality and faith praxis that is rooted in their mode of being and belief system.

The church is God’s people called out of the world first unto God, and secondly send out into the world to show forth the character and nature of God (1 Peter 2:9). The church is God’s instrument through which God is restoring the whole creation to himself. As an evangelical, my faith commitment is that Christ is the redeemer and lord of all creation. I

believe the church is the hope of the world. She is the salt and light of world (Matthew 5:13-16). As salt, it is to preserve God's creation and to correct injustices in the world. As a light of the world, she is to show the way of God through Christ.

The church as a family is expected to care for members, and also be an instrument of God to care for members of the community. Couture (2003:28-40) presents a social work family system model, which supports the idea that churches are valuable in child protection. This model includes churches as one of the important layers in the protective cover for children. It is also observed that child protection traces its earliest commitments to communities of faith, with many Protestant congregations and Catholic religious orders providing the majority of services related to child protection and family support (Garland & Chamiec-Case 2005:22-43). Similarly, the church is also a valuable resource for those recovering from abuse (Carothers, Borkowki, Burke & Whitman 2005: 263-275).

Jesus Christ, who is the owner and head of the church (Ephesians 1:22) admonishes that children are at the centre of the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:14-15). He charged his church to create an environment where children are accepted, valued, and feel welcome, and that the church should remove any stumbling block to the faith of children (Matthew 18:5-6).

According to the World Council of Churches' (WCC) conversation on the advocacy for the rights of children, it concluded that *"the church is called to care for children in the community and the church by advocating for their rights in partnership with other organizations, by empowering them to stand up for their rights and by implementing policies and procedures to protect children* (WCC 2017:146). This consensus by the WCC is in the right direction. The global church must act now due to the alarming proportion of abuse of children in societies across the globe. The WCC indicated that *"many children in every part of the world are at risk, particularly as a result of violence, conflict, and a neoliberal globalized economy. Children are among the most vulnerable victims of injustice, poverty, and abuse. Furthermore, children have been abused even within the churches. It is our responsibility to protect them, to nurture them spiritually and to advocate for them"* (2017:141). It is important to note that this call for churches to respond

to the world's problem of CSA is also coming from governments and other civil society organisations across the globe. For instance, UNICEF indicates that “faith communities were, and have been significantly involved in advocacy for millions of vulnerable children and disadvantaged families even before the inception of the work of UNICEF. Consequently, faith communities continue to be an indispensable partner in UNICEF’s work to advance children’s rights and enhance their well-being. Such partnerships are especially important in our renewed focus on reaching the poorest, most vulnerable, and hardest to reach children and families” (2012:iii).

In addition, the WCC, during the 10th General Assembly in 2013, invited churches globally to commit to the promotion of the protection of children both in the churches’ environment and the larger society (WCC/UNICEF 2017:2). The commitment acknowledges that “all forms of violence against children - individual or structural neglect, sexual, physical or verbal are completely antithetical to God’s will revealed in Holy Scripture and the life and the teachings of Christ” (WCC/UNICEF 2017:8). For this call by global Christian community and civil society organisations to become an integral part of the Christian spirituality and faith praxis of faith communities, it must be rooted in the doctrinal principles of faith communities.

In Ghana, the Children’s Act 1998 (Acts 650) stipulates among other provisions, that “the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration by any court, person, institution or other body in any matter concerned with a child” (1998:6). As a result, faith communities are also mandated to do ministry with children in a such a way that the best interest of the child is brought to bear in all matters.

In addition, the Child, and Family Welfare Policy (2014) calls on all stakeholders to be advocates, and also institute measures to safeguard children. The policy further recognises the key role faith communities plays in our society, consequently, postulate that faith communities can contribute to the following areas: “provide communication and education initiatives that promote positive family values; provide direct help to vulnerable families and serve as their advocates; provide care and support services to families, children and adolescents; and participate in national co-ordination activities to minimize

duplication and enhance the establishment of complementary programmes, projects and activities” (2014:22).

It could of interest to explore the extent to which faith communities adhere to this, in the wake of CSA in faith communities, and also, in the communities where they serve. This section explores the extent to which the Christian faith communities in Ghana are living up to the expectation in this regard. It is estimated that approximately 71 percent of Ghanaian profess to belong to the Christian faith. Consequently, almost every community is housed with at least one church denomination. All the churches factor children in their ministry. Most churches have special programs for children known as ‘Children’s Ministry’ or ‘Sunday school’. These programs aimed at teaching the word of God, and also the Christian faith to children. Most churches have trained volunteers often known as ‘Sunday School Teachers’ or ‘Children Workers’ who are assigned to holding separate Sunday morning church services (Sunday school or children’s services), where children are engaged with the Holy Scriptures. My personal observations and interactions with leaders of different church denominations indicate the ministry to children in Ghana by the churches seems to be homogenous. It could be described as leaning more towards the educational paradigm of children ministry as the language of educational system such as teachers, age-graded classes, syllabus, and the likes are used in their programs (Grobblaar 2016:58). Besides the regular Sunday school services, most churches organise camp meetings and other outreaches with children as indicated in the moment of insertion. These are often held during vacations and public holidays.

A recent study focused on examining child protection in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost in 39 local congregations in the Winneba Municipality of Ghana. The church of Pentecost is the largest Pentecostal Church denomination in Ghana, as a result, have local congregations in most communities across the length and breadth of the country (Pew Research 2006). A recent report showed that the Church has approximately ten percent of the Ghanaian population estimated at 30 million (Church of Pentecost 2020).

The study obtained data from clergy and lay leaders in the 39 congregations. The findings revealed that “all the participants understood child protection as the plans, activities and

structures put in place to safeguard children. Also, that the church is an integral part of the community is a major reason why it should be actively involved in child protection.

Interestingly, and perhaps disturbingly, Scripture was not cited as the main reason for the church's need for participation in children protection. Another concern was that the churches relied entirely on church services with children, teaching the children the word of God, child naming and dedication ceremonies for contributing to child protection. Also, there are no strategic alliances between the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba Municipality and state agencies that are tasked with the responsibility of child protection" (Kpalam 2019:42).

The findings with regard to the fact that there are limited to no guidelines of child protection in the church could be said to be the general situation in the country. As previously indicated in the moment of insertion, my personal interaction and engagement with leaders of church denominations showed that there are no specific guidelines on the protection of children. For instance, I co-authored a book with the title '*Our children: The place of child protection in the church's ministry*'. In this book, we advocated for the need for churches to develop their own guidelines for the protection of children. Consequently, we made attempts to search for samples of churches' child protection guidelines in Ghana, to be included as an appendix. It was observed that most churches do not have any specific guidelines. To the best of our search, it was the Methodist church Ghana and Catholic Church of Ghana that have child protection policies, giving specific guidelines on the church's response to the abuse of children in their ministry, and also in the larger society.

The document of the Methodist Church Ghana, which is titled '*Guidelines for Child Protection*' provides detailed directions for key stakeholders such as volunteers in children ministry (Sunday school teachers), ministers, other leaders, and the entire congregation with regard to the steps to be taken when child abuse occurs in the church and the community. The policy also emphasises the need for taking steps to prevent the occurrences of child abuse. The policy, among other things contained that the "Methodist Church, Ghana, is opposed to all forms of child abuse and exploitation and will do

everything within its power to ensure that no harm comes to any child within the Church and in the communities in which we serve. The Church recognizes that the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child also implies the performance of our moral and Godly duties and reaffirms adherence to the principles of the rights and welfare of the Child contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the African Union's Declaration of the Rights and Welfare of the African Child" (Methodist Church Ghana 2016:2).

It was observed that the guidelines from the Methodist church was adopted from the Compassion International Ghana's child protection policy for their church partners. As already indicated, Compassion International partner with churches in Ghana for Christian holistic child development. Child protection is at the centre stage of Compassion's ministry with children. As a result, it is mandatory for all her church partners to commit themselves to child protection. For instance, in 2014, Compassion Ghana organised a three-day conference on child protection for 220 pastors of their church partners. The conference which was titled 'Child protection: action for all', saw the Country director of Compassion Ghana, Mr. Padmore Agyepong admonished the pastors that "church leaders have a mandate to put in a voice to protect children in their care, and if the church, for that matter has the voice, how is it using that power to change the societal evil" (Ghana News Agency 2014).

The Catholic Church in Ghana is actively involved in child protection. As already indicated, she developed her own child protection guidelines. The document, titled '*The Child Protection Policy for the Catholic Church in Ghana*' provides extensive coverage of the subject of child abuse, child protection and the role of key stakeholders such as children, caregivers, pastors, and pastoral agents to safeguard children in the church and society. The policy among other things indicated that "it is regrettable and sad that the Church which identifies herself with the poor and vulnerable is itself accused of covering up and not doing enough to protect children and the vulnerable. The release of painstaking investigative documents on years of child sexual abuse has not only dented the image and credibility of the church but has also compromised her very mission to children in society" (Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference 2019:4).

The Policy paved the way for the Catholic Church in Ghana to embark on comprehensive interventions that target all stakeholders such as the clergy, parent, teachers in schools and traditional leaders. In a media report on July 26, 2019, it was indicated that the Navrongo-Bolgatanga Catholic Diocese in the Upper East Region which also operates in some parts of the Northern Region has been instrumental in fighting the menace of CSA. The report further indicates that “apart from engaging and offering series of training programmes for stakeholders on how to help curb child abuse, the Diocese had developed its own Child Protection Policy (CPP) document, drawing its contents from the Child Protection and Family Welfare Document of the Gender Ministry and UNICEF to protect children” (Akapule 2019). In addition, the Catholic Church has inaugurated Child Protection Policy Teams in those Regions.

Further, the Catholic Church initiated a nationwide campaign to empower children to report CSA to relevant authorities. In a media report titled ‘*Catholic Church sensitises children to report abuses*’, the Most Rev Charles Palmer-Buckle, who is the vice president of the Ghana Catholic Bishop Conference has urged all children to be bold to report all forms of abuse metered out to them in their communities. The Bishop remarked when addressing a durbar of school children in Accra that “as little children, do not allow yourself to be abused in the church by any church elder, in school by teachers and at home by parents and guardians” (Agyeman 2018). This implies that the Bishop, who is a high-ranking member of the Catholic Church in Ghana recognised that child abuse occurs in faith communities as well. This is supported by the fact that he lamented “there are abuses in the church and it is shameful; if a priest, a religious or a church elder is asking something of you that is not allowed, tell the person straight in the face that you will report it to your parents” (Agyeman 2018).

It could be said that the high-ranking status of Bishop Buckle will help the children to recognise that abuse is unacceptable, and will be encouraged to report, especially, those that occur in faith communities where church leaders are the perpetrators. The Bishop further reiterated “I am not here to defend us; it is bad, it is shameful, and the Pope has told us that as Catholic bishops, priests and leaders, we must make sure that in the church

the children feel safe and should come to the church knowing fully well that they are safe” (Agyeman 2018).

The implication of the Bishop’s submission is that CSA should not take place among faith communities who have a biblical mandate and a moral responsibility towards the little children (Matt. 18:5-6). It could be argued that the active participation of the Catholic Church in Ghana with regard to protecting children from CSA could be due to the global scandal of CSA among the clergy in the Catholic Church (Frawley-O’Dea 2007).

It is difficult to establish the incidence of CSA among faith communities just as it is difficult to establish national data due to the cultural influences on disclosure. That is, the evidence showed the reported cases of CSA are often below the actual state of the problem. To date, there is limited studies that established the actual situation of occurrence in faith communities in Ghana. However, some media reports contain sexual abuse of children by church leaders.

One study examined some epidemiological characteristics of perpetrators and victims of incest in contemporary Ghana through the analysis of media reports of incest from 2008 to 2015. It was observed that 6.3% of the perpetrators were pastors (Quarshie *et al.* 2017:127). In addition, the researchers expressed grave concern about the involvement of church leaders in crime against society, and sin against God since they are seen as role models for their congregation.

In some cases, church leaders have been cited, especially in media reports as being hinderances in the fight against sexual abuses in Ghana, for instance, in one media report, the Northern Regional Coordinator of the DOVVSU of the Ghana Police, Deputy Superintendents (DSP) lamented that “*most of the families of the victims report to the unit when the cases get worse, with the explanation that their pastors and Imans have sat on the case to resolve it properly between the victim and the perpetrator*” (Agyeman 2018). The lament from the police is worrying. This is partly because CSA is a criminal case, in which case, it is illegal to be settled at home by religious leaders. This interference of

religious leaders have been reported by other studies. For instance, one study that examined sexual violence against girls in schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana observed that although faith communities play a significant role in the lives of people, leaders sometimes combine forces with community leaders to oppress the abused and discourage the reporting of CSA (Proulx & Martinez 2013:16). In addition, the study reported that religious leaders have contributed to hinderances of comprehensive sexuality education at home and schools, especially, by parents and teachers.

3.4 Summary and conclusions

The chapter provided contextual description and analysis of the realities of CSA in Ghana. The first two moments in the pastoral circle approach to practical theological enquiry such as the moment of insertion and social analysis was carried out. The first section is the moment of insertion, which outlines my personal experience of the realities of CSA. The second section is the moment of socio-ecclesial analysis of the situation of CSA in the context of Ghana. It was noted that the moment of insertion raised key issues such as the realities of CSA, the fact that most of the perpetrators are members in close relationships with children. Also, the fact that some churches do not have specific plans to prevent abuse from happening, both in their ministry, and in society at large. The socio-ecclesial analysis validated these issues, and also brought deeper and fresh insights to them. The chapter gleaned extensive data on the contextual realities of CSA in Ghana, and also among faith communities. It points to the complex and multi-factorial nature of CSA, that includes socio-cultural, legal, and medical and psychological dimensions. It could be argued that the staggering statistics of CSA in Ghana, and the glaring socio-cultural factors that influence the problem should compel all stakeholders, especially, the church to adopt strategic and pastoral theological responses to CSA.

It could be concluded that the chapter provided relevant primary data that will ensure that the end product of this theological journey, a theological pastoral response to CSA, is contextually relevant and speak to the situation in Ghana. A strategic and theological pastoral response of the church in Ghana to CSA could be influenced by different points of departure, such as understandings of what the role of the church should be, the role of children in the community, and others. I have chosen to take a relational view of the Trinity

as the point of departure, seeing as it has theological implications for these other understandings. Also, the chapter revealed that CSA is a complex issue in Ghana and as part of the complexity, is also seeking appropriate resources. Again, I have chosen the Trinity as a particular resource that could help shape the response to CSA by faith communities. In the following chapter and the next phase of the pastoral cycle, I now turn to the moment of theological reflection, with special focus on a relational view of the Trinity.

CHAPTER 4: A RELATIONAL VIEW OF THE TRINITY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the first two steps in the pastoral circle and investigated the moment of insertion and social-ecclesial analysis. In this chapter, the following step in the pastoral circle is taken, and accordingly, a relational view of the doctrine of the Trinity is discussed as focus of the theological reflection. The focus is on some key ideas and proposals of a relational view of the Trinity by theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna and Miroslav Volf, and what resources they provide that can inform a pastoral response to child sexual abuse (CSA) in the context of Ghana. I proceed from the essence of Christian doctrines to focus on the doctrine of the Trinity from the paradigm of relationality as a central motif. Prior to the explication of the theological resources gleaned from a relational view of the Trinity that can inform a pastoral response, I embarked on a brief historical and biblical perspective of the Trinity. This procession helped to obtain some historical and biblical insights of the Trinity, which may serve as a broader picture from which to appreciate the contributions of a relational view of the Trinity.

Christian doctrines are truths about God that are formulated with Scripture as the chief source. They are not just speculative ideas that are held, neither are doctrines ends in themselves but aimed at having practical implications for faith praxis and Christian spirituality in the faith community (Marmion & Nieuwenhove 2010:12). This section argues that our belief in the Triune God, that is the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit has important implications for faith communities. As observed by our belief that there is communion and relationship in the Trinity, human beings are created in His image and are called to share in this communion. This sharing in the dynamics of the Triune God has important practical “implications for anthropology, ecclesiology, and society” (Marmion & Nieuwenhove 2010:2). This notion is in support of Rahner’s assertion that *“there must be a connection between Trinity and humanity”* (1998:22). This implies that although, the Trinity is not explicit in Scripture, it would have not been inferred in Scripture if it had no relevance for the Christian faith. This is because, Scripture is expected to inform Christian faith praxis and spirituality.

In this chapter, emphasis is placed on the practical implications of a relational view of the Trinity in the life of faith communities. Insights from key theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna and Miroslav Volf were gleaned. The proponents of a relational view of the Trinity argue that the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit presents a relational view of God that should characterise the life of Christians. As Pembroke puts it *“since the relational element is at the very centre of pastoral work, it seemed to me that the doctrine of the Trinity must have the potential to make a major contribution to pastoral theory and practice”* (2006:7).

4.2 Historical perspectives of the doctrine of the Trinity

This section attempted a brief survey, and not a detailed account of the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity. In spite of the fact that the New Testament (NT) contains strong indicators of the Trinity and the Old Testament presents traces of the Trinity due to the several names (wisdom, word, Spirit) of God, the journey of the development of the doctrine has been tedious and not straightforward (Phan 2011:4). The NT contains strong indicators of the understanding that Christ is both human and God. Historically the doctrine of Christ has been a key issue of debate. The rise of philosophical ideas during the period of the church fathers focused primarily on the need to differentiate the spiritual from the material (Pembroke 2006:8).

In the medieval period, there was an attempt to grasp the concept of God. In the vision of Anselm of Canterbury, God is that whom nothing greater can be thought of (Phan 2011:7). The arguments put forth for the existence of God was placed in philosophical ideas, in which this was seen as a mystery that is difficult to understand (Farrelly 2005:221). The period called for harmony between faith and reason. On the other hand, the reformers rejected the harmony between faith and reason, and advocated for the separation of each of these concepts in their own right (Phan 2011:5; Pembroke 2006:8). The period asserts revelation as the only source of truth about God. For example, Martin Luther (1483-1546) believed that Jesus Christ, the crucified one is the only source of knowing God. The reformers had a vision of God as divine monarch with absolute power and sovereign will.

The enlightenment thinking discredits all forms of speculative thinking about God, that is, the doctrine of the Trinity. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 - 1834), considered 'the father of modern theology', rejected abstract discourse with regard to the differentiations within God (Farrelly 2005:223). Schleiermacher laid emphasis on the soteriological significance of the Trinity and demonstrated that the doctrine of the Trinity resulted from the reflection on the experience of redemption in Christ and the Spirit.

Scholars such as Schleiermacher and Hegel ushered the argument in the arena, where the doctrine is grounded in the biblical account, giving way to the twentieth century Trinitarian discourse that moved the emphasis from immanent trinity to economic trinity. Theologians such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, and Eberhard Jungel, brought argument from speculative, abstract idealising of the doctrine of the Trinity to the one that has radical practical implications for the Christian faith praxis and spirituality (Pembroke 2006:15).

In conclusion, the doctrine of the Trinity, like all Christian doctrines, has not been a simple road, moving from good to better, and better to best. The situation has been up and down, sometimes going down and other times resurfacing, and in some cases taking a new or renewed form (Phan 2011:4). The development of the doctrine of the Trinity has been a back and forward movement in an effort to juxtapose the belief in one God as with their experience of this God in unique and different ways as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The discourse has focused on the eternal relations (Immanent Trinity) with three distinctive manifestations of the one God often referred to the 'immanent' or 'transcendental' Trinity, and the relationship with human activities and the entire creation known as 'economic' Trinity (Phan 2011:5; Pembroke 2006:14-15).

In spite of these variations in the historical journey, the doctrine of the Trinity in more recent times, present an explicitly relational focus, with its attendant practical implications for faith communities and society at large. The Triune God is no longer conceptualised in the paradigm of an absolute subject, but rather as a network of relationships inclusive of humanity (Pembroke 2006:5-6). As observed by Sheldrake (1998:16) "to think of God as Trinity is fundamentally to assert, among other things, that within God there is society or

relationship. To affirm that human beings are created in the image of that God implies that they are called to share more and more in the deep communion that is divine life itself”.

4.3 Biblical perspectives of the Trinity

Is the Trinity a biblical concept? Does the Bible provide sufficient evidence for the doctrine of Trinity? Biblical perspectives seek to provide some answers to the question raised above. It is important to recognise that these questions are in themselves research questions that will require full attention. In this study, I do not seek to undertake a comprehensive exegetical and biblical study on the subject of the Trinity since this is not the focus of the study. Neither do I make a claim that the Trinity was fully developed based on the biblical account. I attempted to discuss a brief biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity and argued that Scripture provides adequate pointers and a basis for the development, belief, and Christian praxis of the Trinity (Edgar 2004:30).

This brief biblical survey adopts the Christological paradigm. According to this approach, the whole Bible is centred on, and rooted in Christ. Consequently, the interpretive key of Scripture is Christ (Kpalam & Light 2020:27-28; Smith 2013: 57). This makes Christ the exact representation and the complete revelation of God (Hebrews 1:3). With this, the biblical survey begins with the four Evangelist’s writings (Gospels) to obtain traces of the Trinity in the life, ministry, and teachings of Christ. After that, I turned my attention to Old Testament to glean the reasons behind what was observed in the ministry of Christ. Finally, the rest of the New Testament was consulted to gather the understanding and practice of the early apostles with regard to the Trinity.

In the Gospels, some Trinitarian thinking and practice were observed in the ministry of Christ. In the first place, Jesus said “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19, ESV). This statement is key in our effort to grasp the Trinity in the ministry and teachings of Christ. Although, some argue that this statement could be placed on Jesus by the early fathers to support a biblical formula for baptism, it is a critical point of

departure for biblical reflections on the Trinity (Phan 2011:3). It could be argued that Jesus taught and practiced a faith that is rooted in God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. consequently, before his ascension, the main task he gave, known as the great commission contains a Trinitarian faith seeking understanding and praxis (Edgar 2004:32).

Another pointer of the concept is that the Trinity indwells the believer. That is, the Father, the Son and the Spirit makes abode in the believer (John 14:15-31; 17:20-32), and this becomes the source of the transformation for Christian faith praxis and spirituality. In addition, the Trinitarian relation was observed in the conception and birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-56), and also during the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:1-11), the communion between the Father, the Son and the Spirit was also established (Edgar 2004:32).

The OT provides the rational for what Christ taught and model in his life and ministry. Phan (2011:3-4) argues that although the idea of the Trinity was not fully fledged in the OT, there are traces or metaphors as seen in the names such as wisdom, word, Spirit that were used to make reference to God. Similarly, theophanies like the three men who visited Abraham (Genesis.18:1-2) are considered pointers to the Trinity (Phan 2011:3-4). Similarly, in the creation narratives, it was observed that phrases like *“let us”* and *“in our image and likes”* are pointers to the Trinity (Kärkkäinen 2017:8).

Further, it is established that the OT present the Jewish view of a monotheistic God. The Jewish ‘schema’ as contained in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 presents a view of one God that is acting in relation to His creation (Edgar 2004:32; Kärkkäinen 2007:5). The belief in one God, who only grants salvation could be said to be a pointer to God’s self-disclosure in Jesus Christ for the salvation of all creation (Marmion and Nieuwenhove 2010:6). Secondly, In Isaiah 6:3, it is noted ‘holy, holy, holy’ could be considered as an implicit expression of the Trinity in the OT (Kärkkäinen 2017:8; Phan 2011:3-4). Similarly, Edgar (2004:32) comments that the idea of wisdom in Proverbs 8: 22-31, and the notion of the Spirit of God in Ezekiel 37:1-14, are all implicit expressions of the Trinity (Kärkkäinen 2017:8; Edgar 2004:32; Kärkkäinen 2007:5). Although, there are no consensus among contemporary scholars with regard to the traces of the Trinity in the OT (Kärkkäinen

2017:9), I support the argument that the OT contains categories, metaphors, and pointers to what is expressed about the Trinity in the NT (Kärkkäinen 2017:4; Phan 2011:3-4; O'Collins 1999:11).

Furthermore, there are pointers to Trinitarian thinking and practice in the early church as contained in the New Testament. It was observed that Paul connects Trinitarian ideas with every facet of the Christian life in his statement, referred to as the benediction, in 2 Corinthians 13:14. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (ESV). In this Scripture, Paul made a strong case for the Triune God in the life of Christians. According to Edgar (2004: 32) this Scripture is popularly recited and made reference to the daily life and expressions of Christian communities. He further argues that themes such as salvation and election are connected to the paradigm of the Trinity. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he espoused that salvation in Christ Jesus grants access to the Father by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:1-16). Also, Paul noted that God elect people by the work of the Spirit to partake in the glory of Christ. Similarly, apostle Peter indicated that our election as Christians stems from the purpose of God the Father and being sanctified by the Spirit to live in total submission to Christ. In the same vein, Paul places the life within the faith community (1 Corinthians 12:1-11), and the unity that should be made manifest among Christians (Eph. 4:1-16), all in the framework of the Trinity (Edgar 2004:32).

This implies that, in the Trinitarian understanding of the early apostles, the entire Christ event is rooted in the Trinity. Consequently, the belief in Christ is expected to be expressed daily in a Trinitarian way. Thus, the rest of the NT points to the fact that early Christians experienced the ministry of God in a Trinitarian way. As a result, they taught a Trinitarian Christian faith that is translated into a Christian faith praxis and spirituality that was mainly Trinitarian (Marmion & Nieuwenhove 2010:14). The biblical perspectives revealed that the Trinity is the source of the Christian identity and life in the faith community (Farely 2005:264).

4.4 A relational view of the Trinity

The study focuses on insights and contributions on a relational view of the Trinity by relevant scholars such as Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna and Miroslav Volf. First of all, the choice for these scholars is informed by the limited scope of the study, which means that it is impractical to attempt to discuss all the scholars on the subject. Secondly, focusing on these three provide an overview of two of the main traditions. Moltmann and Volf are from the Protestant tradition, whilst LaCugna is from the Catholic tradition. One may wonder why as a Pentecostal; I did not make any choice from the Pentecostal tradition. It is important to recognise that Pentecostalism is a relatively recent movement and as such, is yet to articulate a strong doctrinal tradition (Neil 2014:291; Onyinah 2013:273).

Although a relational view of the Trinity is a relatively recent concept, it is considered the source of the revival and renaissance in the Trinitarian theological discourse (Kärkkäinen 2017:xvi). In this study, a relational view of the Trinity is conceptualised as a communion of mutual love, equality, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness observed among God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Tanner 2010:207; LaCugna 1991:391). This understanding of the Trinity has dominated the efforts to understand a relational view of the Trinity as an example of the quality of relationships that should exist in faith communities and extended to the larger society. A relational view of the Trinity, in the thoughts of Catherine LaCugna is “the primacy of communion among equals, not the primacy of one over another” (1991:391). That is, the source of dominion and abuse of power in our society is the reverse of the quality of the relationship observed with the Triune God.

Theologians believed this concept of the Trinity has shifted the discourse on the Trinity from an abstract, mystical, outdated concept, to an understanding that puts practical Christian life in the centre of the doctrine of the Trinity. For example, Pembroke remarked that “relationality is the central term in the new approach to the doctrine of the Trinity. The older metaphysic of substance, despite its usefulness in the task of asserting the equality of the Three, is spoilt by the image of God that is associated with it. God as substance speaks of an isolated, passionless monad. The modern European metaphysic of

subjectivity allows for the idea of a person-to-person communication, but ultimately it leads away from the interpersonal relations of the triune God. It is the notion of fellowship or communion that is primary in the renewal of trinitarian thinking” (2006:10). Similarly, Peters (1993:1) observed that in spite of the fact that numerous sources are critical of this view of the Trinity, it is considered a resounding voice in the renewal of the doctrine of the Trinity and Christian spirituality as well as theological reflections. This is so because of its “*real and concrete*” implications for Christian spirituality and praxis (Cunningham 1998:31).

This understanding paved the way to find parallels with the relationships observed in the Triune God and the lives in faith communities (Pembroke 2007:5-6). The Trinity is believed to be the 'best indicator' for the quality of the relationship among individuals and communities, since it is thought to present a framework for how society should be organised (Tanner 2010:27). It is believed that the renewal, revival, rediscovery, and the renaissance of the Trinitarian theology relates to a relational view of the Trinity (Kärkkäinen 2017:xvi; Marmion & Nieuwenhove 2010:1).

The concept of the Trinity as a model that should inform the quality of relationship within the Christian faith community and society has been explored by different scholars (Moltmann 1991; LaCugna 1991; Miroslav 1991; Baukham 1995; Zizoulas 1985). Such a view of the Trinity maintains that the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit presents a relational view of God that should characterise the life of Christians. The growing interest in the relational understanding of the Trinity has resulted in the exploration of the concept by several key theologians. Consequently, a vast volume of literature is available on the subject. However, due to the limited scope of this study, I focused on examining the work of key theologians such as Moltmann 1991; LaCugna 1991 and Miroslav Volf 1998. I focused my attention on Moltmann (1991) and LaCugna (1991) due to the fact that their relational understanding is informed by the need to eliminate social injustice and inspire a sense of safety and hope in our society. On the other hand, my attention is drawn to Miroslav Volf (1998) due to the emphasis on Trinitarian ecclesiology.

4.4.1 Jürgen Moltmann

Moltmann is a German reformed theologian. Although he did not produce a systematic theology, he may be regarded as a distinguished systematic theologian, and one of the brains behind the current revival of Trinitarian theology (Kärkkäinen 2007:100). It could be concluded that Moltmann made several contributions to the field of systematic theology.

In his vision, the doctrine of the Trinity is the only way of discourse about God. Moltmann contends that the doctrine of the Trinity is the “Christianization of the concept of God” (1991:10). However, he was critical of the notion of absolute and supreme substance in the notion of the doctrine of the Trinity and believed that this notion of God as the absolute and supreme substance ushered in a Trinitarian understanding in terms of monarchy (Moltmann (1991a:63). Moltmann’s concept of God’s oneness is informed by the perichoresis. He rejects Bart’s opinion of God as one substance consisting in three modes of being with the proposal that the three divine Persons are three centres of activity. Consequently, he described the Trinity, as follows:

“If we search for a concept of unity corresponding to the biblical testimony of the triune God, the God who unites others with himself, then we must dispense with both the concept of the one substance and the concept of the identical subject. All that remains is: the unitedness, the at-oneness of the three Persons with one another, or: the unitedness, the at-oneness of the triune God. For only the concept of unitedness is the concept of a unity that can be communicated and is open ... The unitedness, the at-oneness, of the triunity is already given with the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit ... The Father, the Son and the Spirit are by no means merely distinguished from one another by their character as Persons; they are just as much united with one another and in one another, since personal character and social character are only two aspects of the same thing. The concept of person must therefore in itself contain the concept of unitedness or at-oneness, just as, conversely, the concept of God's at-oneness must in itself contain the concept of the three Persons. This means that the concept of God's unity cannot in the trinitarian sense be fitted into the homogeneity of the one divine substance, or into the identity of the absolute subject either: and least of all into one of the three Persons of the

Trinity. It must be perceived in the perichoresis of the divine Persons” (1991:150). For him, there is a community in God and God invites others (his creation) into this community.

Moltmann also uses the concept of *‘Imago Trinitas’* to drum home his relational view of the Trinity. He argued that since human beings are created in God’s image, they are expected to live out that image on earth (1985:241). And that image, is the image of the Trinity. He rests this argument in Jesus’s prayer *“that they may all be one, just as you, Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me”* (John 17:21, ESV). Moltmann believes that this prayer is a call into fellowship of human beings with Jesus, which is expected to reflect in the mode of beings and life of believers in our society. The Father through the Son makes human beings conform to God’s image on earth, and that image is the image of the Trinity (Moltmann 1985:243). The implication is that we are not just called to imitate the Trinitarian relationship, but we exist in it.

Moltmann noted that “the social analogy applies to the divine fellowship which is formed through the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father through the Spirit. Here it does not mean the Fatherhood or the Sonship; it means the community within the Trinity. It is the relations in the Trinity which are the levels represented on earth through the imago Trinitatis, not the levels of the trinitarian constitution. Just as the three Persons of the Trinity are 'one' in a wholly unique way, so, similarly, human beings are imago Trinitatis in their personal fellowship with one another” (1985:241-242). He was critical of the notion that human beings as the image of God is limited to God’s rule over creation and proposed that it should be extended to imago Trinitas; that is, relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is “represented in the fundamental human communities and is manifested in them through creation and redemption”. This implies that our communities should be fashioned in ways that reflect the whole image of God. The argument put forth here is that “if the whole human being is designated the image of God, then true human community - the community of the sexes and the community of the generations - has the same designation” (Moltmann 1985:241). In other words, Moltmann envision a community in

which the relationship between men and women, parents, and children, as well as the rich and the poor reflects the whole and true image of God.

In addition, he proposed a conceptualisation of God as triunity, “the three-in-one”, and observed that this concept of the Trinity can be better developed from the Christological foundation (1991:97). He opined that “the cross of the Son stands from eternity in the centre of the Trinity” (Moltmann 1991: xvi). That is to say that the doctrine of the Trinity takes its root from the coming of Christ (Kärkkäinen 2017:201). This implies that the Trinitarian vision of Moltmann is based on the Christ event, which can be understood from the history of the Father and the Spirit (Kärkkäinen 2007:101; Moltmann 1991:16). Commenting on this view of the Trinity, Kärkkäinen (2007:101) relates that this is a “social doctrine” of the Trinity, which moves away from one divine substance to make a case for “*relationships and communities*”. This vision of the social doctrine of the Trinity and relationality extends to the relativistic nature of creation and human beings (Moltmann 1991:19), which forms the motivation for the choice of Moltmann’s concept of the doctrine of the Trinity.

One key concept adopted by Moltmann is panentheism, which rest on the biblical concept of God as love. God is love, relates also to the understanding of community and fellowships. Panentheism points to the idea that “creation is a fruit of God’s longing for ‘his other and for that other’s free response to the divine love. That is why the idea of the world is inherent God himself” (1991:138). The implication is that God’s nature of relationship and communion is demonstrated in the creation narrative. Consequently, “the triune God reveals himself as love in the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (1991:56). The idea of fellowships also points us to mutuality and reciprocal love between the world and God (Kärkkäinen 2007:106; Moltmann 1991:98).

Friendship is another important notion of Moltmann with regard to his understanding of the Triune God. According to Moltmann, the biblical evidence, especially, the New Testament accounts for a mutual relationship of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and this relationship of fellowship is extended to the human being. This extension to the world is an invitation into fellowship, that is, friendship, which create the space for all-men,

women, children, rich and poor to come into friendship with him, and among themselves (Kärkkäinen 2007:106-107). Moltmann asserts *that “God ‘needs’ the world and man. If God is love, then he neither will nor can be without the one who is his beloved”* (1991:58). The friendship lies in the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as the ‘source’ since all the three ‘depend’ on each other in this relationship (Kärkkäinen 2007:108). This concept permits an open invitation into interaction, which is a shift from the traditional view of oneness of the substance. Friendship with God is an accurate way to describe the intimate relationship in the Trinity. This friendship allows Christians to participate in God, which is a sign of the kingdom of God. He observed this friendship is “the concrete concept of freedom” and that implies a ‘free relationship’ that is lived in freedom (Moltmann 2015:119). In Moltmann’s vision, this points to freedom in qualitative terms, in which there is freedom for children, servant and friends (1991:221). Commenting on this notion of friendship, Kotze and Noeth (2017:1) assert that this kind of friendship create both private and public space where Christians live in freedom and in a non-hierarchical way. This understanding provides the basis for a community in which all human beings strive to treat each other as equals. This is important for the way Christians live since there is no hierarchy among friends, it calls for an atmosphere of love, care, and the upholding of the dignity of all human beings because we are all created in the image of God, including children.

Another important concept in Moltmann’s Trinitarian theology is persons in relationship. He argues that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit indwell each other, and this happens in an internal union that could be connected to the promise in 1 Corinthians 15:28 (Kärkkäinen 2007:112). In Moltmann’s social and relational view of the Trinity, each person, “exist totally in the other: the Father exists by virtue of his love, as himself entirely in the Son; the Son, by virtue of his self-surrender, ex-ists as himself totally in the Father; and so on.” Indeed, “each Person receives the fullness of eternal life from the other” (1991:173-174). It could be argued that the goal of Moltmann’s Trinitarian thinking is in the shifting of the kingdom in the divine relationship and the social constitution of the persons in the divine relationships (Kärkkäinen 2007:109). This is evidenced as he posits that “only when we are capable of thinking of Persons, relations, and changes in the relations together does the idea of the Trinity lose its usual static, rigid quality. Then not only does the eternal life of the triune God become conceivable; its eternal vitality

becomes conceivable too" (1991:174). In Moltmann's notion, of God as love, which finds expression in the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as well as the open invitation to share in that love implies that immanent and economic Trinities form a continuity and not rather a distinction (Kärkkäinen 2007:113). The result of this thinking is that there is an open invitation to participate and get to transform into God. Moltmann (1992:60) observed that "the fellowship of the triune God is so open and inviting that it is depicted in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which human beings experience with one another – 'as you, Father, are in me and I in you' – and takes this true human fellowship into itself and gives it a share in itself: 'that they may also be in us'". Kotze and Noeth (2017:5) relates that this open invitation into participation and fellowship within the Triune God carries a significant value for the understanding of human relationships in Moltmann's opinion. It is not a mere knowing of God but rather a transformation that leads to a faith praxis and Christian spirituality that reflects the Trinitarian relationship as a framework for the quality of relationships in faith community. As observed by Moltmann (1991a:202), the Christian community should "corresponds to the indwelling of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father. It participates in the divine triunity, since the community of believers is not only fellowship with God but in God too". And this relationship should be also extended by the faith community to the larger society. In other words, the faith community should be the "lived out Trinity" (Moltmann 1991b:64). That is, the embodiment of the practice of mutual love is consistent with the eternal love of the Trinity (Kotze & Noeth 2017:5).

What does Moltmann contributes to a relational view of the Trinity provide for life in faith communities and society as a whole? How could these contributions serve as a resource for faith communities to respond to CSA, which is the focus of my study? Moltmann's thesis holds that the indwelling mutual love, and equality observed in the Trinity should be the foundation upon which all human societies, including faith communities are formed. As Kärkkäinen (2017:203; 2007:113) observed, all forms of hierarchy and dominion are foreign to the nature of the Triune God, and God as the Father does not imply exercising power over but rather being a loving Father. Using concepts like fatherly and motherly father, Moltmann proposed a community that is built on Trinitarian ideas, in which there is an equal fellowship of men and women; children and adults as well as the rich and the poor (Kärkkäinen 2007:113). McDougall (2005:139) supports this opinion by indicating

that our communities should be structured based on egalitarianism as explain in the concept of '*imago Trinitatis*'. In effect, Moltmann (1993a:315) calls for a fellowship of friends, that is a community of brethren in which there is no more slavery or lordship.

According to Moltmann, the belief in non-Trinitarian monotheism is the root of the hierarchical understanding of community, thereby leading to the building of monarchist society (Kärkkäinen 2017:203). In Moltmann's response to this, in order to address this societal problem, we should hold a Trinitarian view of God in which we promote a "*community of equals, vulnerable and open to the human suffering, who experiences this suffering in himself*" (Marei 2004:213). That is, the concept of subordination, domination and abuse of power is incongruent with this notion of the fellowship of equals that the Triune God presents. Moltmann argues this notion of the Trinity is rooted in Scripture as he relates to "the scriptures as the testimony to the history of the Trinity's relations of fellowship, which are open to men and women, and open to the world" (1991:149-1). In my opinion this fellowship of equals, open to men and women, should form the foundation of the life in faith communities and society at large. Commenting on this understanding, Kärkkäinen (2017:203) asserts that whilst non-Trinitarian monotheistic view leads to domination and abuse of power, the Trinitarian understanding advocates by Moltmann promotes "equality, belonging, and flourishing". There is evidence that the root of sufferings as a result of injustice is in this hierarchical view of society. This implies that sexual abuse of children in our society, and among faith communities relates to abuse of power in relationship of trust. Consequently, Moltmann envisions an ecclesiology where its faith praxis and Christian spirituality play out in an organisational and structural arrangement that reflect the Christian concept of God, Who is Trinitarian. It is the full fellowship of persons that are equal, and united in the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (1991:64). Moltmann's ecclesiology based on John 17:20 is summarised in this way: "the unity of the Christian community is a Trinitarian unity. It corresponds to the indwelling of the Father in the Son, and to the Son in the Father. It participates in the divine triunity, since the community of believers is not only fellowship with God, but in God too" (1991:202). This is an ecclesiology of equal relationships among men and women or adults and children, which is fashioned to corresponds to the 'egalitarian' Trinity (Kärkkäinen 2017:203-204).

It is believed that Moltmann's vision of inclusiveness, equality, love, and communion in the faith community connects to the themes of several contextual theological reflections (Kärkkäinen 2017:204). One of such reflections on the Trinity and society, was the focus on Boff (2005:1), who set a project for liberation, equality, and dignity for all. She was critical of abuse of power and domination, irrespective of whether ecclesiastical or political. Consequently, she proposes fashioning of communities that reflect the Trinitarian relationships in every sphere of society (Kärkkäinen 2017:208).

Using the concept of friendship that is lived out in freedom (Moltmann 2015:119), he states that “the freedom out of which this friendship springs is therefore not a private and arbitrary affair; it is the liberation for new life itself, without which all the other freedoms cannot go on existing. The friendship, which this friendship leads is the ‘practical concept of freedom’ without which all other friendships become powerless ... That is why the concept of friendship is the best way of expressing the liberating relationship with God, and the fellowship of men of women in the spirit of freedom” (1993a:316). The faith community is expected to be fellowship of friends, whose friendship originates from their friendship with Christ, and expected to extend that friendship to those who are forsaken and are suffering. This friendship, according to Kotzé and Noeth (2017:7) creates the public space to participate in the lives of others. This implies that the notion of friendship within the paradigm of perichoresis is an invitation to move from the private space into the extension of affection and responding to those suffering in our societies. In my opinion, this extension of love and affection flowing out of friendship will provide some theological resources to faith community's response to a public concern such as CSA.

In the end, this Trinitarian understanding seeks to build a faith community, and also a society that “live into the image of God as pursuing a community of radical mutuality that reflects the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and Spirit” (Plod 2015:6). That is, the Triune God could be construed as the prototype of true human community (Moltmann 1985:234). This idea was supported by Grenz (2005:77; 1993:186-187) when he opined that God is always a community of love from eternity. And that, the community of love is expressed in the relations that exist among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. In my

opinion, there is no doubt that such a community will provide a wide range of resources that protect children, and the vulnerable in society.

Although, Moltmann has been credited as probably providing the most phenomenal contributions to Trinitarian theology, which led to the revitalisation of the doctrine of the Trinity (Grenz 2001:85), it is belief that his thesis could probably be the most widely debated by a wide range of theologians (Kärkkäinen 2007:115). In the first place, some theologians criticise Moltmann for what seems to be described as tritheism and not Trinitarian, which has been the major objection to relational and social Trinitarian thoughts (Kärkkäinen 2007:115; O'Collins 1999:158; Torrance 1996:243). Similarly, Peters (1993:109) argues that Moltmann, overstretched the separate centres of activity, making it appears to have sacrificed the divine unity.

4.4.2 Catherine Mowry LaCugna

Catherine Mowry LaCugna is a Catholic systematic theologian, who is noted for her contribution to Trinitarian theology. It is believed that LaCugna is widely recognised and debated due to her fine integration of the Zizioulas's idea of persons in communion, relevance of God's self-disclosure in Barth, Rahner's immanent and economic Trinity as well as personhood in Moltmann and Panneberg (Kärkkäinen 2007:178). In addition, Downey (2000:12) observed that her book 'God for us' probably generated more reflections and discourse among the Roman Catholics in the United States than any other theological work since Rahner's work, 'the Trinity'. Commenting on the work of LaCugna, Groppe (2002:730), remarked that "LaCugna wrote from the conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity is the cornerstone of systematic theology and an eminently practical teaching with radical consequences for Christian life". As a result, her work is pivotal in any reflection on practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian spirituality and faith praxis, hence the choice of her work in my studies.

She believes that although the Trinity is at the centre of the Christian faith, over the years, it is detached from Christian spirituality and faith praxis. This is seen in her opening statement, *"the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical*

consequences for Christian life" (1991:1). According to LaCugna, this is due to the divorce between the nature of God in Godself and the nature of God in relation to his action towards human beings. That is, the Immanent Trinity is divorced from the economic Trinity, with strong emphasis on the immanent Trinity. Consequently, the Trinity seems to have little or no bearings on God's action in relation to his creation. As Rahner (1970:10-11) observed, Christians have been predominantly monotheistic in their belief, and that the Christian faith and literature will experience no significant effect if the Trinity has been removed.

In LaCugna's book '*God for us: The Trinity and Christian life*', she hinges her argument on Rahner's axiom "the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity, and the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity" (1970:22). She agrees with Rahner that the economy of salvation should be the point of departure for any discourse about the doctrine of the Trinity (Campbell 2018:110). However, LaCugna differs from Rahner who "seems to conceptualise the one self-communication of God in the economy of Christ and the Spirit as having two levels" (LaCugna 1991:222), which implies that the Father, Son and Spirit is at both the immanent and at the economic level (Campbell 2018:110). She bemoaned the state of irrelevance of the Doctrine of the Trinity to the Christian life due to the abstract and speculative nature of the reflections on the Trinity. And attributed this to the distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity. She claimed that the discussions on the distinction of the immanent and economic Trinity have dominated the discourse on the Trinity and sought to propose a new framework. As Pannenberg (1991:291) observed, the discourse about the immanent and economic Trinity dates back to the 18th century. In her advocacy for the revival of the Trinity to Christian life, she proposed a rejection of the notion 'economic' and 'immanent Trinity' to the acceptance of the concept 'oikonomia' and 'theologia', which she claims is consistent with salvation history in the biblical narratives (Campbell 2018:110).

According to LaCugna, the oikonomia is "the complete self-revelation and self-giving of God to us in salvation history [which] by no means diminishes the Absolute Mystery of God" (1991:322). On the other hand, the theologia is construed as "the eternal being of God" (1991:4). From the outset, LaCugna contends that the notion of immanent and

economic Trinity is problematic in many ways, and proposed an alternative paradigm, which advances the inseparability *oikonomia* and *theologia*, with the aim of developing a view of persons-in-communion (Groppe 2002:730). She argued that although the *oikonomia* and the *theologia* are distinct, they should not be divorced from each other in Trinitarian theological reflections (Groppe 2002:742). In other words, the *oikonomia*, which is the plan of God, finds its expression in the *theologia*, which is the mystery of God. The self-revelation and self-giving of God are further expanded when she contends that the *oikonomia* encompasses a “comprehensive plan of God, reaching from creation to consummation, in which God and all creatures are destined to exist together in the mystery of love and communion” (1991:223). The mystery of love and communion that exists in the Triune God and extended to his creation is expected to be the ontology of relations among human beings created in his image. What then is the notion of the doctrine of Trinity from LaCugna’s perspectives? She remarked that “the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the specifically Christian way of speaking about God, summarizes what it means to participate in the life of God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The mystery of God is revealed in Christ and the Spirit as the mystery of love, the mystery of persons in communion who embrace death, sin, and all forms of alienation for the sake of life” (1991:1). This explanation though may not be considered as an all-encompassing definition of the doctrine of the Trinity. Groope (2002:743) claimed that LaCugna’s conceptualisation of the inseparability of the *oikonomia* and the *theologia* is worth considering. In my opinion, LaCugna’s notion of the doctrine of the trinity should essentially be centred on the mystery of love and the persons in communion and the extent to which this ontology of relationships provides a framework for human beings, especially, Christians. Since she believes that the doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian way of reflections on the nature of God.

Although, LaCugna is widely criticised for the notion of *oikonomia* and *theologia*, it is also argued that this is an excellent insight that is worthy of further reflections (Campbell 2018:111; Karkkainen 2007:187). Her main thesis in the ‘God for us’ is that we “can make true statements about God— particularly when the assertions are about the triune nature of God—only on the basis of the economy, corroborated by God’s self-revelation in Christ and the Spirit” (1991:2-3). This implies that her main notion of reflection on the Triune God should be rooted in the soteriological history as revealed in Scripture.

In an attempt to place the doctrine of the Trinity in the centre of Christian spirituality, Catherine LaCugna claimed that all discourses about God should be Trinitarian, and that it should begin with God's self-disclosure and communication in the person of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit. She advances her argument that the doctrine of the Trinity is not about an abstract nature of God but a critical reflection "about God's life with us and our life with each other" (Imbelli 1993:23). She contends that the Trinity is a theological concept of "relationship, which explores the mysteries of life, relationship, personhood and communion within the framework of God's self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit" (1991:2). In Catherine LaCugna's Trinitarian theology of communion and personhood, the concept of relationality, and not solitariness is at the centre of God's nature in the Godself, and God's work of redemption. This points to the fact that there is relationality within God and also in the nature of human beings. Consequently, the Trinity provides normative patterns and characteristics for human beings, and more so for Christians who are called to be in communion with God, and with one another (Imbelli 1993:24). As observed by Pembroke, "since the relational element is at the very centre of pastoral work, it seemed to me that the doctrine of the Trinity must have the potential to make a major contribution to pastoral theory and practice" (2006:7).

In her opinion, the essence of the doctrine of the Trinity is "to affirm that God who comes to US and saves US in Christ and remains with US as Spirit is the true living God" (1991:380). She maintains that effort to construct social justice and equality should be rooted in Scripture. This is because "what we believe about God must match what is revealed of God in Scripture: God watches over the widow and the poor, God makes the rains fall on just and unjust alike, God welcomes the stranger and embraces the enemy" (1991:397). This implies that LaCugna believes that social justice and the equality should be for all and not for selected few. She opined that this Scriptural notion of social justice and equality may contradict the commonly held ideas of economies, social justice, and social structures in our contemporary society (Campbell 2016:150). However, LaCugna recognised the fact that there are limitations to our understanding of the Trinity. And that, it is not a straightforward concept when it comes to its application to concrete societal problems. Consequently, she contends that the Trinity should not be considered as a pragmatic principle that provides the answers for problems of violence in our communities (Campbell 2016:151). Rather it could be considered a journey of discovery, in which the

Trinity is conceived as “a way of contemplating the mystery of God and of ourselves” (1991:379).

It could be argued that LaCugna sought to undertake a project to revive and retrieve the practical relevance of the Trinity to faith praxis and Christian spirituality. In this way, the Trinity has practical implications for all aspect of life in the community, including sexuality. According to Imbelli (1993:24), LaCugna’s vision is that the faith community should reflect this relationality and communion in her daily worship and praise. This implies that Christian faith communities should fashion their faith praxis and spirituality in this relationality, consequently reflecting the quality of care displayed among themselves, and extended to the larger society.

Catherine LaCugna (1991:338) also opines that the Trinity presents a relational concept in which there is no subordination between the Father and the Son or the Spirit. It is a kind of relationship of equality, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness (Tanner 2010:207; LaCugna 1991:391). This relationality observed in the Triune God offers no place for dominion, subordination, and hierarchy. As Boff (2005:13-16) observed, the basis of inequality, subordination, hierarchy, and anarchy in society is as a result of the scattered notions about God. Contrary to early theology of ‘orthodox subordinationism’ which claims that Christ and the Spirit are inferior to the Father (Kärkkäinen 2007:180), LaCugna, contends that “the primacy of communion among equals, not the primacy of one over another, is the hallmark of the reign of the God of Jesus Christ.” (1991:391). She argues that the idea of economic subordinationism is not ontological subordinations. As a result, LaCugna opines that the Son and the Spirit are of equal status with the Father, and she favours a Christian theology, in which, the ‘theologia’ and oikonomia are held together (Kärkkäinen 2007:180; LaCugna 1991:35-38). She supports the idea that there is a relationship between the theologia and oikonomia or the immanent and economic Trinity. Accordingly, she postulates that “the doctrine of the Trinity is the attempt to understand the eternal mystery of God on the basis of what is revealed about God in the economy of redemption. Theology of God is at the same time theology of Christ and Spirit. The economy of salvation is the basis, the context, and the final criterion for every statement about God” (1991:22).

It is, therefore, implied that there is a dynamic and complex relationship between the inner life of God and God's act of salvation in history. This flows from the idea that God's action towards human beings flows out of his nature. Consequently, act of humans, in terms of relationships and caring attitudes towards the other should flow from the nature of the Christian God, the God who discloses himself in Christ and the activity of the Spirit. The belief in this God should provide a normative pattern for Christian spirituality and faith praxis. That is to say, "divine life is therefore also our life. The heart of the Christian life is to be united with the God of Jesus Christ by means of communion with one another" (1991:1).

The result is that LaCugna puts forth a Trinitarian theology of relationship. Like Zizioulas, her theology rest on personhood in communion. That is, the ontology of God is seen in diversity in persons but united in a communion of love and freedom (Kärkkäinen 2007:184). She construes that "the perfection of God is the perfection of love, of communion, of personhood. Divine perfection is the antithesis of self-sufficiency, rather it is the absolute capacity to be who and what one is by being for and from another. The living God is the God who is alive in relationship, alive in communion with every creature, alive with desire for union with every creature" (LaCugna 1991:304). Commenting on LaCugna's notion, Pembroke (2006:11) relates that God transcends to the world through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, thereby inviting all creation into a communion of love. In essence, God exists not only in the inner life but also in personhood. That is reaching out to all creation in a communion of love. LaCugna asserts that "God is not self-contained, egotistical and self-absorbed but overflowing love, outreaching desire for union with all that God has made" (1991:15). For her, this is the reason for replacing thenotion of 'substance' with 'person' in relation to the discourse of the doctrine of the Trinity. As she argued in her earlier writing that "it would be improper theologically to assume that the One who (supposedly) could be known in abstraction from his/her relationship with creation would be God! For if the very nature of God is to be related as love - and this, after all, is the fundamental claim of a Trinitarian theology - then one cannot prescind from this relatedness and still hope to be making statements about the relational God" (LaCugna 1985:330). This implies that access to God can be achieved solely through relationality because God is relational. In the words of LaCugna, "there is no access to God's being in itself or by itself" (1991:246). Although LaCugna's thesis was informed by

the social injustice of the period, she believes this relational view of the Trinity is rooted in what is revealed about God in Scripture (1991:397).

What is the implication of LaCugna's relational view of the Trinity for faith praxis and Christian spirituality? How could this inform a pastoral response to CSA? In the first place, Groppes (2002:755-756) observed that LaCugna's notion of the inseparability of the *oikonomia* and *theologia* provides some solution to the long history of the disjunction between theology and Christian spirituality as well as faith praxis. As a result, Kärkkäinen (2007:185) asserts that LaCugna's Trinitarian theology of relationality points to practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is expected to provide responses to some problems in society. Her view of the primacy of communion among equals, and not the primacy of one over another speaks against the abuse of power in society. As already indicated, CSA is connected with abuse of power in relation to sexual issues in our society. Children are sexually abused usually in a context of a relationship of power and trust by adults. Commenting on LaCugna's contributions, Tanner remarked that "the personal and social community of the Trinity refutes the male ideal of autonomy or determination of oneself apart from relations with others, replaces hierarchical social relations with ones of mutuality and reciprocity, and maintains the equal dignity of all" (2012:370). This implies that, when community life is organised in such a way that it is rooted in LaCugna's notion of the Trinity, CSA will be uncommon.

Furthermore, the argument put forth relates that, the reverse of this relational view is the source of dominion and abuse of power in relation to moral and sexual issues in our society (LaCugna 1991:393). She contends that "orthopraxis requires that we exercise the modes of relationship that serve the truth of God's economy: words, actions, and attitudes that serve the reign of God. This rule is opposite of tyranny and arbitrariness. God's rule is accomplished by saving and healing love, by conversion of the heart, through the forgiveness of sins. God's household is administered (economized) by the power of the Holy Spirit, who rules through justice, peace, charity, love, joy, moderation, kindness, generosity, freedom, compassion, reconciliation, holiness, humility, wisdom, truthfulness, and the gifts of prophecy, healing, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues" (1991:383-384). The implication of this reign of God

is that faith communities undertake a ministry of caring that institute measures to protect children from CSA and also provide healing and support when CSA occurs.

Furthermore, LaCugna's relational view also contributed to ecclesiology and missiology. Bosch (1991:372-373) relates that mission is the very nature of the churches' being, as such, it is not something the church chooses to do. The missional church carries the notion that "the Church is totally and entirely 'for-God' and 'for-humanity': totally and entirely praise for God and totally and entirely mission, in the service of humanity (Puyo, cited in Bosch 1991:372-373). The faith praxis of churches, constitutive of mission, should operate from the framework of the relational ontology that is observed in the redemptive and soteriological biblical narratives as opined in the Trinitarian thoughts of LaCugna. Her contribution to the church as constitutive of mission is further expounded when she maintains that "being sent forth' of every Christian, is the same as the mission of Christ and the Spirit: to do the will and work of God, to proclaim the good news of salvation, to bring peace and concord, to justify hope in the final return of all things to God" (1991:401-402). The key characteristic of the church of Jesus Christ is the one that brings love, care, hope and healing to the suffering world. That is, any church short of this is not the church of Christ (Groppes 2002:760). In times when children are suffering from sexual abuse, the church of Christ is called upon to undertake a mission constitutive of herself from a theological framework, that will prevent the abuse of children and also bring healing and hope to thousands of children who are at risk of CSA.

Finally, it is believed that LaCugna's notion of person in relation contributes significantly to the practice of pastoral theology. Donovan (2000:357) claims that although LaCugna rejected the title of a pastoral theologian, her notion of the ontology of personhood in communion resonate well with pastoral theology. Pembroke (2006:5) supports this concept when he opined that since relationship is at the centre of pastoral work, the relationality as key motif in the Trinity has several implications for any pastoral response. This is because theology is practised in ways that serve the purpose of God's kingdom, and pastoral theology is not an exception, as it engages with the life with others in the context of relationship (Pembroke 2006:5; Donovan 2000:357). Therefore, pastoral theology is also interested in the extent to which human relationship in communities are

consistent with the Triune God. Since the God we serve is a God who exists as persons in loving relationship, pastoral responses are also targeted at addressing injustice and violence in society as well as ministering to the needs of the oppressed (Donovan 2000:357).

Like any other thesis, LaCugna's own did not go without objections. One major contention regarding her thesis is the attempt to collapse the immanent Trinity. Her concepts such as the "*theologia is what is* given in *oikonomia* and *oikonomia* expresses *theologia*," (1991:225), "an immanent Trinitarian theology of God is nothing more than a theology of the economy of salvation" (1991:225), and the "Trinitarian life is also our life" (1991:228), are considered total refusal of the God in Godself, and the collapse of the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity (Kärkkäinen 2007:190). Similarly, Leslie (1997:384) also believed that a careful analysis of the flow of LaCugna's thought points to a complete rejection of the discourse about the immanent Trinity. In my opinion, this could be traced to her starting point of a project aimed at stopping the speculative theologising about God, to more practical and radical life implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christians, and this is seen in the title of the publication, 'God for us'.

4.4.3 Miroslav Volf

It is observed that Volf is a trained systematic theologian who is committed to protecting what was entrusted to him and making conscious efforts to entrust this training to faithful learners who will in turn teach others (Schweitzer 2016: 210). According to Bidwell (2011:3) Volf sought to undertake a project in Christian theology, with the aim of ensuring a Trinitarian framework that should inform the relationship between persons and community. In short, Volf thesis focuses on the relationship between Trinitarian theology and ecclesiology.

The focus of Volf's thesis is that ecclesial communion should reflect the Trinitarian communion, and he further explores parallels of Trinitarian communion for the ecclesial communion (1998:191). He attempted to develop a "non-hierarchical but truly communal ecclesiology based on a non-hierarchical doctrine of the Trinity" (1998:4). The implication

is a community that live out a non-hierarchical characteristic of the church. One of the key questions posed by Volf is "*what does it mean for the church to embody and pass on the love of Christ and the righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" as stated in Romans 14:17 (1998:7). The concern of Volf here, is the implication of love, peace, joy, and righteousness for relationships between persons and community.

Grounding his thesis in some features of a relational view of the Trinity proposed by Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, he argued that there is a correspondence between the Trinity and the church. He asserts that through the power of the Holy Spirit, churches form a communion with the Triune God, and that this communion should reflect and correspond to the Trinitarian communion. Making reference to Jesus's prayer that "as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us" (John 17:21), Volf contends that this correspondence between Trinitarian and ecclesial relationship is real and not just formal. In his notion "the already obtaining communion of the church with the triune God, directed at this consummation, implies that the correspondence between Trinity and church is not purely formal and that it involves more than a certain relationship between the one and the many. The relations between the many in the church must reflect the mutual love of the divine persons" (1998:195). This implies the fellowship of Christians is not just a mere gathering of people, but rather a fellowship that should corresponds to the Trinitarian unity.

Volf however, made reference to the fact there are limitations to the analogy of the ecclesial correspondence to the Trinity. He argued that our notion of the Trinity is not the entire Trinity because it is limited to our experience of what is revealed in salvation history. Building his argument on the ideas of LaCugna and McDonnell (1988:202-205), he asserts that "a certain doctrine of the Trinity is a model acquired from salvation history and formulated in analogy to our experience, a model with which we seek to approach the mystery of the triune God, not in order to comprehend God completely, but rather in order to worship God as the unfathomable and to imitate God in our own, creaturely way" (Volf 1998:198).

Another concept put forth by Volf is that the relations in Trinitarian persons have significance for the ecclesial relations. He builds this proposal on the concept of Trinitarian perichoresis, however, Volf grounds his argument in the activity of 'self-donation'. His concern was the extent to which this notion has implications for a world of violence and oppression. He described the self-donation this way: "the self gives something of itself, of its own space, so to speak, in a movement in which it contracts itself in order to be expanded by the other and in which it at the same time enters the contracted other in order to increase the other's plenitude. This giving of the self which coalesces with receiving the other is nothing but the circular movement of the eternal divine love - a form of exchange of gifts in which the other does not emerge as a debtor because she has already given by having joyfully received and because even before the gift has reached her, she was already engaged in a movement of advance reciprocation" (1998b:413). Volf, therefore believed that this notion is rooted in the fact that "we love because God first love us" (1 John 4:19). This portrays giving out and receiving in a communion of perfect lovers. Making reference to 1 John 4:8, he construes God as a "communion of perfect lovers" (1998b:414).

This implies that our belief in the Triune God is also an invitation to participate in and extend this love (God). According to Volf, Jesus's command to his followers to 'be perfect' as their 'heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48), is an indication that the faith community could fashion their lives after the same elements of the "perfection of the eternal divine love" (1998b:414). This is not to argue that human beings can copy God in all respects. Further, he opined that 'self-donation' as a participation in this love calls for the need to welcome one another in love, resting his argument on Romans 15:7, which encourages to "welcome one another just as Christ welcomed you". In Paul's letter to the Romans, he believes that this attitude of embrace and love is the participation in the Trinity as he asserts that this brings glory to God. This implies that when members of the faith community embrace one another as sign of life in the Trinity, it could be described as lives that are parallel to the image of God. Consequently, faith will undertake a ministry of care-giving that expresses itself in words and actions that gives praise to God (Donovan 2000: 357).

According to Volf, this self-giving love of the divine trinity that is expected to constitute faith praxis and Christian spirituality, is his vision of the Trinity as a 'social program' (1998b:417). Donovan (2000:357) observes the openness to participate in the love of God and the extension of love to all human beings is the basic predisposition for pastoral theology. This is because pastoral response has its root in the openness of one's life to God as well as the openness to God's act in the life of others. It is the openness to this invitation that calls for a communion which is consistent to the Trinitarian nature of God. It can therefore be argued that adequate pastoral responses can be initiated to meet human needs of suffering in society only when it is rooted in the paradigm of relationality (Pembroke 2006:5-6).

He contends that there are practical implications of the procession and structure of the relations of divine persons for the structuring of ecclesial relations (1998:204). Building his argument on Ratzinger's concept of Trinitarian persons as 'pure relationship', he opined that "the persons seem to dissolve into relations; the Father becomes fatherhood; the Son, sonship; and the Spirit, procession" (Volf 1998:205). In essence, the relationality in the divine unity is critical and should have implications for relationship in the faith community. In Volf's notion, there is mutual acceptance of person and relation and this develop simultaneously. This idea is congruent with insights from Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity, which relates that "there are no persons without relations; but there are no relations without persons either" (Moltmann 1991:172). The implication according to Volf is that "person and relation are complementary" (1998: 205). He believes that a proper understanding of the fact that persons and relations complement one another points to a strict correspondence of the relations in the Trinitarian personhood to ecclesial personhood. That is, the relationships observed in the Triune God should have parallels to the nature of human relationships (Pembroke 2007:6).

Although Christians are made of individuals who come independently to believe in Christ, they do not live in isolation just as the divine person. Volf observed that "a Christian lives from and toward others" (1998:206). Grounding his argument in Ratzinger's notion of "being from and toward," (Fahey 1981:79-85), he argued that in spite of the significance of the relations in the Trinitarian personhood to ecclesial personhood, there may be

distinctions. This is because, sometimes, human beings do not live up to the intimate communion found in the divine persons. Neither are human beings expected to copy God in all aspects. However, this understanding of the correspondence of the Trinitarian relations to the quality of the relations that should be observed among Christians cannot be overemphasised. As Volf observes, it is expected that “the minimum consists in ‘being from others’ and ‘being together with others’, for only a communion of persons can correspond to the Trinity. The maximum consists in perfect ‘being toward others’, in the love in which they give of themselves to one another and thereby affirm one another and themselves” (1998:207). The affirmation of each other signifies the dignity of all human beings, including children due to the fact that all human beings are created in the image and the likeness of God. It can, therefore, be argued that Christians should strive towards a communion, which rests on the love and affirmation that exist in the Triune God. The life in the faith community that exhibits love and affirmation could be connected to Moltmann’s idea of a community of friendship. In my opinion, these characteristics of love and affirmation in the body of Christ and extended to larger society will significantly contribute to the prevention and eradication of CSA, and other forms of the dehumanisation of children in most societies, including Ghana.

Volf was also critical regarding the hierarchical structures in the church. He opines that these hierarchical arrangements are not consistent with Trinitarian relations. They point to subordination and the elevation of one over the other. This is inconsistent with LaCugna’s notion of primacy among equals. Volf observed that “if one starts from the trinitarian model I have suggested, then the structure of ecclesial unity cannot be conceived by way of the one, be it the Pope, the patriarch, or the bishop. Every ecclesial unity held together by a mon-archy, by a ‘one-[man!]-rule,’ is monistic and thus also un-trinitarian” (1998:217). This implies that Volf rejects Trinitarian reflections that projects the Father as superior over the Son and the Spirit since this is inconsistent with the concept of the indwelling of the Father and the Son. His assertion supports the claim of Heribert Mißhlen, (cited in Volf 1998:217) who contends that “ecclesiastical office is to be exercised collegially, even the office of the Pope”. Although Volf’s concentration is not on ecclesial offices, he contends the overly hierarchical fashion of ecclesial structures is in opposite direction with the relations of the Trinitarian persons. He, therefore made a call for organising the entire faith community in such way that relationships that exist reflect faith

praxis and Christian spirituality, which is informed by the relations in the Trinitarian persons. According to Volf (1998:218) this ecclesial communion was also evident in the early church. Referring to Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Romans 12:8, the early church organised their ministry in ways that corresponded to the divine unity based on love, which is the very nature of the Triune God.

What resources do Volf provide to inform life in the faith community? How can this contribute to a pastoral response to CSA? Volf's thesis contends that "the symmetrical reciprocity of the relations of the trinitarian persons finds its correspondence in the image of the church in which all members serve one another with their specific gifts of the Spirit in imitation of the Lord and through the power of the Father. Like the divine persons, they all stand in a relation of mutual giving and receiving" (1998:218). This understanding implies a parallel of mutually interdependent relationships in the faith community. Consequently, communion with one another and with God is promoted. It is a notion that is consistent with Zizioulas's concept of being as communion (1985). Commenting on Zizioulas's thesis, Kärkkäinen (2017:195) observed that "the fact that a human being is a member of the Church, he becomes an 'image of God', he exists as God Himself exists, he takes on God's 'way of being'. This way of being is a way of relationship with the world, with other people and with God, an event of communion, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an individual, but only as an ecclesial fact".

In addition, he argued that there is a 'social knowledge' and a 'social practice' of the love observed in the Triune God. Making reference to the love demonstrated on the Cross of Christ, Volf claimed that social knowledge implies that "the Trinity is above all to re-narrate the history of the cross, the cross understood not as a simple repetition of heavenly love in the world, but as the Triune God's engagement with the world in order to transform the unjust, deceitful, and violent kingdoms of this world into the just, truthful, and peaceful kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah"(1998b:415). This understanding points to the fact that the reign of the Kingdom of Christ should be pursued forever in our world (Revelation 11:16). It, therefore, implies, a social practice of the love espoused in the Trinity. According to Volf, the Christian calling is an invitation to imitate Christ's love and passion demonstrated on the cross. He asserts that "we are called to imitate the earthly

love of that same Trinity that led to the passion of the Cross because it was from the start a passion for those caught in the snares of non-love and seduced by injustice, deceit, and violence” (1998b: 415). Life in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ brings the peace and safety as observed in the relations among the Triune God. This way of life depicts the Triune God, who inspires peace in diverse relations in human community (Milbank 2006: 6).

In this communion of mutual love and equality, individuals are protected from abuse since members of the faith community seek to live their daily lives in such a way that it reflects the love and communion of the Triune God. As observed by Plyod (2015:6), the extent to which the church lives to this standard reflects the extent of the participation of the church in the life of the Trinity. To this end, it could be argued that participating and living a life in the Trinity will bring the covenant of peace and safety for the vulnerable, including children in society. This is consistent with God’s word through the prophet Ezekiel that “I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods” (Ezekiel 34:25, ESV). In my opinion, the perpetrators of CSA could be considered the wild beast that makes it difficult for vulnerable children to live in peace and safety in our communities. As Brewster (2011:84) observes, there is no group in our society today hurting more than children and this is worse for children going through sexual abuse.

Volf was also criticised for projecting tritheism since he grounds his idea in the social model of the Trinity, similar to Moltmann. In addition, it was argued that Volf’s notion of non-hierarchical ecclesiology, informed by the non-hierarchical Trinity, is consistent with contemporary culture and was in contention with the ideas from sociology of religion’s current views of contemporary culture (Watson 1999:744-745).

From the on-going discussion, it is important to tie the pieces together in the ideas of the theologians discussed in this chapter. What are the main themes of the proponents of a relational view of the Trinity? What is the overall contribution of this way of conceptualising the Triune God to Christian spirituality and faith praxis? The proponents ground their argument in the notion that the doctrine of the Trinity, just like other doctrines is not just

speculative ideas held, neither is it an end in itself. Rather, it is aimed at having practical implications for faith praxis and Christian spirituality in faith communities (Marmion and Nieuwenhove 2010:12). The belief in the Triune God, that is the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit has important implications for faith communities. In addition, the belief that human beings are created in the image and the likeness of God (Genesis 2:26) indicates that human beings are called to share in the dynamics of the communion of the Triune God. In their proposal, a relational view of the Trinity is conceptualised as a communion of mutual love, equality, interconnectedness, and interrelatedness observed among God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Tanner 2010:207; LaCugna 1991:391). This, indeed, the proponents of a relational view of the Trinity argued, has important practical “implications for anthropology, ecclesiology, and society”(Marmion & Nieuwenhove 2010:2). This notion is in support of Rahner’s assertion that “there must be a connection between Trinity and humanity” (1998:22). Consequently, they construe a relational view of the Trinity as a model of the quality of relationships that should exist in faith communities, and also extend this to the larger society.

For Moltmann, the Trinity “must be perceived in the perichoresis of the divine Persons” (1991:150), which depicts the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and the Spirit. Using the concept of *‘Imago Trinitas’* he argued that since human beings are created in God’s image, they are expected to live out that image on earth (1985:241). And that image, is the image of the Trinity. The Father through the Son makes human beings conform to the God’s image on earth, and that image is the image of the Trinity (Moltmann 1985:243). “[I]f the whole human being is designated the image of God, then true human community - the community of the sexes and the community of the generations - has the same designation” (Moltmann 1985:241). In other words, Moltmann envision a community in which the relationship between man and woman, parents, and children, as well as the rich and the poor reflects the whole and true image of God. In order to address societal problems of abuse of power and subordination, we should hold a Trinitarian view of God in which we promote a “community of equals, vulnerable and open to the human suffering, who experiences this suffering in himself” (Marei 2004:213).

For LaCugna, her main thesis is that “the life of God - precisely because God is triune does not belong to God alone. God who dwells in inaccessible light and eternal glory comes to us in the face of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Because of God's outreach to the creature, God is said to be essentially relational, ecstatic, fecund, alive as passionate love. Divine life is therefore also our life. The heart of the Christian life is to be united with the God of Jesus Christ by means of communion with one another” (1991:1). With this notion of the Triune God, her Trinitarian theology could be considered “as par excellence a theology of relationship, which explores the mysteries of love, relationship, personhood, and communion within the framework of God's self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit” (1991:1). In this way, LaCugna laid the foundation for practical implications for Christian spirituality and faith praxis. It is believed that her notion of the ontology of persons in relation has contributed to the efforts of faith communities to respond to dehumanisation and violence in societies. Commenting on LaCugna' contribution, Medley (2000:226) observes that “since God's life for us is relational, the human person is measured in terms of participation in personal communion with God, with one another, and with creation”. Accordingly, LaCugna argued that all forms of subordination and abuse of power as seen in the area of sexism, patriarchy, political exploitation, and racism are inconsistent with what is revealed about the Triune God, and for that matter, human beings created in His image (1991:398-399). I believe that this is an insightful theological framework from which to reflect on a pastoral response to CSA.

With regard to Miroslav Volf, his thesis focused on the idea that ecclesial communion should reflect the Trinitarian communion, and further explores parallels of Trinitarian communion for the ecclesial communion (1998:191). Building his thesis on a relational view of the Trinity proposed by Jürgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna and Wolfhart Pannenberg, he asserts that through the power of the Holy Spirit, churches form a communion with the Triune God, and that this communion should reflect a “non-hierarchical but truly communal ecclesiology based on a non-hierarchical doctrine of the Trinity” (1998:4). The implication is a community that live out a non-hierarchical characteristic of the church. He was concerned with the extent to which the church should exemplify and extend the love of Christ and the righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Accordingly, Volf contend that “the already obtaining

communion of the church with the triune God, directed at this consummation, implies that the correspondence between Trinity and church is not purely formal and that it involves more than a certain relationship between the one and the many. The relations between the many in the church must reflect the mutual love of the divine persons” (1998:195). What then is the practical implications for the body of Christ? Volf opined that the Christian calling is an invitation to imitate Christ’s love and passion demonstrated on the cross. It implies that “we are called to imitate the earthly love of that same Trinity that led to the passion of the Cross because it was from the start a passion for those caught in the snares of non-love and seduced by injustice, deceit, and violence” (1998b: 415).

In the nutshell, they all affirm the notion of relationality as a central motif of the Trinity (Metzler 2003:272). The idea of the Trinity as persons-in-relationship forms the basis of a relational view of the Trinity (Peters 1993:34). In his evaluation of the relevance of a relational view of the Trinity, Metzler, summed it up this way: “the renewed emphasis upon the personal character of God in relationship to us, God's intimate engagement with humanity and the world through God the Son incarnate in the flesh, is highly commendable, in contrast to any speculative, abstract efforts to define God apart from our human experience. Our Christian theology must speak of a God who is indeed relational, who relates to real people in a real world, a God who understands our human condition from the inside” (2003:282).

They explicated a doctrine of the Trinity from this paradigm, indicating that from the beginning, God is the community of love and the community is the community of the Father, Son and Spirit, in communion through the love they share (Sexton 2012:475; Grenz 1993:186-187). The relationship of mutuality, love, connectedness, and equality that exist in the Triune God, which he extends to us through the soteriological history, should serve as model for human communities, with faith communities showing the way. They provide a solid ground to respond to subordination and abuse of power in contemporary society, which is a contributing factor to abuse and dehumanisation of children. This way of being provides enormous theological resources for a pastoral response to CSA

4.5 Objections to a relational view of the Trinity

In spite of the contributions of a relational view of the Trinity, which some considers as the renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity, their theses also met wide range of objections.

In the first place, the notion of tritheism is the major objection to a relational view of the Trinity. Some theologians observed what seems to be described as tritheism and not Trinitarian as the major objection to relational and social thoughts (Kärkkäinen 2007:115; O'Collins 1999:158; Torrance 1996:243). Similarly, Peters (1993:109) argues there is the tendency of overstretching the separate centres of activity, making it appears to have sacrificed the divine unity. According to critics, this notion of the Trinity present two main issues. On one hand, they raise concerns about the nature of the persons in the Trinity and on the other hand, about the kind of unity that exist among the persons. For instance, Tuggy (2004:285), objected to proponents of a relational view by arguing that they hold the view that God is presented as having three distinct minds, centre of consciousness and will. This implies that God is not one person but a group of persons, with different names. This follows that their understanding of the nature of the divine persons is defective and the sort of unity is deficient. However, commenting on this criticism, Husker (2010:422) observed that the critics did not read the theses of the social Trinitarian well and that a careful analysis of their thought revealed that they made a stronger case with regard to solutions to the problems of the divine unity in the Trinity.

Additionally, there are concern that a relational view of the Trinity is not consistent with the intention of the fathers who developed the doctrine. As Metzler (2003:283) remarked, "I question whether the trinitarian formulations of the fathers as expressed in the creeds were intended to communicate a tri-personal or social understanding of the deity" and that the "fathers, in my estimation, were far too sensitive to the charge of tritheism to have risked an understanding of God such as we hear expounded today in the concept of the social or communal Trinity". It is important to note also that the church fathers explicated the doctrine of the Trinity mainly to defend the full divinity of the Son, Jesus Christ, as well as to defend the qualification of the Son as saviour. This implies that the fathers developed the doctrine to respond to contextual issues that challenged the divinity of the

Son. Consequently, one could also argue that contemporary theologians also propound a relational view of the Trinity to respond to contextual issues bordering on human relationships in communities, hence, the emphasis on the aspects that were not highlighted in the formulations of the fathers. However, the proponents of a relational view of the Trinity build their argument on the support from the fathers (Cappadocians), who maintained the oneness of the divine substance, operating as three modes of being. It could be said that the early fathers recognised the dynamic personal relations in the Godhead but did not explicate it in the manner that social Trinity sought to do due to the effort to eschew pitfalls of Tritheism (Mitzler 2003: 285).

Furthermore, they were criticised for paying little attention to the discourse about God *in se* (God in Godself), which is considered to be an attempt to collapse the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity (Kärkkäinen 2007:190). Leslie (1997:384) believed that a careful analysis of the flow of LaCugna's thought, for example, points to a complete rejection of the discourse about the immanent Trinity.

Another objection relates to the extent to which a relational view is consistent with Scripture. Tuggy (2004:276) argues that the notion that the Father, Son, and the Spirit are the same and have equal and mutual relations could be described as the biggest deception of the social view of the Trinity since it is not consistent with biblical teachings. He further presents the claim that a critical examination of the New Testament and early Christians showed they did not hold the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as "collectively constituting the group called God" (Tuggy 2004:276). Making reference to New Testament expressions such as 'Kingdom of my father' (Matthew 26:29), and "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20.17), he observed that there is no claim either by Jesus or the early apostles that there is indication of a community of God (Tuggy 2004:276). However, Harris (1992:271-272) also observed that the New Testament refers to the community of God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. With divergent views on the relationship between a relational view of the Trinity and Scripture, I support the view of scholars who hold that the Scripture contains visible traces of the Triune God (Phan 2011:3; Edgar 2004:32).

Finally, the relational view of the Trinity has received a critique of the risk of hastily drawing practical implications for human communities. Kilby (2000:441) describes the proponents as 'projectionist' and argues that this notion of the Trinity relies on analogies of ideals of human relationships such as love, care and empathy on the divine named as Trinity. Similarly, Nausner (2009:412) observed that an attempt to strike similarities between the Trinitarian being of God and sociality of human beings has the pitfall of unnecessary comparison of divinity and humanity. This implies a call for creating a perfect human community, which is not plausible. In spite of this danger, I agree with Van den Brink (2014:341-342), who argues that this pitfall can be managed, since the relational view of the Trinity has its root in Scripture and God's revelation and that ignoring the relevance of the relational view of the Trinity will result in going back to the situation where the doctrine of the Trinity was "more than a logical conundrum, embarrassing both believers and non-believers". According to Volf (1998b:414), Jesus's command to His followers to 'be perfect' as their 'heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48), is an indication that faith communities could fashion their lives after the same elements of the "perfection of the eternal divine love". This is not to argue that human beings can copy God in all respects. To this end, the relational notion of the Trinity resulted in the renaissance and renewal of the doctrine of Trinity due to the fact that it brought awareness to the practical implications of the doctrine for human communities.

4.6 Conclusion

The chapter investigated a relational view of the Trinity as the focus of the theological reflection, which is the third phase in the pastoral circle. It sought to answer the question what a relational view of the Trinity means and implies? Prior to the discussion on a relational view of the Trinity, I undertake a brief survey of biblical and historical perspectives of the doctrine of the Trinity in order to place the discussion within a broader framework.

The result of the historical survey revealed that the situation of the development of the Trinity has been up and down, sometimes going down and other times resurfacing, and in some cases taking a new or renewed form. In addition, the biblical perspective indicated that, although the notion of Trinity is not explicit in Scripture, there is enough evidence of visible traces of the Trinity in both the Old and the New Testaments. With regard to a

relational view of the Trinity, insights from key theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna and Miroslav Volf, and the resources they provide that can inform a pastoral response to CSA in the context of Ghana were explicated. The theses of their argument are that doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract and speculative discourse about God, but one with far reaching practical implications for Christian spirituality and faith praxis. They moved the discourse on the Trinity from substance to relationality as the central motif, and they argued that it should be considered as a prototype for human community. Although, a relational view of the Trinity was considered the root of the revival of the doctrine of the Trinity, their proposals did not go without objections, some of which were briefly discussed in this chapter.

To this end, I support Phan's assertion that "the Trinity lies at the heart and centre of the Christian faith" (2011:11). This implies that the Trinity should be pivotal and given great attention in contemporary Christian theological thought and discourse. This naturally fits into the effort to rediscover the Trinity for Christian spirituality and faith praxis. The conceptualisations of a relational view of the Trinity puts the doctrine at the centre of pastoral responses since pastoral work is centrally about relationality (Pembroke 2006:7). The idea of persons in communion, primacy of communion among equals and a community of friendship, all seek to build a faith community that reflect the relationship of mutuality observed and experienced with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A relational view brought the revival of the doctrine of the Trinity and places it at the centre of theological reflections, as well as Christian spirituality. Consequently, it calls on faith communities to "live into the image of God as pursuing a community of radical mutuality that reflects the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and Spirit" (Plyod 2015:6). There is no doubt that such a community will initiate pastoral responses that adequately address CSA and other forms of the dehumanisation of children in the Ghanaian context.

CHAPTER 5: TOWARDS A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO CSA

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the third phase of the pastoral circle was discussed. That is, the moment of theological reflection, which focuses on a relational view of the doctrine of the Trinity and the resources that can be gleaned from the doctrine to inform a pastoral response to child sexual abuse (CSA) in the context of Ghana. This chapter discusses the last phase of the pastoral circle, which is pastoral planning and action. This is the moment where the faith community discerns the will of God and restates it for their current context (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). It is the point at which a decision is made with regard to what actions are expected by God from His chosen people, who are the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). It seeks to answer the question: what could a pastoral response to CSA based on the relational understanding of the Trinity be?

The chapter begins with a brief discussion on the current developments in the field of pastoral care, with a special focus on Africa. In addition, I propose a pastoral anthropology of children informed by a relational view of the Trinity and thereafter present a conceptual framework for pastoral care based on a relational view of the doctrine of the Trinity for the context of Ghana. Finally, the chapter outlines some proactive and reactive measures faith communities could embark on as a way to respond pastorally to CSA in relation to the realities of the CSA in the context of Ghana as espoused in chapter 3.

Due to the fact that CSA is a complex phenomenon, as corroborated by the findings in chapter 3, faith communities in Ghana need to carry out a care-giving ministry that is interdisciplinary in nature and informed by a relational view of the Trinity. Therefore, pastoral care in Africa should adopt multiplicity of approaches. It should adopt an integrated approach to the complexity of African people's lives. This calls for what Louw (2015:14) called a 'zigzag' approach, which entails a circular approach within the hermeneutics of a spiral model and zigzag methodology of interpretation. Working from this understanding implies that pastoral care demands that faith communities will

“embody Christ and become agents and beacons of desire and wounded healers of life despite the zigzag patterns of suffering” (Magezi 2019:12).

5.2 Current developments in pastoral care

From its inception, pastoral care denotes the notion of shepherding² (McClure 2012: 269). This concept of shepherding connects with the theme of God as a shepherd (Ezekiel 34), hence places pastoral care in the confines of theology. The field of pastoral care has witnessed significant changes over the years. The new developments in the field and practice of pastoral care have largely been attributed to changes in the socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts (Miller-McLemore & Gill-Austern 1999:14), as well as the emergence of theories in theology and social sciences (Van Arkel 2000:142). Some of the key developments have been in the area of the tension between theological and psychological domains; the need for pastoral care to respond to ethical issues in our society; and the sterling contributions by feminist pastoral theologians; the growing attention to the role of pastoral anthropology; and the call to move towards communal care rather than individualisation of pastoral care and therapy (Mouton 2014; Dillen 2011; Buffel 2007; Van Arkel 2000:142).

This section does not seek to provide a thick description of the developments across history in the field. Rather, I attempt to provide a snapshot of the key changes in the field. Attention is given to the movement from the individualisation of care to mutual care of the community by its own members.

Later developments saw a shift from theology, consequently, pastoral care was conceptualised in the terms of psychology, social work, and therapy (Purves 2004:5). This has resulted in concerns with the fact that the discipline has been detached from a

²I am critical of the notion of the shepherd. I disagree with the concept that the shepherd connects with ordained ministers or clericalism, the shepherd is more knowledgeable than other members of the community and undertakes acts of care while the lay people and other members of the community are passive in the care giving ministry (cf. Dillen 2017). I support the understanding that shepherd connects with the idea that all members of the faith community are taking the ministry of caring for each other in the community. That is, all members of the community are sheep and shepherd at the same time. Each member gives and receives care (Dillen 2017:3; 2011:206).

theological and liturgic framework. A call was made to reconsider pastoral care as a concept deeply rooted in the theological understanding of the gospel. In Purves' vision, Pastoral theology "is principally concerned with the practice of God" and secondarily as reflection on "the participative practice of the church within that theological perspective through our union with Christ" (2004: xxii). In other words, theology of pastoral care "is principally concerned with theological reflection on actual churchly practice" (2004:xxii).

This shift calls for a pastoral response emanating from the love of God. As observed by McClure (2012:269) "*pastoral care indicates various responses of a person or persons motivated by God's love for another or others*". This implies that pastoral responses to existential issues should flow out of the love of God and can be undertaken by those who love God. Similarly, Koopman believes that theological responses should rest on the assertion that "God so loved the world" (Jn.3:16). This confessional belief has three dimensions, namely the inherent public nature of God's love, the rationality of God's love for the world, and the meaning and implications of God's love for every facet of life (Smit 2009:526). The Trinity presents this dimension of love. The inherent nature of God's love is the foundation for the communion in the three persons in the Trinity. The Trinity invites all creation into the participation in this love, as well as the extensions of love to the world. God is love (1 John 4:7) and the Christian understanding of God is the Trinity. Scheib (2014:707) suggests that love could be a starting point for reflections in pastoral theology. He grounds this argument in the notion that love is an 'essential characteristic' of the Triune God. And that since the mission of the church seeks to promote "healing, restoration and justice in the face of suffering and growth" (2014:707), it can only be born out of love. The implication is that love is at the heart of the Trinity and this communion of love infuse the praxis of pastoral relationship, thereby, promoting growth and the "just flourishing of all persons and creatures" (Cooper-White 2007:93). Similarly, Streets (2014:4) argues that communion of love is an underling value of pastoral care and remarked that "we are always selves-in-relationship to other people and to nature itself. We become who we are as a result of our relationships with others". As a result, relationships become key element in the praxis of pastoral care and since relationality is a central motif of the Trinity, it cannot be separated from the praxis of pastoral care. The quality of relationship can promote or hinder healing (Streets 2014:4). As a result, it can

be argued that the Trinitarian relations promotes healing as well as growth and flourishing when it becomes the fountain from which pastoral responses flow.

Another development in pastoral theology is the need for pastoral care to be targeted at responding to the signs of the times (Van Arkel 2000:145). This is against the backdrop that there are increasing issues of social injustices such as abuse of children and women, race, conflicts, and the dehumanisation of certain classes in society. Consequently, pastoral theology should also aim at addressing these ethical issues in society (Molla 2018; Couture & Hunter 1995). The renewed interest in pastoral care results in feminist pastoral theologians who advocated strongly for pastoral responses to address violence against children and women in both faith communities and society at large (Molla 2018; Greider, Johnson & Leslie 1999:4344). They argued that children and women are suffering partly due to the hierarchical nature of relationships in both faith communities and the larger society (Molla 2018; LaCugna 1999). According to Couture (1999:175), pastoral theology in the twentieth century has been significantly affected by feminist contributions. In this vein, pastoral theology focused attention on the transformation of society by responding to societal structures that promote dehumanisation of children and women (Miller-McLemore & Gill-Austern 1999:20). It points to the fact that feminist pastoral theologians have contributed to the renewed interest in the impact of context on the ministry of care (Van Arkel 2000:147) as well as faith communities undertaking a ministry of care that is grounded in a communal-contextual paradigm of pastoral work (Greider, Johnson & Leslie 1999:22). Accordingly, pastoral care becomes integral in the ministry of the church. It awakens the mandate of faith communities as prophetic voices, speaking the mind of God and also taking on the priestly role, prescribing, and pursuing how we ought to live in order to be in the Triune God.

This development ushered pastoral care into the arena of public theology. This promoted a shift in pastoral care from attending and responding to needs of individuals to a response to a whole community. This new dimension of pastoral care challenges the whole faith community to assume the responsibility of corporate caring for all by the whole congregation as compared with the traditional notion of care for an individual by privileged, ordained leaders (McClure 2012: 275). This could be considered as living out

ones' belief to the watching world. God, therefore, expects that this relationship of love is expressed in and among believers, and in the communities, they serve (Smit 2015:12). These new frontiers of care call for a Christian spirituality that mobilises the whole faith community to create a space in which wounded and broken members will find a haven. As they receive their healing, their lives become another means of promoting healing to other suffering members of the community and of the larger society (Gunderson, Magnan & Baciu 2018:236; Gunderson 1997:8). In the words of McClure, it is the "*care for the community and its members by the community and its members*" (2012:275). Pastoral care to a community by her members implies that pastoral care has also entered the space of contextual theology. McClure (2012:275) observed that pastoral care moved from the traditional model of caring for individuals to become "communal-contextual". This concept puts the obligation on faith communities to rally their congregations to find God and one another in a caring community. As was observed by Lartey, pastoral theology is concerned with the caring activities created and extended by faith communities to their members. These caring activities are contextual. Pastoral responses should take her root from the culturally specific context (Lartey 2004: 90). This implies a call for decolonizing pastoral care and to make it find flavour in indigenous African communitarian ethos. As a result, Lartey (2013:121-122) observes that pastoral care, aimed at building healthy communities to promote well-being of all members, is part of the effort towards postcolonial pastoral care. He argues that this calls for the need for communities to pursue total dignity of individuals and the transformation of culture and faith praxis. Arguing from the perspective of postcolonial practical theology, Lartey suggests the need for creativity, innovation and improvisation grounded in the indigenous African communitarian ethos in order to undertake a pastoral care and healing that goes far beyond the individual to the whole community by the whole community.

Miller-McLemore described this as pastoral care in the 'living web', which seeks to move from the individualised care to include paying attention to the social, cultural, economic, traditional, political, and religious factors that cause or promote injustices and dehumanisation of children in our communities (1999:80). According to Molla (2018:194), this notion of the living web expands the scope of care to communal care and public ministry. Consequently, the ministry of care could be directed towards societal transformation and helping to alleviate suffering. In the light of this, it is argued that

theological reflections on a pastoral responseshould be placed in a particular context (Duncap 2009:12). This supports the assertion that all theology is contextual. In the opinion of Couture (1999:175-176) pastoral responses should be rooted in contextual theological approaches in order to take into consideration the lived experiences of different people in different contexts. It underscores the critical role of context in the work of pastoral theology's task of helping faith communities to adorn their cloth of caring, healing, and transformation in society (Miller-McLemore & Gill-Austern 1999:19).

Working from this paradigm, calls for critical analysis of the context through an interdisciplinary approach. Social analysis of the context in which pastoral care is carried out could be gleaned through sociological, cultural, and psychological lenses.

Additionally, recent developments in pastoral care have prompted a practice that is placed in the public sphere. That is, pastoral theology adorning the cloth of public theology. McClure (2012:276) opined that critical reflections on the policies and socio-cultural factors that influence suffering, and also liberation has attracted the attention of pastoral theology. Similarly, it is noted that there are implications of public issues for pastoral theology, and that in the same vein, pastoral care has public implications (Miller-McLemore 2004). This discourse implies that pastoral care is both private and public. Although, historically, pastoral care has been predominantly focused on individual needs, recent developments call for attention to issues in the public arena. John de Gruchy observes that "public theology is a Christian witness" (2007:40). It involves "critical theological reflections" aimed at addressing issues of public importance in a particular context (2007:40). The implication, therefore, is that public theology extends the borders of theological reflections to the day-to-day expressing of the Christian beliefs and values in the public space (Juma 2015:3). Public theology challenges faith communities to leave the church walls and be actively visible in the public space (Magezi 2018:6). Faith communities are from a public theological perspective called to undertake a ministry that is actively listening to the voices and cries of children and families experiencing sexual abuse in Ghana. This active visibility of the church in society is often considered 'Christian praxis' according to Kim (2007:424). In this light, it could be argued that current developments in pastoral theology, resulting in a shift from clinical care of individuals to care for the community by the whole community, have prompted pastoral theologians to

undertake an interdisciplinary discourse about Christian praxis (Maynard, Moschella, & Hummel 2010:6).

In Africa, these current developments in pastoral care sit well with the community context approach. Stinton (2012:13) observes that theological formulation in Africa should be placed in the concept of community since the community is central to the daily lived experiences of Africans. It implies that current movement in pastoral care finds affinity in the African culture that leans towards communal life (Grobbelaar 2012:41). The move away from the individualisation of care, that is care provided by an ordained clergy to an individual with a need or distress to communal care, that is care to the whole community by the whole community. It is the care ministry that takes into consideration the living web and the notion that human beings are wired to connect (Miller-McLemore 1999:80).

In addition, pastoral care in African has also gone through different forms and stages, starting from the missionary movement till the emergence of African theological reflections on pastoral care in the context of Africa (Magezi 2019:8). In the 20th century, pastoral care gave more attention to theological reflections on the African continent by African theologians. The awakening of interest in theological reflections on pastoral care and emergence of African theologians led to the formation of the African Association for Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC) in February 1985 in Kenya. Among other things, the association aimed at promoting African perspectives on pastoral care and counselling through research and training that is consistent with the African context (Magezi 2019:8; 2016:2). As a result, several scholars emerged, with series of contributions by key African pastoral theologians such as Emmanuel Y. Lartey (Ghana), Vhumani Magezi, Daniel J. Louw and Julian Müller (South Africa), and many others across the continent.

These advances in the pastoral theology in African ushered in key developments that are worth briefly discussing in this section. In the first instance, pastoral care became rooted in African theology; the theology done by Africans to respond to contextual issues, that is, theology to deconstruct and reconstruct certain structures in African societies (Villa-Vicencio 1992:7–9). It called for the need to undertake a theology that seeks

reconstruction, take into consideration all aspects of life (Mugambi 1995:7–9). African theological reflection sought to rally faith communities to embark on transformative praxis that aims to promote justice and human dignity in African society (Magezi 2019:10).

Secondly, African pastoral theological reflection favours interdisciplinary approaches due to the multi-faced and complex issues in the living realities of human life. The African context and the lives of the people is inundated with complexities, consequently, reflections and practice of pastoral care should take on integrated approaches (Magezi 2019:11-12). In the opinion of the Louw (2015:14), it should adopt a 'zigzag' approach in which the praxis methodology, and spiral hermeneutic paradigms are appreciated. Magezi (2019:12) asserts that for pastoral care to meet this demand, it should be undertaken by people who "embody Christ and become agents and beacons of desire and wounded healers of life despite the zigzag patterns of suffering". This implies that the multiplicity nature of suffering of children in African societies can be effectively addressed by God's people by adopting critical reflection in the paradigm of interdisciplinarity.

Another issue of key concern is illness and healing. Pastoral care should aim at bringing wholeness. Louw (2008) describe it as 'cura vitae'. However, Magezi (2019:11) observed that pastoral care should work towards wholeness. It is important to note that CSA result in the disintegration of the wholeness since it affects the holistic wellbeing of children. In order for pastoral care to address holistic wellbeing and needs, it should be integrated into the ministry of the church in Africa (Molla 2018; Magezi 2016; Van Arkel 2000; Gerkin 1997; Heitink 1993). In this way, faith communities will undertake a ministry of caregiving that is rooted in faith praxis and Christian spirituality, which is consistent with lived experiences of the African context (Magezi 2019:9; Mucherera & Lartey 2017; Bowers 2009:94–100). This implies that pastoral care should adorn clothes of African daily experiences.

In the first place, pastoral care in African should challenge the faith community to hear voices of the vulnerable and take efforts to heal their suffering (Molla 2018:189; Hendriks 2014:61–80). This involves listening and responding to the daily lived experiences of abuse and dehumanisation of the marginalised in the Ghanaian society such as children.

Magezi (2019:11) observed that faith communities should address societal structures such as patriarchy and hierarchy that promotes marginalisation of women and children in society. Secondly, pastoral care in Africa should carry out a ministry that is clothed with genuine compassion, love, and care for people. Commenting on the concept of compassion in pastoral care, Louw (2011:1) used the term ‘ta splanchnic’ to describe a sense of deep and strong feeling of mercy and compassion expressed by the intestines. This implies that our compassion towards people, especially, the vulnerable and those suffering should be genuine and not superficial. This compassion calls for a pastoral ministry that could be described as “*embracing the other and reaching out to the other*” (Magezi 2019:12) as the Trinity continues to reach out to creation. In the atmosphere of this compassion and mercy, faith communities in Ghana are less likely to create spaces for the manipulation, abuse, and dehumanisation of the marginalised, including children. In the light of this development of demonstrating love, care, and compassion to the marginalised in African context, pastoral care enters the public space. Dillen (2011:209) observed that pastoral care is largely ‘public care’ and advocate for the need to focus attention on this way. Consequently, pastoral theological reflection in Africa is giving needed attention to addressing public issues, hence the focus on care by the whole congregation to whole congregation and the whole society. This focus of pastoral care that aimed at demonstrating compassion and reaching out to each other as well as giving voices of the marginalised by seeking to transform the whole community, point to the implications of a relational view of the Trinity. The Trinitarian nature of God, according to Bevan (2018:34) emanates from the “relatedness and giftedness” of the three distinct persons to each other. This connectedness and serving one another depicts the traces that should reflect in faith communities as the whole community sought to care for one another. Making reference to David Cunningham, Bevan observed that faith in the Trinity “opens up a vista of God’s ‘marks’ (what Augustine called “*vestigia*”) in the world’s events, in human experience and cultures, and in the natural world” (2018:34). This implies that doing theology from the contextual realities in Africa is Trinitarian in nature. Given that the Trinitarian God is present in the world, in culture and human experience, theologians reflecting from the Christian perspectives should do contextual theology (2018:34; 2002:11-15).

In addition, commenting on David Cunningham notion of ‘Trinitarian practice’, Bevan

(2018:43) observed that theological reflections should be grounded in the notion that the Christian faith is a Trinitarian faith since it seeks to invite faith communities into the Trinitarian mission of the Christian God in the world. As a result, Mwoleka (as cited in Bevan 2018:43) concludes that the Trinitarian faith is more about 'imitating' the Trinitarian God and extending the divine mission. This calls on theologians to reflect contextually in order to challenge faith communities to participate in the Trinity and extend it to the larger society.

5.3 A Trinitarian paradigm of pastoral care

It could be argued that the current focus of pastoral care, which leans towards communal care sits well with a relational view of the Trinity. The notion of relationality is a central theme in the Trinity and also a key concept in pastoral care. This is because the relational dynamic of the context in which pastoral care takes place has attracted theological reflection (Dillen 2011:204). Consequently, the importance of the topic of this study to reflect on a pastoral response from the paradigm of a relational view of the Trinity cannot be overemphasised. Reflecting on the current developments from the paradigm of relationality, which is the central theme of the Trinity, certain key elements are worth discussing. As Pembroke puts it "since the relational element is at the very centre of pastoral work, it seemed to me that the doctrine of the Trinity must have the potential to make a major contribution to pastoral theory and practice" (2006:7).

Firstly, there is a 'community' in God. God exists in relationship as the Father, Son, and the Spirit - the Trinity. That is, the belief that there is communion and relationship in the Trinity. Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God - the image of the Trinity - and called to share in this communion. Since human beings are created in the image of God, it also implies that we are created for communion with God, others, and the entire creation (Medley 2002:2). Marmion and Nieuwenhove (2010:2) observed that sharing in the dynamics of the Triune God has important practical "implications for anthropology, ecclesiology, and society". The implications are far reaching. There are implications for the views that are held about the members of the community. The community of believers are invited to participate in this community of mutual love and fellowship that exists in the Triune God. Smit (2015:11) commenting on Moltmann-Wendel and Moltmann (1983:88) gave a vivid summary of the New Testament testimony as "the

great love story of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” in which the whole creation and humankind are all together. In the same vein, Migliore (2004:68) opined that God’s love presented originally through Him as Father, is humanly enacted in this world by the Son and becomes vital and present until today through the Spirit. This, therefore, implies that faith communities working through this lens are more likely to build a ministry that follows Christ’s example as Prophet, Priest and King (Leith 1993:159). Christ as king, priest and prophet could be considered as a typology of the Trinity. That is, Christ as the King (the Father), as priest (the Son) and as the prophet (the Spirit). The Father adopts us into the covenant community through the redemptive work of the Son and our lives in that community is empowered through the indwelling of the Spirit. According to Smit (2015:10), at the individual level, God’s children are called individually, and at the group level, are called collectively to participate in the life of the Trinity. The faith community becomes the family of God, which is expected, on one hand to participate in the life of the Trinity and on the other hand, extend the grace and the love of the Trinity to the world. This is what Volf (1998b:417) opined as the ‘social program’ of the Trinity, where the self-giving love of the divine Trinity is expected to constitute faith praxis and Christian spirituality (see section 4.3.3 for further details). The faith community is called to share in this self-giving love. Donovan (2000:357) observes the openness to participate in the love of God and the extension of love to all human being is the basic predisposition for pastoral theology. This is because pastoral care has its root in the openness of one’s life to God as well as the openness to God’s acts in the life of others.

In the paradigm of care by the whole community to the whole community, the notion of mutuality observed in the Trinity could contribute greatly. LaCugna (see section 4.3.2) noted that mutuality is key in the Trinity. Life in this community should be built upon the notion of primacy of equals and not primacy of one over the other. Mutuality implies the possibility to come to a balance of power, where both parties have an influence on each other and whereby each partner has the possibility to express his or her own opinion, to give to the other and to receive from the other” (Dillen 2011:205).

In addition, the caregiving and pastoral ministry of faith communities should aim at transforming the faith community to function in line with Trinitarian ecclesiology. Volf

(1998:191) asserts that ecclesial communion should reflect the Trinitarian communion (see more in section 4.3.3). This challenges faith communities to continually explore and pursue parallels of Trinitarian communion for the ecclesial communion. This implies that the mode of being of faith communities as well as their structures should reflect the relationality in Triune God. The structures of the community should be fashioned to be parallel to the relationship of equality, love, and mutual fellowship. It should be the primacy of equals in communion against the primacy of one over the other. When relationships become truly mutual, it is more likely to promote the atmosphere of care.

Tanner (2012:370) argues that in the Trinity, all forms of hierarchical structures in relation is replaced with mutuality and reciprocity, which affirms the dignity of all individuals. This notion of affirmation of dignity of all could create a safe space to mutual care for one another. For LaCugna, the participation in the Trinity results in deconstruction and reconstruction of ecclesial structures that remove all elements of barriers, subordination, abuse of power and dehumanisation of some members, especially children in the community (Kärkkäinen 2007:185)

Secondly, the relationship of love and fellowship that exist in the Trinity points to communal care. It implies that all members should experience that love and fellowship which create a safe environment for all, including children. The mutual relationship of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and this relationship of fellowship is extended to the human being. This extension to the world is an invitation into fellowship, that is, friendship, which create the space for all-men, women, children, rich and poor to come into friendship with Him, and among themselves (Kärkkäinen 2007:106-107). The notion of friendship as an element of pastoral care has received some criticism. It believed that the notion of friendship could be romanticised in which the boundaries as well as the power balance in pastoral relationships are crossed (Dillen 2017:3; 2011:206). I support the notion that the friendship emphasises mutual fellowship and adequate balance of power, where the dignity and the contributions of all members in the pastoral relationship are appreciated (Dillen 2017:3). Commenting on the notion of friendship Kotze and Noeth (2017:1) asserts that this kind of friendship creates both private and public space where Christians live in freedom and in a non-hierarchical way. This understanding provides the basis for a community in which all human beings strive to treat each other as equals. This is

important for the way Christians live since there is no hierarchy among friends, it calls for an atmosphere of love, care, and the upholding of the dignity of all human beings because we are all created in the image of God, including children. According Moltmann in the Trinity “each Person receives the fullness of eternal life from the other” (1991:173-174). In other words, in the notion of communal care, each member receives life through the caring nature of the triune in the other. It is the concept of uBuntu in the African context, where members of the community assents to the idea one exists because of the other and that one’s life is meaningful through the relationship that exist between him/her and the others. The relational space of love, compassion, and care in the faith community serves as a protective layer for children and families. Faith communities can serve as protective layer for children. Couture (2003:28-30) presents a social work family system model which supports the idea that churches are valuable in child protection. This model includes churches as one of the important layers in the protective cover for children This can occur usually in the atmosphere of mutual love and care, which is the concept of relationality as a central motif of the Trinity. Groppes (2002:760) observed the key characteristic of the church of Jesus Christ is the one that brings love, care, hope and healing to the suffering world.

Again, the idea that pastoral care should rally the faith community to carry out this ministry of caregiving aimed at the transformation of society in line with the Trinitarian paradigm of pastoral response. It is the extension of the Trinity program to larger society. This is what Volf opined as the Trinity as a ‘social program’. This social program involves the faith community’s effort to demonstrate the Trinitarian relations and strive to build structures that are parallel with Trinitarian relations. Commenting on Moltmann’s notion of Trinitarian community, Kärkkäinen (2017:203; 2007:113) observed, all forms of notion of hierarchy and dominion are foreign to the nature of the Triune God, and that God as the Father does not imply exercising power over but rather being a loving parent. Using concepts like fatherly and motherly parent, Moltmann proposed a community that is built on Trinitarian ideas, in which there is an equal fellowship of men and women, children and adults as well as the rich and the poor. The context of Ghana is inundated with community and cultural structures mainly hierarchical, which serves as the root for manipulation, abuse of power and dehumanisation of the vulnerable. Some of these hierarchical structural arrangements are also found in faith communities as the social

position of children in African thought has influence the place and value of children in faith communities (Mtata 2009: 85). McDougall (2005:139) supports this opinion by indicating that our communities should be structured based on egalitarianism as explain in the concept of '*imago trinitatis*'. According to Moltmann, the antidote to this societal problem of abuse of power and dehumanisation of the marginalised is to hold a Trinitarian view of God in which we promote a "community of equals, vulnerable and open to the human suffering, who experiences this suffering in himself" (Marei 2004:213). Pastoral responses informed by a relational view of the Trinity should strive for creating relational spaces where adults affirm the dignity of children and are open to their lived experiences of sufferings. That is, the concept of subordination, domination and abuse of power is incongruent with this notion of the fellowship of equals that the Triune God presents. In effect, Moltmann (1993a:315) calls for a fellowship of friends, that is a community of brethren in which there is no more slavery or lordship.

From the ongoing analysis, it could be argued that the Trinitarian paradigm of pastoral care is consistent with feminist pastoral theologian Miller-McLemore's notion of 'pastoral care in the living web'. This ideology espoused that pastoral care should respond to the whole community. That is, it examines and respond to the social, political, and cultural structures and practices that treat people in relations to their gender, race, status, and physical ability (Miller-McLemore 1999:80). The living web is the space that could promote oppression, injustice, and dehumanisation of children in society (Molla 2018:194). According to Miller-McLemore, pastoral care in the living web of life seek to address the injustice and promoting acts of liberation, resistance, nurturance, and empowerment in public spaces. The focus on the living web as a public space implies a shift from pastoral care's focus from care of individuals to communal care is contextually relevant. Communal care presents the possibilities to address the social, political, and cultural web that contribute to the risk of children to CSA in the context of Ghana as outlined in chapter three.

The notion of pastoral care in the living web is communal in nature. As a result, pastoral care in the living web of Ghana should be rooted in the Trinitarian paradigm in order to rally faith communities to carry out a transformative pastoral ministry that promotes a

living web of justice and compassion for children at risk of CSA in faith communities and in the public space.

To this end, the location of pastoral care as an integral part of church's ministry in Africa is in line with current trends in pastoral care (Gerkin 1997; Heitink 1993; Magezi 2016; Van Arkel 2000) where care is provided from the perspective of the Christian faith and spirituality within the context of faith communities (Magezi 2019:9). For pastoral care to be integrated into ministry praxis implies care which is rooted in the mode of being and praxis of faith communities. This calls for theological resources that emanates from the being of the church. There is a need for an ecclesiology that is relational in the space, created in the Trinity and extended to all creation. This is the motivation for utilising the resources of a relational view of the Trinity to inform and reform a pastoral response to CSA in the context of Ghana. I now turn my attention to other resources that can be gleaned from the Trinity to construct a pastoral response to CSA.

5.4 A pastoral response to CSA in Ghana

As already discussed in chapter 3 (see section 3.2.6), there is a growing interest in child protection and the contribution that faith communities can make. World Vision, under the Joint Learning Initiative for Local Faith Communities conducted a comprehensive study to investigate the roles of faith communities in ending violence against children and instituting measures for child protection. Among other things, the study observed that "faith communities are critical actors in ending violence against children. Faith leaders provide support to families and children and engage with formal child protection systems locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally. They have crucial roles to play in the prevention and referral of child abuse cases" (World Vision 2019). This places faith communities as strategic partners in efforts to end violence against children and to put and keep robust child protection systems in place within our societies. Against this background, strategic ideas in relation to contributions of faith communities in Ghana are identified in an attempt to conceptualise a contextual pastoral response to CSA that is informed by a relational view of the Trinity.

According to Lartey (2006:14) pastoral theology is "reflection on the caring activities of

God and human communities". Pastoral care could be conceptualised to include both the proactive and reactive functions of ministry of care undertaken by faith communities. In this regard, pastoral response is proactive when it assumes functions to empower people to creatively assess situations in advance and make preparations towards them. On the other hand, pastoral ministry is reactive when it aims at bringing healing, restoration, relief to those suffering (Lartey 2003:30). I argue that a creatively integrated proactive and reactive pastoral response, informed by a relational view of the Trinity is critical in addressing the holistic needs of children at risk, such as CSA in Ghana. Similarly, Molla (2018:194) contends that pastoral care aimed at addressing the holistic needs of children at risk could be described as pastoral care in the living web. She argues that pastoral care in the living web "examines traditions, cultures, structures, and ideologies that oppress groups on the basis of age, sex, gender, race, and physical ability" (2018:194). That is, the meaning of pastoral care moved from the care of an individual to communal care. Pastoral care as communal care is consistent with a relational view of the Trinity. Pastoral care in this notion aims at flattening the power gradient, engaging critically with language and practices that create life-denying worlds, but develop mutuality and reciprocity that promotes worlds of flourishing. Molla described pastoral care as a ministry of "resistance; nurturance; empowerment; and liberation" (Molla 2018:200).

Pastoral care as resistance involves acts that seek to resist socio-cultural, political, and religious ideologies and structures that dominate and manipulate others based on age, gender, and ethnicity (Molla 2018:195). Pastoral care as resistance according to Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:195) include healing wounds of abuse. It could be said that sexual abuse of children can result in devastating wounds for years if no help is available. There is evidence that CSA is often associated with abuse of power (Raynaert 2015:189). This abuse of power and manipulation of the vulnerable in society are supported by certain ideologies and structures that seek to dominate others in our communities. According to Moltmann, the belief in non-Trinitarian monotheism is the root of the hierarchical understanding of community, thereby leading to the building of monarchist society (Kärkkäinen 2017:203). In Moltmann's response to this, in order to address this societal problem, we should hold a Trinitarian view of God in which we promote a "community of equals, vulnerable and open to the human suffering, who experiences this suffering in himself" (Marei 2004:213). LaCugna contends that we build

communities based on the primacy of equals and not primacy of one over the other. That is, the concept of subordination, domination and abuse of power is incongruent with this notion of fellowship of equals that the Triune God presents. In the Trinity, all hierarchical social relations, both at personal and social community levels are replaced with “*ones of mutuality and reciprocity and maintains the equal dignity of all*” (Tanner 2012:370). This implies that, if a community life is organised in such a way that it is rooted in the notion of a relational view of the Trinity, CSA will be uncommon in both faith communities and society at large. I argue that this fellowship of equals, open to men and women should form the foundation of the life in faith communities in Ghana and society at large in order to respond pastorally to CSA.

Kärkkäinen (2017:203) asserts that whilst a non-Trinitarian monotheistic view leads to domination and abuse of power, the Trinitarian understanding promotes “equality, belonging, and flourishing”. There is evidence that the root of sufferings, as a result of injustice, is in this hierarchical view of society. In order to address the holistic needs of children at risk of CSA in the Ghanaian context, I suggest an ecclesiology where its faith praxis, and Christian spirituality play out in the organisational and structural arrangement that reflect the Christian concept of God. In other words, a relational view of the Trinity, that is full of fellowship of persons that are equal, and united in the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit to create life flourishing world (Volf 1998; Moltmann 1991; LaCugna 1991).

In addition, pastoral care as nurturing stems from God’s character of love, compassion, and care for human beings and all his creation (Molla 2018:196). Nurturance according to Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:196) involves proclamation of love that promotes solidarity. This love and compassion are characteristic of the nature of the Christian God. This implies that the demonstration of love, compassion and care for the public issue and victims of CSA can flow from the Trinity. As Moltmann contends, the doctrine of the Trinity is the “Christianization of the concept of God” (1991:10). The Christian God can only be construed in terms of the Trinity (LaCugna 1991:1). The relationality espoused in terms of communion, fellowship and mutuality in the Trinitarian persons is the product of the love as a God’s character. God is love and God’s love is revealed in us (John 4:7-8). This

affirmation could be considered the foundation for nurturance as pastoral function. Moltmann believes that "the triune God reveals himself as love in the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (1991:56). In the same vein, Volf (1998:7) observes that the church should be the embodiment of God's love, peace and joy and should pass on this characteristic nature of God to the world. This is because God invites his creation to participate in this love and extend this love to the larger society. Volf (1998b:417) referred to this as the 'social program' of the Trinity in which, the self-giving love of the divine Trinity is expected to constitute faith praxis and Christian spirituality. Similarly, Donovan (2000:357) observes that the openness to participate in the love of God and the extension of love to all human beings is the basic predisposition for pastoral theology. I argue that proclamation of the love, compassion, and care towards members of the faith community and the larger society is more likely to move faith communities in Ghana to undertake a pastoral response aimed addressing the holistic wellbeing of children at risk of CSA.

Furthermore, pastoral care as empowerment rallies the faith community to undertake advocacy and also provide resources for the marginalised (Molla 2018:197). This empowerment is communal pastoral care as it provides the opportunity to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves due to certain societal structures. Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:197), relates that empowerment provide resources to those who were previously voiceless and denied of power. Pastoral care that functions to give people voice and restore their power and dignity is deeply rooted in a relational view of the Trinity. LaCugna asserts that in the Trinity, there is primacy of equals and not one over the other. We observed a relationship of equality, reciprocity, and mutual fellowship in the Triune God. This implies pastoral care as flattening the power gradient and critical engagement with practices creating life-denying worlds. This empowerment enjoins faith communities to aim at pastoral care as developing mutuality and reciprocity. Commenting on Moltmann's vision of inclusiveness, equality, love, and communion in the faith community, Kärkkäinen (2017:203-204) observes that Moltmann proposes an ecclesiology of equal relationships among men and women or adults and children, which is fashioned to correspond to the 'equalitarian' Trinity.

Also, liberation as a pastoral function seeks to undertake a caring ministry that aims at bringing freedom for victims of exploitation, discrimination and injustice against children, women, and men (Molla 2018:198). It is an extension of God's action borne out of love and justice towards the vulnerable. Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:199) opines that for pastoral theology, pastoral care as liberation rejects any suggestion of patriarchal and sexist ideas and structures that dominate people based on age, sex, and abilities. This notion of oppression and domination against certain groups is foreign to a relational view of the Trinity. For example, Moltmann's Trinitarian thinking promotes inclusiveness, equality, love, and communion in the faith community. LaCugna advocates for a communion of primacy of equals and Volf put forth that ecclesial and societal relations should parallel Trinitarian relations. It is observed that a relational view of the Trinity connects the themes of several contextual theological reflections, including pastoral theology (Kärkkäinen 2017:204). One of such reflections on the Trinity and society, was the focus of Boff (2005:1), who set a project for liberation, equality, and dignity for all and was critical of abuse of power and domination, irrespective of whether ecclesiastical, cultural, or political. In the Trinitarian relations, there is freedom. Moltmann (2015:119), use the notion of friendship to describe the freedom observed in the Trinity. He asserts that friendship which flows out of the practical concept of freedom is the "best way of expressing the liberating relationship with God, and the fellowship of men and women in the spirit of freedom" (1993a:316). For LaCugna the Trinitarian thinking maintains that social justice and equality should be for all and not for a selected few. This is because the Trinitarian notion of social justice and equality, which in her opinion is rooted in Scripture may contradict the commonly held ideas of economies, social justice, and social structures in our contemporary society (Campbell 2016:150). As already stated, CSA is a form of abuse of power, exploitation, and injustice against children. This implies that faith communities could respond pastorally from a broader foundation to CSA when they undertake a ministry of care informed by a relational view of the Trinity.

5.4.1 Proactive responses

For the church to be able to proactively respond, it will require her to reform her mode of being. How can faith communities be church to children in a relational space? What resources gleaned from the Trinity could inform the mode of being of faith communities? The proactive measures of faith communities could stem from the views they hold about

the members of the community and the nature of communities they seek to build. This implies that a pastoral response to CSA by faith communities could be influenced by a pastoral theological anthropology of children and the nature of communal life. Mtata observes that there is inconsistency between the communal nature of African life and the hierarchical construction of personhood which puts children at the extreme end of society, and also in the church (Mtata 2009:85). As a result, this section begins with views held about children and the quality of communal life before attention is given to specific proactive strategic steps that could be undertaken by faith communities in Ghana to respond to CSA.

5.4.1.1 Pastoral anthropology of children

Pastoral care is often provided from some framework of hermeneutics and pastoral anthropology is one of such key frameworks. Anthropology is the understanding of human beings. It entails the views that are held about the human nature. Van Arkel (2000) observed that development in pastoral care brought to the fore the renewed interest in the role of anthropology in pastoral care. Heitink (1998:86) argued that although pastoral responses are explicit, these actions are largely influenced by the implicit views held about the people that received the care. This anthropological view can be conscious or unconscious within the context of pastoral care (Brunsdon 2019:1-2; Heitink 1998:86). Brunsdon (2019:3) opines that pastoral anthropology entails “*a Christian understanding of another person within the pastoral context, who and what someone is in the light of God’s covenant love, through the redemption of Christ and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit*”. In effect, Brunsdon suggest that the Christian views about humanity should be rooted in the Triune God. This implies that pastoral anthropology should be grounded in the Christian understanding of human beings, and children are not an exception. It calls for views of children that is consistent with the Christian God. Mtata (2009:85) contents that a “faulty anthropology produces a faulty theology, and a faulty theology produces a skewed anthropology”. This implies that there is a strong connection between anthropology and a pastoral response. As observed, the Christian God can truly be conceptualised in the Trinitarian paradigm. This, therefore, suggests that the pastoral anthropology of children should be conceptualised from the paradigm of the Triune God.

Commenting on the importance of pastoral anthropology in pastoral care, Louw (2000:123) asserts that pastoral responses cannot be detached from pastoral anthropology and that any pastoral response that is not rooted in pastoral anthropology could be described as falling into the trap of being “docetic and alien to life”. The implication is that the views and understandings held about children in the faith community forms part of the hermeneutical framework from which pastoral actions are undertaken. Mtata (2009:97) asserts that faith communities as well as theological reflection in Africa have sometimes followed the African construction of personhood that put children as a lower class of human beings at the subconscious level. The implication of this is that dehumanisation of children is inconsistent with the communitarian nature of African life. As a result, it is imperative to underscore the fact that in the notion of pastoral care as communal care, where the whole community is caring for its members, its pastoral anthropology should be rooted in the image of the Triune God. The views held about all members, especially, the marginalised like children should be consistent with the nature of the Christian God.

5.4.1.2 Views of children in the Ghanaian context

According to Nelson Mandela (1995), the keenest revelation of a society’s soul is in the way she treats her children. This statement underscores the value the society places on the child, and the implication for the future of the society. In addition, it also points to the respect and dignity that is accorded to children in any society and informs the response of that society to their needs. Boakye-Boaten (2010:1) observes that the views held by any society about children and the quality of commitment to the wellbeing of children determine the future of that society. In Africa in general and Ghana, children are seen as sacred and valued in terms of their ability to perpetuate the culture and traditions. Hence there is a conscious effort by families and the entire community to socialise children. According to Boakye-Boaten (2010:2-3), the fact that Africans continue to ensure transmitting of its cultural values in spite of the socio-political and economic domination by the westerners, is due to the strategies in caring and protecting each other based on the quality of relationships that exists at the community levels. This quality of communal ties fuelled the transmission of cultural values to members, especially, children. In the communal bonds aimed at nurturing and protecting members of the community, the life of children became significant in African communities. The significance of children is

further portrayed by the importance associated with birth, childhood and in some cases cultural processes of initiation into adulthood through different rites of passage (Boakye-Boaten 2010:2-3). These cultural initiations are communal in nature and function. According to Miescher (2005:17-18) the initiation into adulthood and learning the roles of guiding and advising children by adults are passed on through stories that are told, mostly by grandparents.

However, the significance of children in Ghana has not remain static. Socio-political and economic factors have impacted negatively on the value of children and the way the Ghanaian society has responded to the needs of children. The influx of western culture, with its attendant socio-economic implications have disrupted the community structures within which children finds their value and significance (Boakye-Boaten 2010:4; Gecaga 2009:57). The industrialisation and the need for economic emancipation have brought changes in family structures and the entire community life. As a result, women have to take up jobs for income and some cases, fathers have to travel to cities for work, leaving their families behind. According to Gecaga (2009:56) this phenomenon has created a new reality of community life in Ghana and Africa at large. This new life is the integration of the old African community life and the new life created by industrialisation accompanied the Western culture. This disruption created a new world for the significance of childhood in Ghana. The situation partly affected quality of nurture and protection of children, which hitherto were predominantly enjoyed in the context of family and communal care. Consequently, the plights of children in Ghana continues to increase. Thousands of children continue to struggle for survival, with associated challenges such as discrimination, neglect, malnutrition, abandonment, trafficking, child labour, and sexual and physical abuse (UNICEF 2012:9).

5.4.1.3 Pastoral anthropology of children informed by the Trinity

In this section, I investigate how a relational paradigm of the Trinity can inform what views of children are held. How can a relational view of the Trinity inform a pastoral anthropology of children? The answers to these questions are not simple and straightforward. However, key insights will be drawn from the Trinity to inform a hermeneutical framework of the understanding of children, which invariably influence the pastoral care of children.

According to Moltmann '*Imago Trinitas*' is key in understanding a relational view of the Trinity and argued since human beings are created in God's image, they are expected to live out that image on earth (1985:241). And that image, is the image of the Trinity. He rests this argument in Jesus's prayer "*that they may all be one, just as you, Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*" (John 17:21, ESV). Moltmann believes that this prayer is a call into fellowship of human beings with Jesus, which is expected to reflect in the mode of beings and life of believers in our society. The Father through the Son makes human beings conform to the God's image on earth, and that image is the image of the Trinity (Medley 2002:2; Moltmann 1985:243). The implication is that we are not just called to imitate the Trinitarian relationship, but we exist in it. According to Medley (2002:2), we are called into the Christian faith to bear the image of the Trinity. Although it sometimes appears as if the way and manner children are treated could lead to the conclusion that children are created in an image that is inferior to the image in which adults were created. It is important to underscore the fact that our belief in the Christian God - the Trinity - is inconsistent to any suggestion that the value of children is different from that of adult. Both adults and children are created in the same image of God (Gen. 1:26) and there is only one image and likeness of the Triune God (Gen 2:7). Moltmann disagree with the assertion that human beings as the image of God is limited to God's rule over creation and proposed that it should extend to *imago Trinitas*, that is, relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as "represented in the fundamental human communities and is manifested in them through creation and redemption".

This implies our communities should be fashioned in ways that reflect the whole image of God. The argument put forth here is that "if the whole human being is designated the image of God, then true human community - the community of the sexes and the community of the generations - has the same designation" (Moltmann 1985:241). This idea of 'rule' could partly contribute to the exercise of power and dominion over every aspect of creation that is perceived as inferior to those who have the power to rule. Consequently, it is therefore difficult to create a relational space for all creation as observed in the Trinity. The faith community is made of individuals who are called by God the Father through the Son into fellowship in the power of the Spirit (Smit 2015:11). This

is a fellowship of mutual relationship that first exist in the Trinity. LaCugna described this as fellowship with 'primacy of equals and not primacy of one over the other'. This is a community and fellowship of people with the same image of God. This notion promotes the effort to build communities in which a safe relational space is created for its members, including the marginalised and vulnerable. As Mandela observed, the way children are treated in any community points to the keener relation of the soul of that community.

The concept of persons in relationship is an important idea that should form part of how we view children as part of the community. This implies that children should be construed as persons in mutual relationship with other human beings (adult and other children). This idea is consistent with the notion of a relational anthropology and a theology about the 'web of creation' by Dillen (2011). She observes that the literature presents two main views of children: the 'liberationist' view (child participation); and 'care' view (child protection) and argues that these two are not opposing each other but should be held in a fine integration when working from the paradigm of relational anthropology. Accordingly, she contends that "relational anthropology places the dignity of both the child and the parent centrally and sees them as interconnected in a relation of give and take from the beginning" (2011:214). This interconnectedness in a mutual relationship is what exist in the communion of the Father, Son and Spirit. The Trinitarian communion becomes the framework from which children are viewed. In an attempt to connect relational anthropology to creation, Dillen opined "this relational anthropology can be theologically grounded in the view of creation as a 'interconnected web of relationships' rather than a 'fixed hierarchical ordering', where people have an ontological or natural place and status" (2011:214). The web of relationships implies a shift from hierarchy to asymmetry- different positions, and advocates that although the position of parent and children as well as power may vary, the respect and dignity of both children and adults remains mutual in these interconnected (relational) spaces. Consequently, children come into the pastoral relation as those who can give and take something from the relationship, that is, as vulnerable and agents at the same time. Dillen (2011:215) concludes the "recognition of both the asymmetry on the one hand and the change in the balance of give and take over time and the mutuality of giving and taking on the other hand, is very important, both for parent-child relations as for pastoral relations, in order to respect the dignity of both parties". Asymmetry and mutuality are qualities that are prominent in a relational view of the Trinity.

Moltmann argues that the Trinity presents a clear case of persons in relationship that is, the Father exist in the Son and the Son exist in the Father and so it also applies to the Spirit. Consequently, he opined that *each Person receives the fullness of eternal life from the other*" (1991:173-174). In this notion, each person looks out for the other person. This is consistent with the African concept of uBuntu, which states 'I am because of you'. It, therefore, suggest that one exists because of others' existence. Similarly, the idea is about the community of friends. Children should be seen as part of this community of friends and the children themselves should experience this friendship in freedom. Moltmann contends that friendship in freedom is an epitome of the relationship with God, a relationship of liberating of men, women, and children (1993a:316). It is the friendship that emanates from Christ and extended to all members, including those who are forsaken, and suffering. According to Kotze and Noeth (2017:7) the idea of friendship creates the public space to participate in the lives of others.

A relational view of the Trinity should be reflected in the faith praxis and spirituality that hold an understanding of children that is consistent with the full image of God - the *Imago Trinitas*. This renders pastoral anthropology of children as theological. It should be rooted in a theological understanding that is consistent with the entire Gospel message. A pastoral anthropology of children should be informed by our systematic theology of children, especially children at risk. Kpalam and Light (2020:70-71) proposed a theology of children at risk with components as follow: (i) God as the good shepherd who cares for his sheep, including the vulnerable, weak, marginalised and poor in the church and society, especially widows and orphans; (ii) children are precious in the sight of God and Christian parents and churches have the responsibility to treasure and protect them; (iii) God's universal salvific plan includes children, another most powerful reason for caring for them so that no stumbling blocks to coming to faith, discipleship and opportunities for ministry are placed in their path; (iv) demonstrating the importance Scripture places on godly, able leadership in the home, church and society which necessitates a safe environment for raising children to be such leaders in the present and grow to become leaders in the future; and (v) childrearing that ensures that there is no abuse. This implies that our pastoral anthropology of children should consider children as important in the sight of God just as all other human beings are, from the perspective of God. As a result,

His plans to restore all creation to himself include children. The fact that the *missio Dei* includes children places the onus on the faith community to value children just as Jesus Christ modelled and created an environment where nothing blocks their coming to the Lord (Matthew 18:1-6; Mark 10:13-16).

Commenting on the view of children, Bunge (2008:353) argues that children are created in the image of God and they are also gifts from the Lord to families and societies. Making reference to Psalm 127:3 that “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him”, she advocates for an environment where children and adults respect and enjoy each other. It could be said that this atmosphere, where children feel accepted, welcomed, and respected by adults and vice versa can be truly achieved in a community which is founded in a relational view of the Trinity.

To this end, our pastoral anthropology of children should be the one that view children as created in the same image of God as adults. And that image is the *imago Trinitas*, the image of the Triune God. It is in this image that children’s dignity and respect is consistent with, which is accorded to all human beings created in the image. It holds that children are precious in the sight of God and they are also called into the relationship with the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Because they are part of God’s salvific plan, he places the responsibility on adults to guide and nurture in the faith to grow in order to attain the full measure of Christ. However, this responsibility to guide does not mean they are inferior in the body of Christ. Children are considered a model of faith in Christ Jesus; hence adults can also learn some elements of faith from them. This notion makes a powerful reason to build a faith community in which all members are valued and given the dignity that is rooted in the image of the Triune God. In this view of children, and for that matter of all members of the community, it is more likely for power to be used in life giving ways amongst parties that enjoy equal worth.

This view of children is crucial in pastoral care that is communal - the whole community caring for each other and extending care to the larger society. It is therefore imperative to recognise that holding this view is critical to ensure an environment that hold the dignity of children and eliminate all forms of abuse and dehumanisation of children in the

Ghanaian society.

5.4.1.4 Building healing communities

A community could be construed as a group of people who shared the cultural norms and values and are bound by some form of geographical boundaries. In Africa, including Ghana, children are often defined in relation to families and communities. The idea exists that it takes families and communities to raise children. The community has often taken the centre of life in Ghana as in the case of Africans. The need for connectedness and collective unity is always integral in the life of Africans and this notion is expressed as uBuntu (Grobelaar 2012:41). The notion of uBuntu (Zulu of South Africa) and biakoye (Akan of Ghana) portrays the African worldview of humanness and collective unity which are indispensable features of community life. Grobelaar (2012:41) opined that uBuntu is the “idea of living up to the full human potential”. The full human potential is the one that is defined by the relationship with the Triune God in whose image and likeness humans are created. According to Mbigbi and Maree (1995:1) uBuntu is the idea that portrays “collective unity for survival in the face of deprivation and poverty”. Commenting on the concept of uBuntu, Shutte (2001:12) relates that the concept connotes “a dependence on personal relations with others to exercise, develop and fulfil those capacities that make one a person. One’s life, if all goes well, is a continual becoming more of a person through one’s interaction with others. Personhood comes as a gift from other persons. Community, as an interpersonal network of relationship, is the fundamental value in traditional African thoughts”.

This underscores the importance of community life in Africa. It emphasises the extent to which our connectedness and collective unity is key to humanness in the African worldview. Consequently, it is observed that the concept of uBuntu is a daily expression in several African languages. Some examples include:

Akan (Ghana) – biakoye;

Zulu (South Africa) – uBuntu

Yoruba (Nigeria) – ajobi.

John Mbiti also consents to this importance of community life in traditional Africa when he observed that “in traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporate ... the community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual to depend on the corporate group” (1990:106). This means that community life is more important than the individual. The interconnectedness and network of relationship with each other is integral in order to participate fully in the life of the community. Full participation requires an extent of communion with each other which displays a mutual and interdependent relationship. A relational view of the Trinity provides a parallel for this community life in order for each member of the community, irrespective of their age, status, race, gender, and religion to gain a sense of belonging (Medley 2002:2). It should be fashioned along the lines of the fellowship of love, equality and mutuality that exist in the Trinity. Consequently, each member depends on the mutual relational space for their needs and survival in the face of adversity. A healing community could be considered to be where this mutuality of relationality exists.

Lartey (2013 :121-122) observes that pastoral care aimed at building healthy communities to promote well-being of all members is part of the effort to postcolonial pastoral care. He argues this calls for the need for communities to pursue total dignity of individuals and the transformation of culture and faith praxis. Arguing from the perspective of postcolonial practical theology, Lartey suggest the need for creativity, innovation and improvisation grounded in in the indigenous African communitarian ethos in order to undertake a pastoral care and healing that far beyond the individual to the whole community by the whole community. I, therefore, argue that In Africa, the communal life itself does not implies that it is life sharing and flourishing. This is evidenced in pockets of violence and injustice in several African communities. Consequently, it is the nature of the community that can promote life giving and flourishing. In my opinion, the notion of the Trinity provides a thicker foundation to help shape the nature of faith communities to seek and promote healing and well-being of all individuals, including children.

A healing community is that one in which both adults and children live in a relational space that is rooted in the relational notion of the Trinity and where there is primacy of equals, not primacy of one over the other. It is a relational space where each member feels safe, and comfortable with each other. In this notion, a healing community is the one in which

adults and children maintain a healthy relationship that ensures using and shifting of power in life giving ways amongst parties that enjoy equal worth. It portrays the idea that children are comfortable with adults and adults are also comfortable with children. This could be likened to what LaCugna described as primacy of equals and Moltmann referred to as community of friends. This kind of relationality between children and adults can be created within the space of Trinitarian life. That is, the Trinitarian is also our life. This implies that both children and adults are comfortable and feel safe in the presence of each other. This promotes an environment of mutual fellowship as observed in the Trinity. It is a medium to extend the covenant of peace and safety that God promises his people (Ezekiel 34).

Healing community is also a community in which wounded members can receive healing and can also provide healing for other members. This is mutual care giving and interdependence, based on the communion that exists among members of the community. The dignity of humanity is upheld in all matters concerning members of the community. In this way, the needs of members are adequately met. In order to achieve this, there is a continual effort to understand the needs of each individual through the quality of communion that exists. Consequently, elements of abuse, domination and dehumanisation are absent in this community. This means that healing has its precepts grounded in a relational view of the Trinity. As Moltmann observed, the abuse of power and dehumanisation in our communities are foreign to the life and the participation in the Trinity. In the Trinitarian life, there is love, mutuality and fellowship that create a safe relational space for all members of the community. Volf indicated such communities have their structures built on the parallels of the Trinity. There is a community in God and that community is a healing community.

How can the church become a healing community to sexually abused children? The faith community is a community of believers. God's promise of peace is accomplished through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Smit (2015:12) observed that the faith community is an interpersonal organism that should be committed to promotion of restoration of relationship with God on the one hand and with one another on the other hand. In furtherance of his argument, he asserts that the New Testament has about 96 texts, making reference to 'one another'. It is a community that is called to participate in the

covenant of peace and safety promised by God the Father through the Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The faith community is an extension of this promise of peace, fulfilled in Christ in the power of the Spirit. This implies that it is a community called into the life in the Trinity, a community that is fashioned on parallels of relationality. As Pembroke (2006:6), observed, since the Trinity has at its centre the concept of relationality, it should have parallels for the way of life in the faith community. Faith communities are more likely to undertake pastoral care, grounded in this conceptual framework I proposed as the Trinity ministers healing and restoration to all creation through communities of believers who live in healthy relationships. This builds on the understanding that God is reconciling the world to himself through the new community - the covenant community formed through faith in Christ. This new community is the faith community. That is, a community (the Trinity) ministering healing through a community (the church) to a community (the world). The result is that it takes one community to bring healing to a community through another community. To advance this notion in more specific terms, the Triune God ministers healing to sexually abuse children through healing communities in healthy relationships. The Trinity brings healing to abused children through his people (community of believers) in a healthy relationship. It implies that there are four components of this framework, namely, Trinity; community of believers; relationship; and sexually abused children.

The diagram on the following page explains this model:



i) The Trinity

In the Triune God, there is fellowship of love, freedom, and mutuality. This underscores the relations among the Trinitarian persons. This love and freedom connote the peace (shalom). The Triune God promised a new covenant of peace that he invites all people and all creation in this covenant of peace. The shalom, peace is broader and includes holistic wellbeing of humankind. This peace goes beyond a mere absence of conflict but a mode of being and a way of life. God is inviting all creation into full participation in this peace as a gift of salvation. This peace is a gift and evidence of his blessings upon his creation (Num. 24-25) including children. The Father promised this gift. The Son brought this gift to human beings through the redemptive work on the cross. That is Jesus secure healing for the brokenness of human beings through his atoning death (Isa. 53:5-6). And

the Spirit initiates and sustain this restoration and revival in the life of the fallen humanity. The spirit lives in us - God with us - the Triune God with us. In short, the Trinity is concerned about the suffering of his creation. A situation that is not consistent with his original intention of peace. Consequently, he chose to enter into the suffering of his creation. In his response to the suffering of his creation, he established a new Kingdom through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This new Kingdom is extended on earth to human beings as the community of believers.

ii) Community of believers

This community include all creation who accept God's offer of love and invitation to restored relationship with him. It is all those who accept Jesus Christ as the son of God and the saviour of the world. It involves all those who opens up for the indwelling of the Trinity and seek to participate in the life of the Triune God (John 1:12). This is the community of people who accept the grace of God to be part of the new kingdom through which God is ministering healing to the hurting world. This community is part of the healing process through God's grace. According to Moltmann, this is a community within the Trinity because it comes to being when divine fellowship which is formed through the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father through the Spirit.

The watch word of this community is love - the nature of the Trinity. "the triune God reveals himself as love in the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Moltmann 1991:56). The idea of fellowships also points us to mutuality and reciprocal love between the world and God (Kärkkäinen 2007:106: Moltmann 1991:98). The love, which is the foundation of this community propels members to long for each other and the others acceptance of that love from the other. Moltmann use the notion of Panentheism to point to the idea that "creation is a fruit of God's longing for 'his other and for that other's free response to the divine love" (1991:138).

This community of believers is a healing community. This community seeks to be in continuous conversion towards the kingdom to become that instrument through which the Trinity is bringing restoration and healing to all creation. The community is participating

in the healing grace of God. That is, on one hand, members continually receive healing from the Triune God from sins and hurts in the world. On the other hand, members become conduit through which other hurting members receive healing. In other words, while the Triune God brings healing to the community, the participation of the community in the Trinity put the members at the position of bringing healing to broken and hurting members in the community. The Triune God brings the healing through an individual, family or the entire community. The life of children is influenced greatly by the family and community in which they live. Sexual abuse of children occurs in families and the community. A community in which children are abused sexually could be described as uncaring and broken community. A community, whose life is detached from the Trinity and her structures and policies are foreign to the life and participation in the Trinity. Volf opined that this community should be parallel to the persons in relation in the Trinity. Similarly, LaCugna points to the equality, mutuality, and interconnectedness. In the Trinity, no member takes advantage of the other. In describing this life, Paul in writing to the Ephesians encourage the church to adopt the attitude of Christ, who though is equal with God, he didn't take advantage of it for selfish gain (Philippians 2:5-8). This community follows the examples of Christ. This community is found in God. In the new community of God (believers), members do not take advantage of each other. There is evidence that sexual abuse in a community is a product of exercise of undue power and taking advantage of vulnerable members in the community. There is no doubt that children are vulnerable members of communities in the context of Ghana and Africa as a whole. Consequently, there is the need for a healing community in which adults becomes conduit through which the Trinity brings healing to children and vice versa.

Bunge (2008:352) observes that children are vulnerable members of our community and needs compassion and justice. This compassion and justice are not expected from parents only but the entire community. In Ghana, it is believed that it's takes a whole community to raise a child. This implies a healing community, in which there is a mutual and genuine concern for the welfare of each member. In social science, this healing community is also described as an 'authoritative community'. An authoritative community is described as a community which exhibits high levels of commitment to the fact that human beings, including children are 'hard wired to connect' and live out the kind of connectedness that children require for holistic development (Kline 2008:26). A

characteristic feature of this community is that it creates a relational space by accepting children as integral part of the community, consequently, children are treated as an end in themselves and not a means to an end. It is believed that working towards building and strengthening authoritative communities is one of the proactive strategies to respond to abuse and dehumanisation of children in societies. For example, proponents of authoritative communities argued that since children are wired to connect, neglecting the efforts to strengthen this connectedness is the root cause of the suffering of many children. As a result, building and strengthening authoritative communities is the greatest investments to be considered in our societies (Kline 2008:26).

It could be argued that in such communities, a wounded person receives healing and restoration on one hand and also becomes an instrument of healing and restoration for other broken persons. That is, the community is constantly receiving and giving healing at the same time, which is consistent with notion of mutual. That is, using and shifting power in life giving ways amongst parties that enjoy equal worth.

iii) In and through healthy relationships

The Trinity ministers healing to sexually abuse children through a healing community in healthy relationship. As already indicated our lives are shaped by the relationships we form. The notion of uBuntu says we are who we are through our relationships. This means the quality of relationships that is formed has implications for health and healing within the community. A healthy relationship is a caring relationship that brings healing and restoration. It is a relationship that dignifies, welcomes, and accepts members irrespective of status, colour, gender, and age. A healthy relationship is a communion of love, mutual fellowship, friendship, and deep trust that exist in the Trinity. Since the community of believers are invited to participate in this relationship, it should be the key characteristic of the relationship among believers. Sweeney (2001:36) observed that *'it is relationship that brings people into God's kingdom, and it is relationship that brings healing to the emotionally wounded'*. That is, it is through relationship that people are invited to participate in the life of the Trinity. This implies that the people of the Kingdom, the new community, which is a healing community, should establish relationship that bring healing to children. Holistic development of children thrives in healthy relationships. A caring and

loving relational space for children is critical for survival and holistic development of children. On the other hand, unhealthy relationships could be a source of brokenness among children. As it indicated in chapter 3, CSA occurs usually in close relationships in Ghana. Perpetrators of CSA are those in close relationships with children, relationships that are supposed to be relationships of trust. The degree of hurt of CSA is severe when it occurs in relationships of trust. Children get shattered and broken in uncaring and abusive relationships.

However, in healthy relationships, children discover their own relationship with the Trinity, self, and other people (Smith 2015:12). Consequently, if an emotionally wounded child as a result of CSA is placed in a community of believers, new relationships are formed that brings healing and restoration. This implies that in a healthy relationship, there is receiving and giving of healing and restoration that flows from the Trinity through a healing community.

iv) Sexually abused children

The realities of CSA in Ghana have been discussed extensively in chapter three. It was observed that the situation is alarming and permeate every aspect of society, including faith communities in Ghana. It was noted that there is the need for faith communities to rallies their members to respond pastorally among her congregation and extend this pastoral response to the larger society. A pastoral response by faith communities should be rooted in the conceptual framework that the *Trinity* ministers healing to *sexually abused children* through a *community of believers* who lives in and through *healthy relationships*. The relationality, which is a central motif of the Trinity should be the hallmark of this community. Healthy relationships that are established in this community and extended to the hurting world will bring healing to brokenness brought by CSA. Since the proponent of a relational view of the Trinity espoused that there is a community in God, the community of believers can adorn her clothes of healing and restoration when the structures and relations that exist is built upon the love and mutual fellowship that exist in the Father, Son, and the Spirit. Commenting on the faith community as a healing community, Coetsee (2003:34) asserts that “healing is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring restoration (peace) to wounded and broken children in caring relationships with a

compassionate community of believers". This implies that a caring community of believers is key in the plan of the Trinity to bring healing and restoration to hurting children. The question is, how can faith communities in Ghana be a healing community? A critical analysis of the situation of CSA in Ghana in chapter three revealed that the problem is not uncommon. As a result, there is a call on all stakeholders, including faith communities to initiate responses that will address this menace. The church is the hope of the Ghanaian society and it is expected to lead the way. In order for the church to be the salt and the light in our society, she could embody a ministry praxis that operate from the conceptual framework that 'the Trinity is ministering healing to sexually abused children through healing communities in and through healthy relationships'.

Faith communities should hold the belief that the Trinity is the source of healing to the hurt in the Ghanaian society. This belief should inform ministry praxis. The Triune God is the peace and shalom that is needed in a society that is replete with abuse and dehumanisation of children. An analysis of major church denominations in Ghana revealed that the belief in the Trinity is one of the common doctrines held. This is in support of the notion that the Christian God can only be conceptualised in terms of the Trinity. For example, the Trinity is found in the doctrinal statement of the Church of Pentecost, which is the fastest growing church denomination in Ghana (Pews 2006). The Church of Pentecost holds that "we believe in the One True God ... revealed as Triune God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (The Church of Pentecost 2016:7) The Trinity is in the statement of belief of the Methodist Church, Ghana as well as the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

As has already been argued, Christian doctrines are truths about God that are formulated with Scripture as the chief source. They are not just speculative ideas that are held, neither are doctrines ends in themselves but aimed at having practical implications for faith praxis and Christian spirituality in the faith community (Marmion & Nieuwenhove 2011:12). LaCugna remarked that the doctrine of the Trinity has radical implications for the daily living of Christians (1991:1). That is, the Trinity should inform our faith praxis and Christian spirituality. It could be argued that the Trinity does not only teaches about the inner life of God. The Trinity also reveals the mutual love, communion, and fellowship

between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. As a result, adherence to the doctrine of the Trinity should inform the mode of being and way of living in faith communities in Ghana.

Kärkkäinen (2007:185) asserts that LaCugna's Trinitarian theology of relationality points to practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is expected to provide responses to some problems in society. Her view of the primacy of communion among equals, and not the primacy of one over another speaks against the abuse of power in society. This implies that if the Trinity inform and reform the mode of being and way of life in faith communities in Ghana, it could serve as the source of covenant of peace and safety, thereby eliminating CSA and dehumanisation of children. Faith communities become the new community, the community of believers, whose lives and participation in the Trinity makes them healing communities for children at risk in the Ghanaian context.

Faith communities in Ghana should consider themselves as healing communities. A new community created by the Father through the Son to live in the power of the Spirit. Through the relationship of the Trinity, this community is invited into participation in the life of the Trinity and to become a community of compassionate believers, serving as the medium through which the Triune God brings healing, restoration, and peace to the hurting world. In this way, churches as not just institutions but community of believers called to live a life that is consistent with the nature, will and purposes of the Trinity. As a community in God, it must be interested in every aspect of the lives of its members as the Trinity is interested in all aspects of creation. The faith community is also a family and as a family it should be interested in the life of all her members. Families are seen as protective layers of children. This implies if we live in this fellowship, we become a family. The family of God is a family that care for each other by her own members.

For churches to play the role as protective layers for children, it must build structures and policies to support this function. These structures and policies should be grounded in the Trinitarian paradigm. Moltmann envision an ecclesiology that its faith praxis, and Christian spirituality play out in the organisational and structural arrangement that reflect the Christian concept of God, which is Trinitarian. It is full of fellowship of persons that are equal, and united in the indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (1991:64). His

ecclesiology based on John 17:20 is summarised in this way: “the unity of the Christian community is a trinitarian unity”. Volf observed that ecclesial communion should reflect the Trinitarian communion, and faith communities should explore parallels of Trinitarian communion for the ecclesial communion (1998:191). Working from this understanding, what structures, policies and programs should be undertaken by faith communities in Ghana to respond to CSA?

5.4.1.5 Child theology

Child theology is an emerging field in Africa. In this study, theologies of childhood are conceptualised as one that creatively co-construct nuanced understandings of childhood and children informed by diverse biblical and theological perspectives of. Without a clear vision of children, we cannot seek to reform spirituality and praxis that will respond to their needs holistically. The faith community should develop a statement of belief with regard to children. This view and understanding of children should be consistent with a relational view of the Trinity. This implies that the Christian understanding of children should be grounded in the image of the Triune God.

The need to present a systematised teaching of Scriptures to arrive at theologies of childhood is key. This systematic teaching of Scriptures must be corroborated by the social sciences to ensure that it is comprehensive, contextual, culturally sensitive, and informed by a relational view of the Trinity. Child theology is seeking the understanding of God with regard to children. It is about seeing children through God’s eyes. And for Christians, it is seeing children through the Trinity.

A theological understanding of children that views children as the image and the likeness of the Triune God is crucial in addressing the abuse of dehumanisation and abuse of power, which contributes to CSA in Ghana. Moltmann (1985:241) use the notion of ‘*Imago Trinitas*’ to argue that since human beings are created in God’s image, they are expected to live out that image on earth (1985:241). And that image, is the image of the Trinity. A nuanced understanding of childhood and children that conveys views of children that are consistent with Trinity implies that children are considered as integral, equal, and active

partners of the faith community. This understanding contributes to flattening the power gradient in faith communities in Ghana. This is because the Father through the Son invites all creation into fellowship in order to conform to the God's image on earth, and that image is the image of the Trinity (Medley 2002:2; Moltmann 1985:243). The implication is that we are not just called to imitate the Trinitarian relationship, but we exist in it. According to Medley (2002:2), we are called into the Christian faith to bear the image of the Trinity. Although the social position and treatment of children in faith communities sometimes suggest they are created in the image that is inferior to the image in which adults were created, I argue that our belief in the Christian God - the Trinity is inconsistent to any suggestion that the value of children is different from that of adults. That could be considered a faulty theology, the one that is inconsistent with what is revealed about the Christian God in Scripture. I support a child theology that maintains that both adults and children are created in the same image of God (Gen. 1:26) and there is only one image and likeness of the Triune God (Gen 2:7). This adds to this study's contribution to child theology and theologies of childhood.

To this end, our child theology should be culturally relevant and sensitive. It should be consistent with the communitarian notion of Africans. As I already argued (see section 5.3), the emphasis on communal life by Africans is in agreement with the current focus in pastoral care, which leans towards communal care. The issue of community or communal care sits well with a relational view of the Trinity. This implies that views held about children should be in tandem with the concept of uBuntu in Africa. Children should not be pushed to the margins of community, since this notion suggests that they are not part of the community. Mtata (2009:90) caution that our theologies of children should eschew the fact that in most African cultures, children are seen and treated as not full human beings. He contends that African child theologies should be sensitive to communal life, in which, children are integral partners. When our theologies of children put them at the margins of society, children are more likely to develop the sense of not belonging to the community, which is in discord with the African notion of communal care. Accordingly, as Bunge indicates, "there is a clear and urgent need for articulating sound and complex theological understandings of children and our obligations to them" (2016:96).

Child theologies that take children away from the fringes of society could be considered an act of liberation as pastoral function. Liberation as a pastoral function seeks to bring freedom for victims of exploitation, discrimination and injustice against children, women, and men (Molla 2018:198). It is an extension of God's action borne out of love and justice towards the vulnerable.

With regard to the theological perspectives of children, Bunge (2008:352-353) identified four main ideas, which she believes should be held together in order to be consistent with Scripture. Firstly, children are vulnerable beings and therefore need justice and compassion from parents and the faith community. It could be argued that the true source of love, compassion and justice is the Triune God. The relationship of love and mutual fellowship promotes seeking the welfare of each member of the community, hence seeking equality and justice for all, including children. Secondly, children are created in the image of God and are gifts from God to the parents. As a result, need respect. Respect and dignity of each person could emanate from valuing each other as members of the same community, created in the same image of the Triune God. Thirdly, children are "developing beings, sinful creatures, and moral agents in need of instruction and guidance". This calls on the faith community to guide and nurture them so they can maximise their full potential and continues to be equal and active players in the service to community. Finally, children are "models of faith for adults" and at such adults should listen and pay attention to the insights that they can bring on the journey of faith and life in the Trinity. This portrays the concept of primacy of equals according to LaCugna. This is because all members of the faith community - adults and children engage in mutual interactions in the matters of faith, thereby growing together and learning from each other. That is, the whole community serve each other together. This implies such a vision will assist faith communities to follow the examples of Christ, who ministers holistically to children. For example, Christ prays and blesses children (Mark. 10:13-14); healed children (Mark 5:38-42) and put children forth as models of faith (Matthew 18:1-4). This implies that Christ wants the faith community to see children as integral and active partners.

5.4.1.6 Child protection policy

The Children's Act of Ghana (Act 580), 1998 enjoins all institutions to act in the best interest of children, and to institute pragmatic measures to ensure the welfare and protection of children. In addition, the Child and Family welfare policy (2014) of Ghana requires faith communities to be actively involved in the protection and welfare of children. In order that churches could lead the way, there is the need for faith communities to develop their own guidelines to child protection. It will ensure children are secure and safe in the congregations and the communities in which they serve. A child protection policy is a set of guidelines that direct a coordinated response to child abuse in a particular context. In a country where over 90% of children experience some form of abuse, including CSA, investing in child protection is an imperative for churches in Ghana.

This policy should include key elements such as recruitment and background checks of volunteers, what constitute child abuse, child protection focal persons at all levels of the church and what measures to take when CSA occurs, including disclosure and reporting.

Since a child protection policy seeks the best interest and welfare of children in both faith communities and society at large, it could be considered as the goal of the entire pastoral function and response. This implies that child protection provides directions and outline activities that seek to meet the holistic needs of children. Molla (2018:194) contends that pastoral care aimed at addressing the holistic needs of children at risk could be described as pastoral care in the living web. She argues that pastoral care in the living web "examines traditions, cultures, structures, and ideologies that oppress groups on the basis of age, sex, gender, race, and physical ability" (2018:194). In a relational view of the Trinity, all forms of cultures, ideologies and structures that oppress children are replaced with equality, mutual fellowship, love, compassion, and justice. Pastoral care as communal care is consistent with a relational view of the Trinity. Pastoral care in this notion aims at flattening the power gradient, critically engaging with language and practices that create life-denying worlds, developing mutuality and reciprocity that promotes worlds of flourishing. In this case, child protection policy provides for pastoral response that is congruent with what Molla described as a ministry of "resistance; nurturance; empowerment; and liberation" (Molla 2018:200).

Child protection has the ultimate purpose of holistic development of children, which could be achieved through holistic discipleship. That is, holistic discipleship should be the focus of any theological pastoral response to children undertaken by faith communities. The faith community should ensure children grow in all life dimensions such as cognitive, physical, socio-emotional, spiritual, and in relation to the entire cosmos. In Luke 2:52, Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, favour with God and men. These areas such as wisdom (cognitive), stature (physical), favour with God (spiritual) and favour with human beings (socio-emotional) are the key indicators for ministry programs of faith communities that seek to promote holistic child development. In my opinion, this framework of child development is one that is consistent with Scripture as well as current findings in social science. It is the framework that promote the whole wellbeing of children, by seeking to build mutual relationships of care, which is a key characteristic of the Trinity. In a relational view of the Trinity, there is communal care, in which, each member of the community gives and receive care at the same time. This is an understanding of child development that faith communities could appreciate and act upon. This is because they are called to participate in the life of the Trinity. Consequently, the Father through the Son provided a model for holistic development that is sustain by the power of the Spirit in faith communities in order that they undertake a ministry to, and with children that is aimed at promoting holistic growth.

In order for this to be achieved, children should be considered as integral part of the community, capable of conversion, training in righteousness and serving in the faith community (Kpalam and Light 2020:45). In Ghana, it is observed that churches focus their attention largely on the conversion and training in the word of God. This implies that children are seen in terms of conversion and training in Scriptures. As such, faith communities gather children and teach them the Scriptures. In a recent study of the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba Municipality of Ghana, it was observed that the church sees children in terms of conversion and training in Scriptures but not necessarily holistic discipleship. The implication was that the congregations didn't institute direct measures and programs in their ministry to ensure protection and holistic development of children.

It could be argued that the community of believers, which is the medium through which the Triune God restore the entire creation, including children, should embark on a ministry that address the holistic needs of children. For example, her pastoral response should address the health needs of children by promoting access to good health care, adequate nutrition and regular exercises that promotes physical development. Promoting good health and wellbeing could be described as a pastoral function of nurturing. Pastoral care as nurturing stems from God's character of love, compassion, and care for human beings and all his creation (Molla 2018:196). Volf (1998:7) observes that the church should be the embodiment of God's love, peace and joy and she should pass on this characteristic nature of God to the world. Efforts by faith communities to provide information to help children stay healthy and other services that promote the health of children could be born out of love and compassion, which are characteristics of the Triune God.

The need to grow cognitively, should be addressed by promoting access to quality education and information to all children. Instituting efforts to meet this need of children could be liken to the pastoral function of empowerment. Molla (2018:197) asserts that pastoral care as empowerment rallies the faith community to undertake a ministry that provide resources for the marginalised. Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:197), relates that empowerment provide resources to those who were previously voiceless and denied of power. Pastoral care that functions to give people voice and restore their power and dignity is deeply rooted in a relational view of the Trinity. Ghana has a policy of compulsory and free basic education. However, there is evidence that lack of access to quality basic education is not uncommon in some rural communities (UNICEF 2018:45). Additionally, although enrolment of children into basic schools has increased over the years, there is evidence that a significant number of more than 35 percent of children cannot read. The result of poor access to quality education contribute to the level of poverty in the country. As was indicated in chapter 3, poverty was directly linked with CSA among girls. The faith community could undertake literacy programs as part of her holistic ministry to children in Ghana. They should partner with government to deliver quality basic education, especially, in rural communities. The contribution of faith communities in the provision of educational facilities in the country has been commended (UNICEF 2018:87). However, in the face of increasing decline in the quality of education, resulting in the

inability to read, churches are called upon to be the salt and light in this aspect of child development and survival.

Furthermore, the faith community should promote socio-emotional development in children by ensuring that children interact with both their peers and adults in a healthy and compassionate manner. This is the foundation upon which life in the Trinity is built. In the conceptual framework proposed in this chapter, that is, the Trinity ministers healing to all creation through a community of believers in and through healthy relationships. It therefore suggests that adequately developing this aspect of children is crucial. It becomes the foundation upon which the children and other members of community can respond to God's longing for his creation and calling all creation into the Trinitarian life. Socio-emotional development of children is at the heart of relationality, which is a central motif of the Trinity.

5.4.1.7 Praying for, and with children

In this community of believers, one critical aspect of life is carrying each other burdens (Galatians 6:1-2; Romans. 15:1-2). It is an indication of the mutual love and fellowship in the Trinity. Why should we pray with children? In the Trinity, the community share in the joy and suffering of each member. There is empathy, a crucial feature of reciprocal care and mutual fellowship. For instance, Marei (2004:213) commenting on Moltmann idea of the community of fellowship of equals, contends that in the Trinity, we promote a "community of equals, vulnerable and open to the human suffering, who experiences this suffering in himself". The vulnerability and openness to the suffering of members of the community is the foundation for the Trinitarian perspective of pastoral care, in which the whole community provide care for the entire community. This underscores attributes of caring communities. Consequently, this community carries each other's burden to the Lord in prayer.

With the staggering rate of CSA in Ghana, faith communities are called upon to intercede for, and with children. Kpalam and Light (2020:46) suggests that Christians and churches should pray with all children, especially, the vulnerable (Lamentations 2:9). Malherbe

(2004:56) making reference to the story of Ismael and Haggai in Genesis 21: 17-20, comments that God hears the cry of children and that when we cry on their behalf, and with them, God hears. For example, Vieth, Tchividjian, Walker and Knodel (2012:238) reported that 26th February 2012 was declared a 'Freedom Sunday by about fivethousand churches across hundred countries that have united in a worldwide fight for justice for children. Through the "Not For Sale (NFS) initiative, many church members embarked on fasting and prayer in what they called 'fasted for freedom'" throughout the Lenten season.

5.4.1.8 Child advocacy and research

The church is the prophetic voice of God to society and the advocacy ministry of the church plays this function. As a community of communion, love, and mutual fellowship in the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit, the church should be interested in what happens to all her members. Furthermore, pastoral care as empowerment rallies the faith community to undertake advocacy and also provide resources for the marginalised (Molla 2018:197). This empowerment is an integral aspect of communal pastoral care as it provides the opportunity to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves due to certain societal structures. Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:197), relates that empowerment provide resources to those who were previously voiceless and denied of power. Pastoral care that functions to give people voice and restore their power and dignity is deeply rooted in a relational view of the Trinity. LaCugna asserts that in the Trinity, there is primacy of equals and not one over the other. We observed a relationship of equality, reciprocity, and mutual fellowship in the Triune God. This implies pastoral care as flattening the power gradient, critical engagement with practices creating life-denying worlds and promoting equality, belonging, and flourishing (Kärkkäinen 2017:203). In the spirit of uBuntu, the community of believers should be aware of situations of children in the faith community and the larger society. This calls for observation and research to identify needs of children. It helps faith communities to obtain adequate pictures of child abuse and dehumanisation in her own ministry and the larger society. Kpalam and Light (2020:57) observed that this could be achieved by examining data from relevant institutions such as UNICEF, government, and the police on the realities of child abuse in the locality. This data will inform the advocacy ministry of the faith communities. Scripture admonishes Christians to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves

(Proverb 31:8). Firstly, we must speak against the cultural factors that supports the abuse of children. Molla (2018:195) described this advocacy as pastoral functions of resistance, which involves acts that seek to resist socio-cultural, political, and religious ideologies and structures that dominate and manipulate others based on age, gender, and ethnicity. In chapter three, (see section 3.2.2) it was observed that children are socialised to esteem adults' instruction as always good without asking any question, even if the child sensed danger. In addition, girls are socialised as helpers at home, which put them at risk to sexual abuse (Mansaray 2008:ii). Another factor is where respect is not reciprocal between adults and children in the Ghanaian context. Quampah (2014:37) observed that although respect is expected to be reciprocal between adults and children, the traditional idea of upbringing of children in Ghana is that children are socialised to be respectful and dutiful to adults irrespective of the treatment given to them. It is important to note that the above factors are foreign to life in the Trinity. Consequently, the church should speak against these traditional worldviews that support dehumanisation of children. The church should advocate for mutual respect between all members of the community and larger society as well as a sense of freedom for children to express themselves, which are key features of life in the Trinity. As LaCugna observed, it is a community which promote the primacy of communion among equals and not one over the other. This is not to undermine the responsibility that adults have to take oversight of their responsibility towards children and weaken the respect and honour children are expected to accord adults in the Ghanaian society. Rather, it is a call to a community to act in ways in which the dignity and respect of both adult and children are held in all matters. A community that understands that both children and adults are created in the same image - the *Imago trinitas* and called into participation in the fellowship of the Father, through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The church could operate with this paradigm and also extend it through her advocacy to the larger society.

Further, it was noted that Ghana has a comprehensive legal framework, with associated policies for the prevention of abuse of children. However, poor implementation has rendered these laws and policies ineffective. Some factors cited are bribery and collection among law enforcement agents and delay in the delivery of justice when CSA occurs. Also, the church should address the issue of 'collective shame' which is one of the factors cited as the reason for non-reporting of CSA to the law enforcement agencies. Adequate

efforts should be made to explain the importance of reporting, especially, with regard to access to the requisite intervention, which is more likely to mitigate both the long and short impact of CSA. The advocacy ministry of the church should firstly create awareness among Christians to eschew these acts that are inconsistent with life in the Trinity. This is because, these socio-cultural factors contribute to abuse of power, consequently leading to marginalisation and dehumanisation of children. In addition, faith communities in Ghana, through national associations like the Christian Council of Ghana and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches could embark on national campaigns that target government functionaries to bring to book law enforcement agents and other government officials who falls into bribery and corruption when dealing with CSA. It is believed that these national bodies will create a united front and a strong force that can cause a change and transformation in justice delivery regarding CSA.

5.4.1.9 Parent education and capacity for volunteers/child workers

Parents and caregivers have a critical role to play in child protection and holistic development of children. Bunge (2008:352) observed that children are vulnerable, and parents are expected to take care of their basic needs and ensures their safeguarding. Other people in the community should take up this responsibility in situations where parents are unable to do so. In my opinion, all parents, whether they are capable or incapable to do so need support from the community due to the complex nature of child abuse. In the spirit of a Trinitarian notion of pastoral care, the whole community is involved in receiving and providing care. Parents and other caregivers are those in the immediate environment of children, who provide direct care. Building the capacity of caregivers forms part of the pastoral function of empowerment. According to Molla (2018:197), pastoral care as empowerment enjoins faith communities to provide the requisite resources to act in the best interest of children. In the Trinity, there is empowerment of all members of the community as faith communities seek to build an ecclesiology of equality, belonging and flourishing. In Ghana, it is believed that it takes the whole community to raise a child. The church, which is a community of believers called to participate in life in the Trinity, should be interested in the capabilities of parents and caregivers. This calls for efforts by the church to assess the gaps in the ability of parents and caregivers to undertake holistic parenting and child protection. Although God gave children to families to raise and protect them, there is the need for faith communities – the family of God – to assist.

The church could support the capacity of parents to understand children from the perspective of God and the divine mandate placed on them to raise children in the way of God and to ensure their nurturing and protection (Prov. 22:6; Deut. 6:6-9; Eph. 6:1-4). The church could develop Bible study guidelines to empower adults for holistic parenting and child protection. The church could also do sermons on God's heart for children and the mandate given to parents and other adults to care for their needs and ensure the safeguard of children. This will create a general awareness among the faith communities to take individual and corporate actions aimed at child protection and preventing dehumanisation of children among themselves and the larger society. The church could also institute annual festivals such as Children's Week, Family Day, Child Protection Awareness Week, and other innovations that will create a platform for the creation of the awareness of the needs for child protection in our societies. Where some of these programs already exists, there could be the need to give it a sharper focus in order to respond to the child abuse situation in the Ghanaian society.

The faith community should educate parents on the rights and responsibilities of children (cf. Yates & Swart 2010:225-242). Conscious effort should be made to draw the attention to the fact that these rights and responsibilities can also be garnered from Scripture. This is because some Christians believe that the rights of children are foreign to Scripture. They consider them to be part of the agenda of secular humanism which is in constant rivalry to Scripture. However, Arigatou International (2019:91) observes that the teachings of Scripture is consistent with the four guiding principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): non-discrimination; the best interests of the child as a primary consideration; the right to life, survival and development; and the child's right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child, with those views being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. I argue that the four guiding principles of the UNCRC are also consistent with a relational view of the Trinity. That is, in the Trinity, each one is invited to participate fully in the life of the Father, through the Son, empowered by the Spirit. As a result, there is no discrimination and abuse of power. Rather, freedom, equality, mutuality and flourishing in the fullness of life.

In addition, parents should be equipped with information to understand the laws of the country that requires the need to report CSA to the police. It is important for parents and caregivers to appreciate the fact that reporting forms part of the entry point into the requisite intervention and access to the resources that are required to help mitigate the negative impact of CSA on the development of the child. That is, non-reporting of CSA could worsen the situation of children since the abuse may continue and the children may not also receive any help. This is important due to the culture of shame which was observed as one of the reasons for non-disclosure of CSA by children as well as families in the Ghanaian context.

5.4.1.10 Capacity of children to protect themselves

Children have the potential to be active partners in the pursuit of child protection. Children should be given every opportunity to become key players themselves since their active involvement empowers them in their own development and protection (Kpalam and Light 2020: 36). This is consistent with Molla's idea of empowerment as a pastoral function. According to Molla (2018:197) pastoral care as empowerment rallies faith communities to undertake advocacy and also provide resources for the marginalised. In addition, Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:197), relates that empowerment provide resources to those who were previously voiceless and denied of power. Pastoral care that functions to give people voice and restore their power and dignity is deeply rooted in a relational view of the Trinity. LaCugna asserts that in the Trinity, there is primacy of equals and not one over the other. We observed a relationship of equality, reciprocity, and mutual fellowship in the Triune God. Consequently, empowering children is more likely to change labelling of being victims to active agents of change in the community (Molla 2018:198).

A study in South Africa to assess the perspective of children on how their communities can protect them from CSA revealed that children can be empowered to protect themselves and other children (Fouché, Truter & Fouché 2019:455). This implies that faith communities should consider child participation in their own protection and that of others. As a result, there is the need to build their capacity to play that role. In the first place, the church should equip the children to understand that they are created in the image of the Triune Christian God, and that their value and dignity is rooted in the image

and the likeness of God. The church should teach children to understand that their body is the temple of God and they should not allow anyone to defile their bodies (1 Cor 6:19-20). The faith community should ensure that children know their rights and responsibilities and this teaching should also be grounded in Scripture. Additionally, children should be aware of the laws of the country that protects their basic rights and what actions are to be taken when their rights are trampled upon. For example, children should be taught to report CSA to the police or any trusted person who will assist him or her to report to the police for the necessary action to be taken. This implies that the faith community has the duty to teach children what constitute child abuse and the forms of child abuse. Children's attention should be drawn to certain characteristics and activities of perpetrators of child abuse and paedophiles.

Further, children should know where they can report or disclose abuse. For instance, children should be encouraged to report CSA to parents, trusted church leaders and also the police. Faith communities could develop child-friendly and age-appropriate teaching and learning resources to address the issues of child protection. This material should be rooted in sound theological teachings and be integrated into the syllabi for children's ministry. The volunteers working in children's ministry could be trained on the correct use of this material to produce the needed change in knowledge and skills of children in ways that assist them to stand up against CSA.

5.4.1.11 Strategic partnership with relevant organisations

Child abuse is a multi-faceted and complex situation in the Ghanaian society. As a result, there is the need for a multi-sectorial approach to child protection. Within the framework of a Trinitarian paradigm, pastoral care is communal care. Communal care calls for strategic partnerships, in which all relevant resources are harnessed for effective pastoral care to, and with children. Child abuse is not uncommon in Ghana as indicated in chapter 3. As a result, all stakeholders are called upon to institute measures to ensure the safeguard of children. This implies that strategic partnerships could be formed for effectiveness in the fight. In Ghana, there are state agencies such as the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service (DOVSU), Department of children, Department of Social Welfare, the Juvenile Court that are tasked with the

responsibility of child protection. It was noted that there is limited partnership between faith communities and these agencies. For instance, Kpalam and Light (2020:45) observed that among the Church of Pentecost in Winneba, there was no strategic partnership between the local churches and state agencies with the responsibility of child protection. This could be attributed to the fact that some churches do not have a clear child protection policy and program. In some cases, it was observed that church leaders sometimes discourage families from reporting CSA to the police, and this is even worse if the perpetrator is a church leader due to the fear of the impact on the image of the church.

Faith communities will do more to protect children if they make conscious efforts to collaborate with state agencies and other NGOs in country. In Ghana, NGOs such as Compassion International, World Vision, International Justice Mission, Action Aid, Child Right, and others are working at community levels to protect children from abuse. It is expected that these partnerships could contribute to areas such as reporting CSA, influence the delivery of justice as well as advocacy and capacity building. For instance, the police could organise capacity building workshops on the need to report CSA and the kind of information to be gathered when CSA occurs for the purpose of legal redress. In addition, such partnerships will bring to the disposal of faith communities, information on other resources in the communities that can be harnessed to bring restoration and healing when CSA occurs.

Another important area is partnership for poverty reduction. This could be considered as pastoral care as empowerment since it seeks to provide resources that are more likely to give voice to the poor. In addition, it could also be in support of pastoral care as nurturing since this is born out of the love and compassion that exist in the Trinity. The mutuality in the Trinity could be the motivation for taking initiatives towards poverty alleviation. Faith communities in Ghana could work towards poverty reduction among their members and the larger society. Poverty was considered as a key factor contributing to CSA in Ghana (see section 3.2.2). Children, especially girls engage in petty trading outside home, which put them at risk of CSA. Due to poverty, some families give their children to engage in some form of employment. Churches could initiate economic empowerment programs through assisting with Income Generating Activities (IGAs) among her members and the

larger society. In some cases, faith communities could forge strategic partnership with government and NGOs. In Ghana, there are poverty alleviation initiatives by the government such as Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), National Health Insurance, and school feeding programs (Aphu & Lu 2018:2). Churches can come alongside the government to implement such initiatives. In Ghana, churches are one organised group that has always partnered with government in other FBOs can be strategic partners in community development projects (Eyber, Kachale, Shields & Ager 2018:31; Yates 2010:168).

In addition, NGOs such as Compassion International Ghana, World Vision Ghana and Action Aid Ghana are collaborating with faith communities. For example, Compassion Ghana is working closely with faith communities to release children from poverty. Compassion undertakes her holistic child development program through the local church. In addition, Compassion provides technical support and funds to assist parents to engage in Income Generating Activities (IGAs) with the aim of reducing poverty. Although, Compassion works through the local church, the church denomination, at the national level through their headquarters could throw their support behind the local church by providing technical and logistical support for maximum impact in the community. Beside Compassion, World Vision and Action Aid have also been working with communities for poverty alleviation and community transformation to make life better for children. Faith communities could adopt these approaches and expand these poverty alleviation initiatives from government and NGOs in order to release more people out of poverty.

5.4.2 Reactive responses

Although the church should live in a way that prevent CSA and dehumanisation of children among themselves and also in the larger society, it is important to note there are possibilities of CSA occurring. Reaction responses involve the steps taken when CSA occurs to bring relieve, healing and restoration. This implies that reactive responses could entail elements of pastoral care as liberation, empowerment, resistance, and nurturance. There are several actions that could be taken in instances of CSA. Carothers *et al.* (2005:264) observe that the local church is a valuable resource for those who are recovering from child abuse. Kpalam (2019:42) revealed from data obtained from clergy

and lay leaders in the 39 congregations in the church of Pentecost that “all the participants understood child protection as the plans, activities and structures put in place to safeguard children. Also, that the church is an integral part of the community is a major reason why it should be actively involved in child protection”. For the purpose of this study special attention will be given to reporting, counselling, need for temporal shelter and networking for appropriate referrals.

5.4.1.1 Reporting of child sexual abuse to law enforcement agencies

This involves providing relevant information about the abuse to relevant institutions such as the Police and the Department of Social Welfare. This is a form of pastoral function that advocate justice for sexually abuse children. Any pastoral response that promotes justice for the marginalised could be thought of as one that is grounded in the Trinity. Therefore, faith communities in Ghana are expected to undertake a ministry of advocacy for justice for children since the Trinity is one of the doctrines widely adhered to. Molla (2018:198) concluded that “*advocating for justice is the role of the Christian in any given society and this will broaden the meaning of children’s ministry*” if it is embodied in and through the life of faith communities.

As stated in the proactive responses, it is expected that child protection policy of faith communities in Ghana spells out guidelines with regard to disclosure to relevant persons within the church’s structure. However, when disclosure is made, there is the need for making reports with the police, this is because, as indicated earlier in chapter 3, CSA is a crime according to laws of Ghana. The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act of 1998 (Act 554) describes different aspects of sexual offences such as rape, defilement, indecent assault, and incest as well as the punishment that those offences attract with various aspects of sexual offences (Agu *et al.* 2018:126-127). Consequently, all crimes are required by the law to be reported. For instance, the Domestic Act of 2007 (Act 760) enjoins any person or institution with knowledge of domestic violence to report to the police. The Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) is a department within the Ghana Police Service that deals with human right abuses towards women and children. The DOVVSU plays a major role in protecting children from violence at district, regional, and national level (GHS 2018:42-43).

This implies that refusal to report CSA is an offence or breach of the law. In America, for example, it was reported that leaders of faith communities contend that child protection laws are very important in promoting active participation in intervention such as reporting CSA to child protection institutions (Rhee, Chang & Young 2003:27). In Ghana, it was reported that communities' members believed that enforcement of the law on child protection will inject a sense of responsibility into people. The report further argued if perpetrators of child abuse are arrested and prosecuted, it will send a strong warning, and will serve as a deterrent to others (GHS 2018:79-80).

Reporting CSA could be considered as pastoral care that is liberating. Liberation as a pastoral function seeks to undertake a caring ministry that brings freedom for victims of exploitation, discrimination and injustice against children, women, and men (Molla 2018:198). It is an extension of God's action borne out of love and justice towards the vulnerable. Miller-McLemore (cited in Molla 2018:199) opines that for pastoral theology, pastoral care as liberation rejects any suggestion of patriarchal and sexist ideas and structures that dominate people based on age, sex, and abilities. This notion of oppression and domination against certain groups is foreign to a relational view of the Trinity. For example, Moltmann's Trinitarian thinking promotes inclusiveness, equality, love and communion in faith communities and larger society. LaCugna advocates for a communion of primacy of equals and Volf put forth that ecclesial and societal relations should parallel Trinitarian relations.

The role of faith communities in reporting is crucial since this leads to investigation and the prosecution of perpetrators. Reporting CSA to protection agencies is the initial point of entry into care and support for sexually abuse children and their families. It opens the opportunities for medical and psychological services as well as legal redress. The result is that the victim and family receive hope on one hand. On the other hand, the perpetrator may be removed from the environment and punished, which protects other children from being abuse by the same perpetrators and also serve as deterrent to others. Church leaders at all levels should lead the way and encourage all members of the faith community and the larger society to take reporting as a Christian mandate. Martin Luther (1483-1546), a significant figure in the Reformation era, believed that one's personal faith

in Christ Jesus places an obligation to serve others, especially, those at risk in society (Elmer, cited in Kpalam & Light 2020:36). As Scripture admonishes to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, reporting CSA is a form of speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves. The importance of reporting cannot be overemphasised since perpetrators of CSA often treat the victims to not disclose the act.

5.4.1.2 Counselling services

Counselling is a form of pastoral care that seek to assist individual or groups to find solutions to problems. Lartey (2003:319) observed that pastoral counselling is a form of counselling which is offered in the context of a faith community and it should focus on the whole person rather than specific experiences of the person. That is, the counselling should aim at bringing wholeness and growth. Counselling services have been found to contribute significantly to the recovery from the emotional trauma and the psychosocial challenges that sexually abuse children and their families go through. As observed by Carothers *et al.* (2005:264), the local church is a valuable resource for those who are recovering from child abuse. Counselling provides several resources, which encompass pastoral care functions such as resistance, nurturing, empowerment, and liberation. Counselling is a specific help within the framework of pastoral care of the whole community by the whole community. Provision of professional counselling services create the opportunities for children to express their thoughts and feelings about the abuse in a trusting atmosphere. This contributes to emotional healing and also assist to adopt positive coping mechanisms, which promotes recovering from the abuse. Counselling helps to restore relationship with God, self, and others in the community. In chapter 3, it was noted that counselling services are not readily accessible in Ghana for victims of sexual abuse. It was observed that CSA can result in long-term devastating effects where counselling services are not available (Kpalam & Light 2020:46).

In the light of this, faith communities could make appropriate investment by offering counselling training to church leaders, volunteers, and full-time workers in the children's ministry. As noted in chapter 3, churches in Ghana have children ministries that pay special attention to ministry to children. In most cases, there are regular meetings with children to share fellowship and also study Scripture under the supervision of volunteers

and child workers. Kpalam and Light (2020:46) argued that special counselling skills and tools should be given to these children workers in order to provide a more structured help to those who have suffered sexual abuse or are currently going through the abuse.

For counselling services to bring healing to sexually abused children, it should be offered in an atmosphere of a trusting relationship. The goal of counselling is healing, and growth and its methods and processes are grounded in the Trinity, in which, healthy relationships exist. This implies that child workers and the entire faith community should seek to build healthy relationships with children. The quality of relationships that exist should be rooted in the relationality as a central motif in the Trinity, and relationality in the Trinity could provide parallels for the relationality in the faith community (Pembroke 2006: 5-6; Volf 1998:67).

5.4.1.3 Temporal shelter

Temporal shelters are homes where sexually abused children can be kept for a short period, usually 2-6 weeks as part of the measures to protect them from abuse. Temporal shelters form part of the pastoral function aimed at promoting safety and protection of children at risk of continuous abuse. It creates the relational space for healing, restoration, and growth. The relational space of security, safety, belongingness and nurture are key characteristics of the Christian God - the Trinity. In this relational space, there is safety. Moltmann described the relational space of safety as “the liberating relationship with God, and the fellowship of men and women in the spirit of freedom” (1993a:316). For Kotze and Noeth (2017:7) this could be described as friendship that creates the public space to participate in the lives of others. This public space is a relational space that moves people from private space into the extension of affection and responding to those suffering in our society such as CSA. Similarly, LaCugna (1991:384), opines that God’s household is directed by the Holy Spirit through justice, peace, love, joy, generosity, freedom, reconciliation, and healing. Faith communities providing temporal shelters, where they are needed most could serve as a form of extending the household of God to those suffering.

As it was noted in chapter 3, CSA occurs often in close relationship such as with parents, uncles, siblings, and members of the home environment. In such case, it may require that for the purpose of putting a stop to the abuse whilst other steps are taken, the child is removed temporary from the home where the abuse occurs. As a result, they are kept in these home whiles they are receiving appropriate intervention. It is observed that temporal shelter plays a vital role in the protection of children. However, in Ghana, there are no temporal shelter for children. This has been one of the challenges of fighting child abuse in the country. The Child and Family Welfare Policy (2014) calls on faith communities to institute programs, structures, and activities to complement the efforts of government at community, district, regional and national levels. As part of the effort to complement government's effort, faith communities could build temporal shelters for children. They may collaborate with government and other NGOs to run these shelters. For example, government and other agencies could provide social workers and clinical psychologists to support the work of faith communities. They could build new structures or create a space in already existing structures for this purpose. For instance, some of the major church denominations in Ghana such as the Church of Pentecost, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, Lighthouse Church, and the Roman Catholic Church have huge retreat and renewal centres with large accommodation facilities. To begin with, these church denominations could consider the possibility of creating spaces in these huge edifices for the purpose of temporal shelters for sexually abuse children. For instance, as part of the measures by the government of Ghana to fight the Covid 19 pandemic, the Church of Pentecost has given her Retreat Centre (Pentecost Convention Centre) as an isolation and treatment centre for almost one year. This could be replicated in the area of temporal shelters.

5.4.1.4 Networking for child protection

The World Council of Churches' (WCC) conversation on the advocacy for the rights of children, observed that the church has a mandate to care for children and they should promote the right of children in partnership with relevant organisations in order to ensure effective implementation of child protection policies and programs (WCC 2017:146). Since CSA is a complex phenomenon with multi-faced realities in the Ghanaian context, establishing appropriate networking is crucial. Also, in the framework of the Trinitarian paradigm of pastoral care, the whole community is involved in providing care. This

communal care calls for strategic partnerships, in which all relevant resources are harnessed for effective pastoral care to, and with children. Faith communities could build strategic partnerships with health facilities in the communities where they serve. This could contribute to eliminating the delay in conducting medical examinations due to high charges by medical persons. The church may have an arrangement where the cost could be borne by the church where it is established that families of victims could not afford the medical fees. In addition, the church should engage in strategic alliance with the police service for the purpose of reporting and assisting victims and families to provide adequate information to the police for investigation and prosecution. It was observed in chapter 3 that sometimes, church leaders encourage families of victims to withdraw cases of CSA from the police. This according to the police service has impacted their work negatively. It is believed that effective networking with the police service will address this gap. Similarly, the church could also liaise with the court and other human right lawyers such as Legal Aid to ensure appropriate redress of cases of CSA. It is my opinion that strategic partnership in this area will address some of the weaknesses in the legal system mentioned under the legal perspective in chapter 3. Finally, the church should collaborate with NGOs such as UNICEF Ghana, Child Rights Ghana, Compassion International Ghana, Ark Foundation, International Justice Mission Ghana, and Challenging Heights, which are actively involved in advocacy for children who are sexually abused to received appropriate interventions that will bring restoration to the victims and their families. It is believed that partnerships will put the resources of these institutions at the disposal of faith communities. For example, churches could give opportunities to such organisations to educate congregations on child protection issues. It is important to note that appropriate partnerships can be formed when faith communities become fully aware of relevant resources in the community that could be harnesses to support children and their families when CSA occurs. The implication is that churches should take proactive steps to look for and network for the purpose of child protection.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter underscored the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to a pastoral response in the context of Ghana due to the multi-faced and complex nature of CSA in the context of Ghana. It also discussed a historical perspective pastoral care in Africa and made a case for the fact that current developments in the field of pastoral care favours

communal care, which sits well in the African concept of community life. The African concept of communal life is consistent with the Trinity, which I argue should inform a pastoral response to CSA in Ghana. The chapter made a case that the relational view of the Trinity provides a thicker foundation that can shape a strong pastoral response to CSA by faith communities in Ghana. I argue that faith communities in Ghana are in need of a pastoral anthropology of children informed by a relational view of the Trinity in which, our theological understanding of children is consistent with the image and likeness of the Triune God. In this way, children are considered as made in the same image of God just as adults. It is believed that holding this Christian view of children could influence the mode of being of faith communities. Consequently, a relational space for children that ensures protection and the elimination of all forms of dehumanisation of children among themselves and the larger society can be created. That is, faith communities will enact policies and build structures that are in line with this Scripture: “he will rescue the poor when they cry to him; he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them. He feels pity for the weak and the needy, and he will rescue them. He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious to him” (Psalm 72:12-14).

In the Trinity, there is love and mutual fellowship. This love always protects (1 Cor. 13:7). God is looking for a community - a covenant people, called by the Father through the Son to live in the power of the Spirit. The community that views herself as God’s ambassador here on earth, is called to protect the weak. To this end, the community should operate with a pastoral response that is informed by the conceptual framework that *the Trinity is ministering healing and restoration to all creation, including sexually abused children through a community of believers who live in and through healthy relationships*. That is, from community (the Trinity) through a community (faith community) to another community (world). The underlying and constant element is the relationship that connects all the three communities in this conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global public health concern due to its devastating and long-term effects. It has lifelong effects on victims, families, and society at large. The Bible describes it as a sin that affects both spirit and body (1 Cor. 6:18). This position is affirmed in most societies, including Ghana where CSA is considered a crime. Literature reveals that CSA has been explored from several perspectives within the scientific fields of as sociology, economics, and anthropology, and this was done extensively from the Western world (Behere & Mulmule 2014; Wihbey 2011). Although, CSA has been investigated in pastoral ministry, this has largely been conducted in the Western context and from Western perspectives (Rudolfsson 2015; Rudolfsson & Tidefors 2014; Rudolfsson & Tidefors 2013; Meninger 2009; Parkinson 1997). In Africa, and for that matter Ghana, investigations so far have focused on socio-cultural, psychological, and political dimensions (Mohamed 2014; Ige & Fawole 2012; Tetteh-Yankey 2009; Ampofo *et al.* 2007; Brown 2003).

Child abuse as viewed from an African theological perspective may possibly be connected to "the social position children have occupied in the hierarchy of the construction of personhood in African thought" (Mtata 2009:85). Child abuse is connected with the abuse of power (Reynaert 2015:189). In Africa, abuse of power could be linked with the hierarchical construction of personhood and societal structures. Mtata (2009:85) argues that African theological perspectives have followed this hierarchical ordering in ministry as well as theological reflections. He observes that "a faulty anthropology produces a faulty theology, and a faulty theology produces a skewed anthropology" (2009:85). He advances the argument that "marginalisation of children in the African communitarian ethos is sometimes rationalized by using the language of 'care' and 'protection' while the real value of childhood is not recognised" (2009:97). This may contribute to the fact some perpetrators of CSA are people in a relationship of trust and care with children. They are people such as parents, teachers, and volunteers, who are trusted with the care of children. According to Mtata (2009:99), the hierarchical construction of personhood, which influences theological discourse in African could contribute to the marginalisation of not only children and women but "all those

considered as not being fully human, such as the physically or mentally disabled or those considered different". It is believed that the current debate of CSA could be influenced by the African theological discourse on the construction of personhood. As a result, Mtata concludes that "only once African theology has come to terms with this reality of the hierarchical construction of the African person will it start effectively to address the needs of children and other marginalized persons in the African church" (2009:101).

In effect, the study is not on the level of practical ideas and interventions but rather on stimulating questions about the practices and theologies pertaining to children in the life of the church and within broader society. This is in reference to and in the context of how the practice of CSA is connected to how adults think theologically about the personhood of children. And then to continue with the circular movement of the pastoral circle to reflect on to what extent and how theological anthropological thinking from an African theological perspective informs adults' faith practices towards and with children in the context of church as well as in the intimate spaces of daily living.

This chapter comprises of the summary and conclusions and recommendations of the study. It also presents a brief evaluation of the pastoral circle as used in this study and finally make some suggestions with regard to further research.

Chapter 1

In this chapter, the introduction, general orientation, and the theoretical assumptions to the study was explicated. It provides the background, problem statement and the motivation for the study. It also provides clarification of key concepts such as child protection, child sexual abuse, child theologies and theologies of childhood, faith community, a relational view of the Trinity and pastoral care.

The problem of CSA is expounded in this chapter. It is noted that CSA is a global public health concern due to the devastating effects. It has lifelong effects on victims, families, and society at large. The situation of CSA in Ghana presents a multi-faceted reality. The literature reveals CSA has been explored from several perspectives within the scientific

fields of sociology, economics, and anthropology, and this was done extensively from the Western world. Although, CSA has been investigated in pastoral ministry, this has largely been conducted in the Western context and from Western perspectives. In Africa, and for that matter Ghana, investigations so far have focused on socio-cultural, psychological, and political dimensions. Consequently, there is no clear direction in the literature on CSA from the perspectives of pastoral care for faith communities in Ghana. The implication of this situation is that CSA is in need of theological reflection and pastoral responses, based on a theology of relationship informed by a relational view of the Trinity. It is imperative to explore and propose ways the contributions of faith communities could be rooted in their mandate as caring and healing communities. There is therefore the need to investigate theological resources informed by a relational view of the Trinity and faith praxis that could influence the pastoral responses of faith communities to CSA in the context of Ghana.

The main research question that guides the study was: *How can a relational view of the Trinity inform a pastoral response of faith communities to CSA in the context of Ghana?*

Other sub-questions that the study attempted to respond to, were as follow:

- What is the reality of CSA in Ghana, also in faith communities?
- What is the theological motivation for utilising doctrine in responding to CSA?
- How can the Trinity be understood relationally?
- What could a pastoral response to CSA based on the relational understanding of the Trinity be?

These questions were the focus of the various chapters in this study. Chapter two answers the question: *what is the theological motivation for the utilising doctrine of the Trinity in responding to CSA?* Chapter three answers the question: *what is the reality of CSA in Ghana, also in faith communities?* Chapter four answers the question: *how can the Trinity be understood relationally?* Finally, Chapter five attempts the question: *what could a pastoral response to CSA based on the relational understanding of the Trinity be?*

Chapter 2

This chapter describes in detail the methodology and it is presented in two parts. The first part presents the interdisciplinary approach to this study and the description of the pastoral circle as an approach to practical theological interpretation. Firstly, the chapter describes the methodological process as mainly interdisciplinary. In this sense, interdisciplinarity is a unique and creative engagement in a dialogue with theological, biblical, and social as well as human sciences, with the context in mind (Graham 2012:4). Secondly, a brief discussion is carried out with regard to key approaches of practical theological research in the contextual-hermeneutics paradigm. I am convinced that the pastoral circle by Holland and Henriot (1984), when compared with others, is the most suitable approach for this study. The pastoral circle is one useful approach in the hermeneutic-praxis paradigm. Macallan and Hendriks (2012:194) posit that this approach is interdisciplinary, and a logical way of doing practical theological research. The pastoral circle lays strong emphasis on the integration of pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections in an on-going process with the aim of transformation in the life of the church in a particular context (Henriot & Holland 1984:7).

In addition, elements such as faith-commitments, ecclesial analysis and spiritual formation and empowerment is suggested to be added to the pastoral circle by Cochrane and colleagues. These elements are based on their experiences of using the pastoral circle for research in the South African context and it was integrated into the four moments described by Henriot and Holland.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the motivation for the utilising Christian doctrine of Trinity. A comprehensive reflection is undertaken to identify key reasons for the choice of a Christian doctrine as the framework from which to construct an interdisciplinary theological pastoral response. First of all, it is noted that Christian doctrine provides a thicker foundation and a broader frame of reference to theological reflections, especially, those aimed at transformative Christian spirituality and faith praxis to respond to issues in the public space. Also, where Scripture offers little or no direct guidance, turning to doctrine is highly encouraged. In addition, it is argued that the choice of doctrine fits into the on-going discourse in practical theology that practice, and context

informs theory (doctrine), which in turn informs practice. Furthermore, the relationship between public theology and doctrine, as well as the interplay between liberation theology and doctrine are referenced to motivate the choice of utilising doctrine in this study. To conclude, it is argued that the motivation for utilising doctrine stems from the idea that practical theological reflection and Christian doctrine are inseparable. And that, approaching this study from the point of doctrine allows for an interdisciplinary theological discourse that gives adequate attention to both the priority of Scripture and the retrieval of traditions (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:20).

Chapter 3

This chapter presented a contextual description and analysis of the realities of CSA in Ghana, the first two moments in the pastoral circle, the moment of insertion and social analysis. The first section is the moment of insertion which outlines my personal experience of the realities of CSA. The second section is the moment of socio-ecclesial analysis of the situation of CSA in the context of Ghana. The moment of insertion raised key issues such as the realities of CSA and the fact that most of the perpetrators are members in close relationships with children. In addition, it indicated that some churches do not have specific plans to prevent abuse from happening, both in their ministry, and in society at large. The socio-ecclesial analysis validated these issues, and also brought deeper and fresh insights to them. The chapter gleaned extensive data on the contextual realities of CSA in Ghana, and also among faith communities. It points to the complex and multi-factorial dimension of CSA such as the socio-cultural, legal, and medical and psychological dimensions. It could be argued that the staggering statistics of CSA in Ghana, and the glaring socio-cultural factors that influence the problem should compel all stakeholders, especially, the church to adopt a strategic and pastoral response to CSA.

It could be concluded that the chapter provides relevant primary data that ensures that the end product of this theological journey - a pastoral response to CSA - is contextually relevant and speak to the situation in Ghana. A strategic and theological pastoral response of the church in Ghana to CSA could be influenced by different points of departure, such as understandings of what the role of the church should be, the role of children in the community, and others. I have chosen to take a relational view of the Trinity as the point

of departure, seeing as it has theological implications for these other understandings. Also, the chapter revealed that CSA is a complex issue in Ghana and aspart of the complexity, is also seeking appropriate resources. Again, I have chosen the Trinity as a particular resource that could help shape a response to CSA by faith communities. In the following chapter and the next phase of the pastoral cycle, I then turned to the moment of theological reflection, with special focus on a relational view of the Trinity.

Chapter 4

In this chapter, the following step in the pastoral circle is taken, and accordingly, a relational view of the doctrine of the Trinity is discussed as part of the theological reflection. The focus is on some key ideas and proposals of a relational view of the Trinity by theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna and Miroslav Volf, and what resources they provide that can inform a pastoral response to CSA in the context of Ghana. It seeks to answer the question: what is a relational view of the Trinity? Prior to the discussion on a relational view of the Trinity, I undertake a brief survey of biblical and historical perspectives of the doctrine of the doctrine of the trinity in order to place the discussion within a broader framework.

The historical survey reveals that reflection on the Trinity has been up and down, sometimes fading into the background and other times resurfacing, and in some cases taking a new or renewed form. In addition, the biblical perspective indicated that, although the notion of the Trinity is not explicit in Scripture, there is enough evidence of visible traces of the Trinity in both the Old and the New Testaments. The thesis of their argument is that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an abstract and speculative discourse about God, but one with far reaching practical implications for Christian spirituality and faith praxis. They moved the discourse on the Trinity from substance to relationality as the central motif, which, they argued could be considered a prototype for human community. Although, a relational view of the Trinity was considered the root of the revival of the doctrine of the Trinity, their proposals did not go without objections, some of which are briefly discussed in chapter four.

To this end, I support Phan's assertion that "the Trinity lies at the heart and centre of the Christian faith" (2011:11). This implies that the Trinity should be pivotal and given great attention in contemporary Christian theological thought and discourse. This naturally fits into the effort to rediscover the Trinity for Christian spirituality and faith praxis. The conceptualisations of a relational view of the Trinity puts the doctrine at the centre of a pastoral response since pastoral work is centrally about relationality (Pembroke 2006:7). The idea of persons in communion, primacy of communion among equals and a community of friendship, all seeks to build a faith community that reflect the relationship of mutuality observed and experienced with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A relational view brought revival of the doctrine of the Trinity and place it at the centre of theological reflections as well as Christian spirituality. Consequently, it calls on faith communities to "live into the image of God as pursuing a community of radical mutuality that reflects the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and Spirit" (Plyod 2015:6). There is no doubt that such a community can initiate pastoral responses that adequately address CSA and the dehumanisation of children in the Ghanaian context.

Chapter 5

This chapter discusses the last phase of the pastoral circle, which is pastoral planning and action. This is the moment where the faith community discerns the will of God and restates it for her current context (Cochrane *et al.* 1991:24). It is the point at which a decision is made with regard to what actions are expected by God from His chosen people, who are the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). In this case, the planning and actions expected by God from his chosen people are informed by the insight gleaned from Christian dogmatics - the Trinity. I attempted to respond to the question: what could a pastoral response to CSA based on the relational understanding of the Trinity be?

This chapter underscores the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to a pastoral response in the context of Ghana due to the multi-faced and complex nature of CSA. In addition, the arguments rests on the conceptualisation of a pastoral response as both proactive and reactive. In chapter five, current developments in pastoral care are discussed. I argue that current movements in pastoral care favours communal care, which is congruent with the African concept of community life. The African concept of communal

life is consistent with the Trinity, which I argued should inform a pastoral response to CSA in Ghana. The chapter made a case that the relational notion of the Trinity provides a thicker foundation, which help shape both a strong pastoral anthropology of children and a strong understanding of the church that emphasize mutuality, equality, and interconnectedness. In the first place, the study makes a case for a pastoral anthropology of children informed by the Trinity. This implies that a pastoral anthropology of children should be grounded in the Christian understanding of human beings, and children are not an exception. It calls for views of children that are consistent with the Christian God. As observed, the Christian God can truly be conceptualised in a Trinitarian paradigm. This, therefore, suggests that the pastoral anthropology of children should be conceptualised from the paradigm of the Triune God.

Secondly, a pastoral response informed by a relational view of the Trinity is suggested. The mode of being of faith communities could be reformed to create a relational space for children that ensures protection and the elimination of all forms of dehumanisation of children among themselves and the larger society. That is, faith communities will enact policies and build structures that are in line with this Scripture, “he will rescue the poor when they cry to him; he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them. He feels pity for the weak and the needy, and he will rescue them. He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious to him” (Psalm 72:12-14).

In the Trinity, there is love and mutual fellowship. This love always protects (1 Cor. 13:7). God is looking for a community - a covenant people, called by the Father through the Son to live in the power of the Spirit. The community that views herself as God’s ambassador here on earth, are called to protect the weak. To this end, faith communities in Ghana could reflect on and undertake a pastoral response that is informed by a Trinitarian framework, which suggests that the Trinity is ministering healing and restoration to all creation, including sexually abused children through a community of believers who live in and through healthy relationships. That is, from a community (the Trinity) through a community (faith community) to another community (world). The underlying and constant element is the relationship that connects all the three communities in this framework.

Based on this conceptual framework, faith communities could embark on proactive measures such as developing contextual child theology, child theologies and theologies of childhood, child protection policy, and undertake a ministry of advocacy to challenge relevant stakeholders to create relational spaces for children in the faith community and also in the larger society. Other measures include empowering church leaders, volunteers, as well as the children themselves with the requisite skills and knowledge to play active roles in the ministry of child protection. Reactive responses such as reporting CSA and providing counselling services should be undertaken in the faith community and also in larger society in case CSA occurs.

To this end, the study makes some contributions to the literature on the theological and ethical reflection on CSA in Africa, and within the specific context of Ghana. In the first place the study makes a case that CSA could benefit from a theology of relationship, that is, a relational view of the Trinity. I argue that child abuse is connected to abuse of power and the abuse of power is supported by the hierarchical construction of personhood in Ghanaian community, which puts children at the margins of society. Consequently, a relational view of the Trinity could provide a reformed view of children in which the real value of children is held as one that is the same as the real value of adults. This implies that construction of personhood is viewed through the lens of the Trinity. In the Trinity, there is primacy among equals and not of one over the other. This is seen in the communion, fellowship and mutuality that exist in Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Holding this view of children implies maintaining a Christian understanding of human beings that are grounded in the Christian concept of God, which is the Trinity. In effect, I suggest a pastoral theological anthropology of children that is grounded in the Christian understanding of human beings as created in the image and the likeness of the Trinity. Since, the views we hold about people influences our responses to them, I believe that a theological construction of personhood in the Ghanaian context that is rooted in a relational view of the Trinity could help move children from the margins of faith communities and society into a relational space. In this relational space there is using and shifting of power in life giving ways amongst parties that enjoy equal worth. Also, this understanding of children in the African context is more likely to ensure that the language of 'care and protection' of children is construed from the Trinitarian notion, in which there is the flattening of the power gradient, thereby promoting mutual care. This understanding

holds that the indwelling mutual love, and equality observed in the Trinity should be the foundation upon which all human societies, including faith communities are formed. I support the argument that all forms of hierarchy and dominion are foreign to the nature of the Triune God, and that God as the Father does not imply exercising power over but rather being a loving Father. Consequently, a community that is built on Trinitarian ideas, in which there is an equal fellowship of men and women; children and adults as well as the rich and the poor is constantly maintained. This is consistent with Romans 15:7 that “welcome one another just as Christ welcomed you”. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he believes that this attitude to embrace and love is a sign of participation in the Trinity as he asserts that this brings glory to God.

I propose that pastoral care informed by a relational view of the Trinity is consistent with the current global understanding of pastoral care as care to the whole community by the whole community. The perspective of communal care moves pastoral care from the care of individuals by ordained persons (clergy). I argue that in the individualisation of pastoral care, there is the possibility of imbalance of power. This is because care is offered from the perspective of a skilled person (care provider) to an unskilled person (care recipient). In order to eschew the hierarchical arrangement in the individualisation of care and move towards communal care, I maintain that this could be described as care from the paradigm of a relational view of the Trinity. This is mutual care that is founded in relationality and offered in a relational space. The concept of mutuality emphasises a relationship of love, which values each person and the need for one another. It is believed that ‘reciprocal interdependence’ promotes vital community virtues such as forbearance, forgiveness, considerateness, care, and protection, and also ensures the absence of focus on self at the peril of others (Ackermann 1998:18-19). This implies that since communal care has at its centre relationality, it could be considered as pastoral care informed by the Trinity because relationality is a central motif of the Trinity. Similarly, I conclude that a Trinitarian paradigm of pastoral care is consistent with the communitarian ethos of African life. The concept of uBuntu underlies communal care, which in my opinion is a pastoral care informed by a relational view of the Trinity.

6.1 A reflection on the pastoral circle

The aim of this study was to investigate the resources the doctrine of the Trinity could provide to inform a theological pastoral response to CSA in Ghana. That is, it seeks to undertake a transformative pastoral response to CSA in the context of Ghana from the framework of a relational view of the Trinity. In order to effectively achieve this goal, the pastoral circle was proposed and used in this study (chapter 2.3). This approach presents a broader vision of pastoral theology and faith praxis. In this approach of practical theology, “pastoral praxis, hermeneutics, and theological reflections are integrated into an on-going process in the life of the church” (Holland and Henriot 1983:7). This approach emanates from the tradition of contextual theology and liberation theology, with strong emphasis on action and change with the context in mind (De Beer 1998:15). Holland and Henriot (1983) identified four moments in their process, namely: moments of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning. The pastoral circle has been a common choice of theologians and practitioners who follows doing theology with the emphasis on the context (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:195; Ballard and Pritchard 2006:82-83; De Beer 1998:70).

The table below provide a brief description of the four moments in the pastoral circle that I followed in this study

Description	Chapter	Moment
Background, problem, objectives, and orientations to the theological methodology.	Chapter 1 and 2	
Description of the current situation. That is, my own experiences and the experiences of the faith community in Ghana.	Chapter 3	Insertion

On the basis of phase 1, questions are formulated in this moment and a socio-cultural, legal, psychological, and ecclesial analysis were conducted.	Chapter 3	Social Analysis
Theological reflection informed by the doctrine of the Trinity. Insights from other sources were integrated into the reflections.	Chapter 4	Theological reflection
In this moment, a pastoral planning for action was undertaken. This plan includes transformed spirituality and faith praxis to respond adequately to child sexual abuse.	Chapter 5	Pastoral planning and praxis
Conclusions and recommendations	Chapter 6	

In this section, I undertake a reflection on the pastoral circle. I don't seek to evaluate the approach against other practical theological approaches, but rather offer a brief evaluation based on my experience of using the pastoral circle in this study.

Firstly, I found the pastoral circle to be a pragmatic and useful approach for doing contextual practical theology in the context of Ghana. With this approach, I had the opportunity to reflect critically on my own faith commitment that I brought to the table and holding it constantly in check throughout the circle. It afforded me the opportunity to engage in a systematic analysis of my assumptions, problems and questions emanating

from the context of Ghana with regard to the realities of CSA as well as the responses of faith communities. Another strength of the approach I observed in my study is the opportunity to conduct a thick description and analysis of the global problem in my own context. Within this approach I observed the importance of my own experience as a source of theology and of social analysis (Macallan & Hendriks 2012:199). I was able to connect my personal experiences of CSA in different circumstances in Ghana to the social-ecclesial analysis. In the end, I realised that social analysis validated and expatiated my personal experiences, resulting in new assumptions, understanding of the problem and questions that guided the circular, back, and forward movements within the circle. This I find interesting and revealing, consequently, shedding brighter light on the process of theological reflection and pastoral planning.

Secondly the pastoral circle provided the space for interdisciplinarity. I had the opportunity to integrate theological resources such as the faith tradition, Christian doctrine, and non-theological sources such as psychology, sociology, medical sciences, and law in an ongoing reflection on CSA and pastoral responses. I observed that a fine integration of theological and non-theological sources within this space of interdisciplinarity promotes a 'hermeneutical-praxis' paradigm (Kim 2007:421).

Furthermore, I found the flexibility and the circular movement vital in any theological reflection aimed at transforming Christian spirituality and faith praxis (Stinton 2012:18). The continuous circular movements created a space for new assumptions, facts, new insights which resulted in an on-going refinement of the theological reflection process. The pastoral circle allows for further and deeper reflections on these new questions and insights that may result in the adjustment of the pastoral planning. In this way, new research opportunities may emerge.

Finally, I found the approach useful at both academic and ministry levels. At the academic level, as used in this study, it provides an interdisciplinary opportunity to engage in a contextual practical and systematic theological study. Its prospects are far reaching when

it comes to theological reflections with the context in mind. On the ministry level, it can be used by leaders or the entire congregation to reflect on their own ministry praxis using this as guide (De Beer 1998:552). This implies they can reflect on their own experiences in ministry, undertake a simple social-ecclesial analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning, aimed at a transformative ministry praxis. It, therefore, means that this approach can be used at any level to reflect on the spirituality and faith praxis in a particular context.

On the other hand, there are some limitations of the pastoral circle. I find the pastoral circle approach as challenging. It calls for an attitude of continuous intentionality and discipline to keep to the process. The circular movement throughout the phases, which present new assumptions, problems and questions, and the need for further reflections can present an overwhelming reality and a daunting task. These fresh insights that should be considered in refining the process can be laborious and therefore requires a certain level of discipline and commitment to the process. In addition, the social analysis of the problem is a complex and laborious task (Trokan 1997:148). In this study, the social analysis of CSA was complex. Since the phenomenon is dynamic and multi-faceted, I find it difficult with regard to which aspect to focus on during the analysis. The theological nature of the entire pastoral circle should be honoured by not restricting theological reflection to only one moment within the process. Also, the moment of theological reflection can be fluid and poorly executed if proper care is not taken. However, I notice this challenge could be dealt with in an appropriate manner in this study since I chose to work this through a particular resource - the doctrine of the Trinity.

To this end, I found the pastoral circle an intriguing journey of an on-going interdisciplinary engagement of different sources that results in the discovery of new insights throughout the phases. The pastoral circle gave me the opportunity to proceed naturally from “present theory-laden practice to a retrieval of normative theory-laden practice to the creation of more critically held theory-laden practices” (Browning 1991:7). I recommend this approach to anyone doing theology with the context in mind and with the aim of transforming ministry praxis in a particular context.

6.2 Suggestion for further and future research

This study proposed a conceptual framework that the Trinity is ministering healing and restoration to all creations through communities of believers who live in and through healthy relationships. I suggest that future works consider investigating the quality of relationships that currently exist in faith communities in Ghana, and also extended to the larger society. This is likely to provide faith communities with resources that can be harnessed to strengthen existing beliefs and practices that are consistent with Trinitarian relations and also reform faith praxis and Christian spirituality in aspects that are incongruent with the Trinity.

Secondly, further research could focus on the extent to which the Ghanaian culture influence the pastoral anthropology of children in family relations. This will further shed light on what elements in the culture are consistent with the reformed views of children as well as which areas require transformative praxis to reflect the Trinitarian paradigm. In this way, faith communities in Ghana are more likely to undertake a ministry aimed at empowering families to leverage the aspect of the culture that are consistent with the Trinitarian paradigm and take practical steps to rally families to reform those views of children that are contrary to the reformed view of children.

Another area of further research is the relationship between a relational view of the Trinity and the ecclesial leadership structures in faith communities in Ghana. In order for faith communities to embark on a pastoral theological response to CSA informed by the Trinity, it is imperative to examine the structures of leadership in the paradigm of the Trinity. This is because, faith praxis of faith communities is more likely to be significantly influenced by the leadership structures.

The contribution of this study makes a case for a pastoral anthropology of children informed by the Trinity. This implies that a pastoral anthropology of children should be grounded in the Christian understanding of human beings, and children are not an exception. It calls for views of children that are consistent with the Christian God. As observed, the Christian God can truly be conceptualised in a Trinitarian paradigm. This,

therefore, suggests that the pastoral anthropology of children should be conceptualised from the paradigm of the Triune God.

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Addendum I

Motivation of the study

This study was motivated by three main events that took place in my life:

At the age of 7, my parents travelled to another province of my country and left me with my uncle. My uncle's main occupation was farming. The situation in my uncle's house was very difficult because, on daily basis, I left home to farm at 4 am and returned at 7 pm, without food most of the time. We walked a distance of 15 kilometres to our farms. I was often beaten, leaving bruises on my whole body due to my inability to complete a portion of the farm I was assigned to weed. My uncle was also a leader of a local evangelical church congregation in my village. Sundays were good days because I joined my uncle in the church for fellowship. It was a moment of joy, as it was my only opportunity to interact with other children. I became so much involved in the church that I admired those who read the Bible during church services. I was not in school at the time. My interest in Bible reading made some leaders in the local congregation put pressure on my uncle to enrol me in school. At the age of 10, I started school, and by 11 years, I could read the Bible in church. These harsh treatments, including receiving no food, working all day, walking alone through the busy and lonely roads to the farm, lack of play and interaction with other children, continued. All the members of the village, including members of the church, knew about my ordeal, but everyone was afraid to confront my uncle. It was one known drunkard, and a non-Christian in the village who eventually confronted my uncle and threatened to report the matter to the police. One question on my mind as a child was: *Why my uncle was so nice to me on Sundays during church service, but so abusive on the other days?*

When I started practising as a Clinical Psychologist in 2010, the experiences of young people in my practice stood out. I noticed that some of them presented with problems that were as a result of childhood traumatic experiences such as sexual abuse. I observed the devastating effect CSA had on these young people, leaving them with depression, poor school performance, and poor interpersonal relationships, thereby seeking psychological help. I began to wonder about the magnitude of children going through this

experience. I also noticed that some of these children grew up in Christian homes and participated in church activities on a weekly basis. Also, some of the instances of sexual abuse were perpetrated by church leaders and volunteers assigned to teach children in the church. In most cases, I tried to find out if someone in their local congregation was aware of the abuse, however, the responses were negative. In 2013, I took part in a course on 'Walking with Wounded Children' by the Petra Institute for Children's Ministry in White River, South Africa. My attention was drawn to the effect of CSA on the Christian faith development of children. God's covenant of peace and safety with his people, especially, the vulnerable children (Ez. 34:25) was absent in the lives of these children. I became aware that God has mandated his church to be a caring and healing community to children. I began to wonder: *To what extent is the Christian faith community living as caring and healing communities in our society?*

Finally, between 2015 and 2018, I undertook research to investigate child protection in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost, the largest Pentecostal church in Ghana. I observed that although the church leaders recognised the need to protect children, there are no concrete measures instituted by their local congregations to protect children in the church and society as part of their ministry. What was more worrying, is that Scripture was not cited by the church leaders surveyed as the motivation for instituting child protection measures, pointing to a weak child theology (Kpalam 2019:40).

Addendum II

Kinder foundation holds workshop on child sexual abuse | Ghana News Agency (GNA)

Tema, Feb. 24, 2016 GNA – Kinder foundation, a Christian child-centred non-governmental organization, has held a two-day workshop on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA).

It was attended by 40 participants including teachers, social workers, counsellors, psychologists, Sunday school teachers and chaplains.

The workshop was designed to equip participants with the understanding of the dynamics of CSA; increase their comprehension on the impact of CSA on a victim's emotional, cognitive, relational and behavioural levels. It also sought to provide participants with good counselling skills for handling CSA victims and to facilitate their recovery process from the traumatic experiences; using a range of therapeutic tools and techniques.

Mr Ebenezer Kpalam, the President and Founder of Kinder foundation, speaking to the Ghana News Agency, said recent reports from the Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service shows that CSA abuse is on the increase. He urged parents to report any incidence of CSA to the Police for the necessary legal action to be taken against the perpetrators.

Mr Kpalam said when children take the very difficult task of reporting abuse, parents and guardians must ensure that they are appropriately supported and given the necessary assistance to bring the perpetrators to book. He said CSA occurs when a child is used by an adult or an older or more knowledgeable child for sexual pleasure.

Mr Kpalam advised parents to educate their children on sex, build trust friendly relationships with their own children; and to endeavour to know who the friends of their children. He cautioned that many a time the alleged perpetrators of CSA were close family members and other relations.

Mr Kpalam appealed to counsellors and social workers to help provide assistance to victims of CSA and avoid condemning them.

Ms Akorfa Buabasa, the Project Director of Full Gospel Child Development Centre, said the workshop was very important because it creates awareness of the extent of emotional damage a victim of CSA goes through. She said sometimes, counsellors out of inadequate knowledge, in their efforts to provide healing, end up opening old wounds and leaving the victim worse off.

Mr Sylvester Wellington, a Tutor of Tema International School, said he had been adequately equipped to provide proper counselling for victims of CSA.

Kinder foundation is a Christian child centred non-governmental organization, which provides professional counselling services to help children go through life. (GNA<https://ghananewsagency.org/social/kinderfoundation-holds-workshop-on-child-sexual-abuse-100835> 2/4)

Don't shield perpetrators of child abuse in churches'

Date: Oct 27 , 2015 , 08:35 BY: Seth J. Bokpe, Category: General New

Church leaders in the country have been advised not to shield perpetrators of child abuse in their churches as it is a violation of the Constitution

Mr Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam, the Founder and President of the Kinder Foundation, a Christian non-governmental organisation (NGO), urged churches to have child protection policies that protect children from abuse, and stressed that "Although the church is a place where children are sometimes abused, it is also a place where abuses are not reported." The church should not handle cases of sexual abuse. Domestic violence cases are criminal in nature. Such cases must be reported," he said.

He, however, stated that the church could offer emotional support to such victims because of the trauma they go through. He was speaking at the ninth anniversary celebration of the Child Development Centre of the Trinity Parish of the Global Evangelical Church at Kotobabi in Accra.

The centre was established in partnership with Compassion International Ghana in November 2006 with the registration of 200 needy children in Kotobabi and its environs. The centre currently has 276 children.

Background checks

He said, "Our churches need to screen and conduct background checks on people who take care of children in the church." That aside, he said, church leaders also needed training on child rights and protection with the church also taking steps to equip parents with child care mechanism as there were some parents who were abusing children in the name of discipline.

He observed that child neglect and abuse cases were rampant because of little focus on the needs of children by policy makers, saying "when we are planning, our major concern is the needs of adults. We behave as if we don't have any responsibility towards children."

Rising cases of child abuse

Mr Kpalam's observations come in the wake of several reported cases of child abuse in some Catholic churches, especially in Europe and the United States. In Ghana, child sexual molestation by some pastors also persist. According to the United Kingdom's Mail Online, in the last 10 years, the Vatican had investigated more than 4,000 cases of sex abuse by priests on children.

In the United Kingdom, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was established in January 2013, and as of October 1 that year, it had handled nearly 26,000 phone inquiries and had referred more than 760 cases to law enforcement authorities.