

**Applying Integrated Theology to Child
Protection in the Church of Pentecost in
Winneba municipality in Ghana**

By

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The opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary or the supervisor(s) of the research.

I hereby declare that the work contained in this research report is my own work, based on my own research, and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Signed: 

Date: November 16, 2018

Abstract

Child abuse is not uncommon in Africa, and Ghana is not an exception. Where child abuse exists, the appropriate response is child protection. Child protection involves policies, structures and practical steps to ensure children are safeguarded. This research report presents an account of a theological discourse and small-scale empirical research that presents a biblically faithful theory and practice regarding child protection in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba Municipality, Ghana. Using an integrated approach to doing theology, insights from biblical, historical, systematic and practical perspectives were gleaned. The systematic perspective correlates the findings of the biblical and historical perspectives with extra-biblical materials, mainly from the human sciences, to formulate the theological perspective. Children are precious in the sight of God, but are also vulnerable; and God, the chief shepherd, sets the standard for caring for children, and expects his people to protect children and raise them in a loving, caring and nurturing environment. The practical research examines the child protection ministry of the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba. Significant gaps were observed in its theology of children, and child protection when correlated with the conclusions of the systematic perspective. Consequently, certain recommendations are made to enable it achieve an operative theology regarding child protection that is faithful to God's will and purposes. Finally, the integrative approach to theology is evaluated and found to be helpful when seeking a biblically sound praxis regarding any theological problem in a church's current context.

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1. Introduction

This research report presents a report on a comprehensive study of a topic through the lens of integrated theology. It forms part of the master's in integrated theology programme at the South Africa Theological Seminary (SATS). The integrated approach to doing theology is a preferred methodology of SATS. This approach seeks to obtain insights from the various theological disciplines to a given topic. This implies that the theological discourse entails studying a topic from historical, biblical, systematic and practical perspectives and then correlating them. This is to ensure that the insights from all these disciplines are gained in order to faithfully discern the nature, will and purpose of God with regard to the topic. This way of doing theology is considered a process for arriving at a sound theology with its practical implications for our contemporary context. This research report is the final step of the integrated theology programme at SATS.

The topic chosen for investigation was child protection. I reside in Winneba in Ghana and attend the Church of Pentecost. My motivation for this topic stems from that fact that child abuse is not uncommon in Ghanaian communities. Where child abuse persists, an urgent and appropriate response is necessary that includes providing care for those abused and taking concrete measures to prevent the occurrence of child abuse. Ghana has laws that make child abuse illegal. Consequently, all institutions, including the church, are required to institute concrete measures to ensure that children are not harmed. In addition, as an evangelical, I believe that Scripture teaches that God expects his followers to protect the vulnerable in society (see sections 3 to 5). The key question of concern to me was, therefore, what does the Church of Pentecost in Winneba do to protect children in her ministry and is it according to the will for God?

Section one of the research report is the introduction to the report. Section two contains a more detailed presentation and discussion of integrated theology. Sections three to six present the four theological disciplines' perspectives on child protection. In this report the perspectives are presented in the following order as this reflects the research order followed in the master's integrated programme: biblical, historical, systematic and practical. The reason for the order will become clearer

below. Each theological perspective is defined, the methodology used to conduct the research covered, and a summary of the findings presented.

The practical perspective was gained through a small-scale qualitative research project on child protection in the four Districts of the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba Municipality. Each district has a number of local churches under the supervision of one Pastor with a Leader responsible for the oversight of the ministry to children.

Section seven addresses the implications of all the findings for the child protection ministry for the four Church of Pentecost districts investigated. Finally, section eight presents the strengths and weaknesses of the integrated approach for discerning the will of God and restating it for the contemporary context of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba regarding child protection.

The relevant literature (books, articles and other sources) cited in all the theological modules (some of which appear in this research report) regarding child protection are included in the bibliography.

2. Integrated Method of doing Theology

The integrated approach preferred by SATS is a theological reflection that seeks to integrate the various sub-disciplines of theology in order to discern the will of God for the church in its context. The integrated model sees theology as one discipline (Smith 2013:11) and is thus holistic in its methodology. This approach provides a model for theological investigation that includes contributions from the various theological disciplines of biblical, historical, systematic and practical theology. It will be seen below that both systematic and practical theology perspectives take into account relevant extra-biblical research and insights.

The biblical perspective presents what a book of the Bible or a biblical author (for example, the apostle Paul) teaches about a subject or topic. The historical perspective presents how the Church in church history understood and responded to the subject. The systematic perspective is broader (a whole Bible perspective) and more ordered than the biblical perspective. It also takes into account other disciplines that are outside the traditional disciplines in theology, and seeks to be relevant to the current age and more immediate context. The practical perspective

provides, through small-scale or large-scale empirical research, the beliefs and practices of a faith community regarding the topic and any challenges the context presents as well as insights from the practical context that can contribute to understanding the topic.

Each theological discipline provides insights into the topic. The academic discipline of Practical Theology does give some attention to some relevant biblical teaching, principles and ethics, when constructing a theory of praxis. But when the practical perspective is integrated with the other perspectives, there is a better chance of more faithfully reflecting the will of God concerning the topic in a specific church context.

I agree with the arguments of the proponents of integrated theology that theology is one discipline and that it should be regarded as such even though it has sub-divisions (Smith 2013:11; Lewis and Demarest 1996a 21). This implies that instead of departmentalization of the sub-divisions of theology and thus promoting thinking in “silos,” it creates the opportunity to allow each sub-division to contribute its unique perspective on a particular topic or issue. While this silo thinking is suitable for academic endeavour, it does not allow theological institutions to prepare men and women who are able to undertake the theological journey to discern God’s nature, purpose and will, both generally and in specific church contexts. Smith defines integrated theology as understanding God’s revelation about himself and his world in order that we might restate its meaning and contextualise it for our situation (Smith 2013:18).

Another advantage of integrative theology is that it makes room for contributions from other disciplines in the sciences and the arts that are consistent with the teachings of Scripture. The integration of perspectives from the human, social and natural sciences are also important because they contribute to understanding reality (Smith 2013:119). In our effort to grasp reality from God’s perspective, we need to recognize the contribution of the sciences; but in all instances, we need to weigh the interpretations of science in the light of Scripture’s worldview and teaching (Smith 2013:120; Lewis and Demarest 1996a:28).

Additionally, SATS anchors this model in the belief that Christ is the clearest and fullest revelation of God’s purpose, nature and will. It also roots the integrative

approach in God's mission to redeem humankind through his Son and establish his kingdom on earth. In other words, Christocentrism (see section 3) and the *missio Dei* are central to SATS' understanding of integrated theology, encompassing the whole theology endeavour and process.

Section 7 presents my reflection on the integrated method when applied to the topic of child protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba.

3. Establishing the Biblical Theology Perspective on Child Protection

3.1 Defining the biblical theology perspective in integrated theology

Biblical theology involves the processes that aim at the collection of biblical texts on some topic in order to understand it from the perspective of a book of the bible, a corpus, a whole testament or the canon and as it was meant for its original hearers in their own context (Smith 2013: 137). As noted by Osborne (2006) and Smith (2013: 137), biblical theology is a step beyond biblical exegesis. However, Smith argues that biblical theology builds on biblical exegesis. But in exegesis of a text the exegete also moves into the arena of biblical theology to aid the interpretive process.

Biblical exegesis is a careful analysis of a text, using sound hermeneutical principles to determine the author's originally intended meaning (Fee and Stuart 1993:1; Fee 2001:139). It also thus seeks to answer the question, "How did the original audience understand the message in its context?" Whilst biblical exegesis focuses on a single text or passage, biblical theology examines a number of related texts to understand their teachings. This means biblical theology flows naturally from biblical exegesis (Smith 2013:37; Hasel 1984:26).

Osborne (2006:347) explains that biblical theology involves an in-depth analysis of theological themes by a biblical author or through a book in order to unite those themes of the Bible. In the same vein, biblical theology is often described as a journey that primarily focuses on the entire theological message of the Bible. As such, this discipline attempts to study the parts of Scripture in relation to the whole Bible (Rosner's 2001:4).

The importance of the relationship between biblical theology and systematic theology cannot be overemphasized. As biblical exegesis is the foundation for biblical theology, so biblical theology is the major building block of systematic theology. Osborne (2006: 374) argues that the result of biblical theology is systematic theology (see below sub-section 5.1). Put briefly, systematic theology is concerned to grasp and defend God's will in all situations of our lives. Biblical theology is essential to systematic theology for evangelicals as they hold Scripture to be the final authority for life and godliness. Since biblical theology traces the progressive revelation of God's truth with regards to a topic across the Bible, it provides the main ingredients for the formulation of God's purpose and will for our contemporary context (Smith 2013:145).

There are diverse arguments with regards to the genesis of biblical theology. Whilst some scholars believe the discipline is as old as the Bible itself (Scobie 2000:11), others scholars argue that the origin can be traced to the fraternity of biblical theologians in the Protestant Reformation (Carson 2014). In the latter part of the 20th century several scholars focused on the diversity within the Bible, and consequently spoke of Old Testament and New Testament theologies. However, in recent times, attempts have been made to focus on diverse approaches to arrive at unifying themes across the canon (Scobie 2000:15-16).

There are several methods of doing biblical theology. Osborne (2006), as cited in Smith (2013:49), highlights approaches such as analytical/descriptive, synthetic, Christological, and narrative. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses. From the on-going discourse, I conclude that biblical theology is the process of obtaining the meaning of various biblical texts in order to trace themes with the goal of contributing to the entire process of understanding the Bible's metanarrative or plot-line.

My approach to biblical theology will incorporate the Christological paradigm. This approach is based on the understanding that the whole Bible is ultimately centred in the Christ event. The centrality of Christ, therefore, is taken as the interpretative key to the Scriptures (Smith 2012:164). This also stems from Christ providing a complete revelation of God (Heb.1:3), which makes the revelation through him the interpretative principle to the whole Bible. This supports the promise-fulfilment

approach to the two Testaments. This approach is based on the fact that redemption was promised by God to Israel and all of humankind in the OT and is provided by Christ as recorded in the NT (Smith 2013:140-141). The OT thus provides the foundation for understanding the revelatory and redemptive work of Christ, but the latter impacts the interpretation of the OT. This model of biblical theology argues that the OT conveys a complete picture of Christ but in different anticipatory, typological and prophetic ways.

Peppler's (2012:128-129) approach to biblical theology is a form of the Christological one. He calls it the Christocentric principle. He argues that we can know God's will, nature, values and priorities by studying the words and works of Jesus. This is because Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God. From this he argues that "all Scripture should be interpreted primarily from the perspective of what he taught, modelled, or revealed to us concerning the nature and character of God" (p. 134).

However, Peppler's Christocentric approach does not imply that the Gospels are superior to the rest of the books of the Bible. It does recognize the equal importance of all the sixty-six books of the Bible; but it understands that the entire Bible points to the centrality of Christ and the Bible must be seen from this perspective. Jesus is seen as the great exegete of God's eternal purposes and the guarantee of their full fulfilment and thus the great unifying theme of all Scripture.

It can, therefore, be noted that the Christological approach to biblical theology is directly related to the mission of God to restore all humanity and his world after the fall to himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. This implies that the Great Commission Jesus gave his Church should be another lens through which all theological discourse should be filtered. Thus, I support the Christocentric-missional lenses for obtaining a comprehensive and unified biblical theology.

3.2 Methods used in establishing the biblical theology perspective on child protection

In sub-section 3.1 several approaches to doing biblical theology were discussed; but especially the one I espouse. Using the Christological and Christocentric approaches, the study of my topic began with the Gospels to gather what Christ said or did concerning it. Though this was biographical, it focused mostly on his ministry

and teachings with regards to protecting the vulnerable. The critical role of Christ as shepherd was, thus, first gleaned from the four Evangelists' writings.

Then I turned my attention to the OT to investigate reasons behind what Christ taught and practiced. The accounts of the OT on the shepherding role were carefully examined, with special focus on Psalm 23, to discover the rationale behind what Christ did and taught with regards to the role of the shepherd in caring for and protecting the vulnerable. Understanding the role of Jesus Christ as shepherd can be helped by studying how God shepherded Israel, especially her vulnerable and needy.

I argued that the people of Israel came from a nomadic background and understood the concept of shepherding (Ugwu and Okwor 2013: 51; Okweeze 2001:29). As a result, the OT provided more insights into what it meant for Christ's ministry as shepherd; and thus what our ministry as followers of Christ in this area should be, especially the churches' leaders/pastors. It will be noted that one of the reasons for Christ coming as the true shepherd was the failure of Israel's shepherds to follow God's heart and example, resulting in the straying of his people (Eze 34:1-15). This implies that there is little to learn about the shepherding role from most of the kings and many prophets of Israel as compared to God's shepherding heart and ministry showcased by Christ (Smith 2013:57; Köstenberger 2007: 461-467; Bruce 1990:388).

Finally, the rest of the NT was surveyed to gather how the early Christians interpreted and applied what Christ said and modelled. This specifically examined the apostles' and the early Christian's beliefs and practices with regards to protection of vulnerable children.

The above three separate phases to my biblical theology methodology were aimed at gaining a biblical theology of caring for children. My integrated master's programme necessitated investigation into four biblical perspectives on my topic. This challenging task and the extent of each of the three phases in my biblical theology approach to my topic meant the exegetical element had to be limited. My approach to the exegetical process for the unlocking the meaning of individual texts was influenced by key principles of interpretation recommended by Dumwright and Osborne (2009). This methodology of interpretation places emphasis on the

language used in the text. The ability and need to explain the words and terms are vital in discovering the meaning of a text. This principle suggests that since the Bible is recorded in human language, it requires attention to aspects of language such as meaning of words, contextual analysis, literary types and forms, historical analogy, and syntactical distinctiveness (Kein, Blomberg and Humbard Jr 1993:15).

The exegetical procedure outlined by Stuart (1992:682-688) also impacted my exegetical methodology. This is because it is comprehensive in nature as it examines the passage from several angles and seeks to provide answers to the several questions posed to the text during exegesis.

Additionally, the presupposition I brought to the interpretation was that the Bible contains divinely revealed truth and the writers were inspired of God to write the Scriptures. Firstly, this understanding recognizes the role of the Holy Spirit as the divine author and illuminator of God's word and thus the importance of reliance on the Holy Spirit throughout all the steps of exegesis. Secondly, this presupposition points to the importance of language since the Holy Spirit influenced the human authors to write in human language.

I focused my most extensive exegetical activity on interpreting Psalm 23:1. This stemmed from the belief that in this Psalm the qualities of our Lord as protective, nurturing, and healing caregiver shine forth most clearly. This Scripture reflects the way the Lord cares for his people. It, therefore, serves as a pattern and framework for the church, whose biblical mandate includes instituting pastoral measures to ensure children are not harmed but nurtured (see section 3.3).

Exegesis starts with translating the text from its original language into the modern language. Ideally, knowledge of biblical Hebrew and Greek are required. Where this is not possessed, comparison of different translations is vital. The translation of Psalm 23:1a in the Latin Vulgate is "the Lord directs me." However, the Septuagint (LXX) and Masoretic texts read "the *Lord is my shepherd*," which is consistent with the translation in the majority of English Bible versions (NLT, TNIV, NIV, GNB, NRSV, NET, ESV, KJV, NASB, NAB, and REB).

The attempt to discern the context of the passage is also important in the exegetical process. The historical backgrounds, the geographical information, events preceding

the passage, the social setting, as well as the date, were explored to gather adequate knowledge about the audience. All this throws light on the meaning and purpose of the passage

Additionally, the genre was identified. Stuart (1992: 682-688) points out that the general and the specific genre provides information concerning the social setting. The form of Psalm 23 was also examined and it was noted that it was a hymn of thanksgiving and expression of satisfaction with God's care and protection. Similarly, careful examination of the structure of the Psalm was conducted to pay special attention to how the parts relate to the whole and vice versa. This helps suggest the logical flow of the passage which aids understanding.

Furthermore, grammatical and lexical analysis was conducted. Thus the words and terms used in the passage were carefully examined to ensure accurate interpretation. Attention was also paid to the meaning of the words in the present context (Rhodes and Anthony 2014). But the analysis of the passage in relation to the entire Bible was also undertaken. This was done to correlate the function of the passage to the other Psalms, the OT, and teachings of the Bible as a whole.

In addition to the biblical context, an attempt was made to determine the contribution of the passage to the revealed truth about God. This step sought to establish as accurately as possible the contribution of the passage to broader theological concepts (Stuart 1992:682-688).

Finally, the exegetical process ends with application of the teachings of the passage to the Christian life. Here too I relied heavily through prayer upon the Holy Spirit to isolate clear steps that can be taken to respond appropriately to the truth in the text. Also, I explored effective ways I can teach the passage to other Christians so that they can model it in their Christian lives.

3.3 The findings of the biblical theology perspective on child protection

As noted above, the topic of child protection due to limited relevant texts was investigated under the umbrella of the more widespread shepherding paradigm in the canon. The concept of a shepherd is a common imagery in the Bible. A shepherd refers to a person who knows, feeds, seeks, rules and safeguards the flock (Ugwu

and Okwor 2013:50; Taylor 1983:7). It also refers to the one who “exercises pastoral functions to the people on behalf of God” (Stott 1992:273).

Beginning with the gospels, it was observed that Christ described himself as the good shepherd (Jn 10:11,14). In John 10:10-11 Jesus sees himself as the good shepherd in contrast to the malevolent thief. During the time of Jesus, sheep were often considered weak, defenceless, and unable to fend for themselves and therefore totally dependent on the shepherd. They were prone to wandering, and were exposed to dangers such as heavy rainfalls, robbers, rushing water from valleys, attacks by wolves, snow in the winter, and scorching sand during summer. Consequently, shepherds continually kept watch over them (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998:1047; Hale and Thorson 1996:405). Even in the night, the good shepherd still kept watch over the sheepfold (Lk 2:8), making sure that the flock was not attacked by wild animals. This implied he endured uncomfortable conditions and even the possibility of losing his life in ensuring the wellbeing of the sheep. This could partly explain the rationale for Jesus stating that the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

In reaffirming himself as the “good shepherd,” Jesus stresses his intimate relationship between himself and his sheep (Jn 10:14). It portrays that his quality of shepherding can be trusted and that he understands the needs of those placed under his care and works effortlessly to meet them. This description of Jesus could also be considered as a pledge and promise of commitment to faithfully advancing the welfare of the sheep and protecting them, even being prepared to sacrifice his life to save the sheep unlike the hireling (10:12-13) (MacDonald (1995:1526). The adjective “good” also connotes that Jesus was a noble or an ideal shepherd; in fact, the perfect shepherd and the model to be followed by other shepherds (p. 1526).

The shepherding ministry of Jesus was not only focused on adults, but also the vulnerable, including children. Christ displayed special attention to children, even in his busy, tight schedules. For instance, he entreated that we welcome, receive and accept children in his name (Mt 18:5). This implies that he wants us to follow his example of love for, and care and protection of, children. In addition, Christ gave a charge to us to ensure that not one child is harmed (Mt 18:6; Mk 9:42). This implies

no one is to place an obstacle to their faith, piety or happiness (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998:928; MacDonald 1995:1272)

The shepherding ministry of Jesus to children is also seen in his great displeasure at his disciples rebuking the mothers for bringing their children to him to be prayed for and blessed (Mk 10:13-14; Mt 19:13-15; Lk 18: 15-16). This attitude of discrimination towards children was to immediately stop (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998:967). It is important to note that Christ did not tolerate any form of abuse to children, and made conscious efforts to prevent such abuses. Walvoord and Zuck (1983:150) argue that these actions of Christ at the instances of ill treatment of children are also to set the pattern and pace for his followers.

It is obvious that Christ desires that his disciples will be good shepherds of his people, including the children. This can also be seen from the worry, concern and compassion he showed when seeing God's people without a good shepherd (Mt 9:36). Again, these attitudes were to be reflected in his disciples (Mt 9:37-38). The message from the Gospels is that God's sheep will face thieves and wolves and need good shepherds in the tradition of Christ. Children would be the most vulnerable and in need of pastoral training and care.

My investigation of the OT revealed God as a good shepherd with regards to Israel (Gn 49:24; Num 27:17; Ps 28:9, 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; Isa 44:1; Mic 7:14; Jer 17:16). This relationship of God to his chosen people is most vividly revealed in his covenant with them. He demonstrated his love, protection and deliverance from the enemy. For instance, Jacob near the end of his life declared that God had been his shepherd all his life (Gen 48:15). David rejoiced that God was his loving, caring and protecting shepherd and therefore he lacked nothing (Ps 23). David's brave role protecting his father's flocks from danger (1 Sam 17:34-36) positioned him to understand the shepherding role of God in his life (Craven and Harrelson 2003:772).

My exegetical findings with regards to Psalm 23:1 indicate that David expressed trust and confidence in, and thanksgiving to God, as a result of his experience of God's shepherding role. God was encountered as his protector, carer, guide, and provider. Psalm 23 is all about God's providential care, guidance and protection throughout the vicissitudes of life and its joyful celebration in the community of God's people. However, it also places a responsibility on us towards the weak, needy and helpless

among us (Craigie 1983:204). The qualities of a caregiver (shepherd) espoused in Psalm 23 provide adequate guidance and motivation for the church to take up the shepherding role towards the weak and helpless.

This shepherding nature of God with reference to his people implied that they were to be competently and with integrity shepherded by their leaders (for example consider King David's commission in 2 Sam 5:2, 1 Chron 11:2 and Ps 78:70-72). Consequently, God was displeased and judgmental when Israel's leaders were uncaring and predatory shepherds (Ez 34:2,11) (Allen 1990:158).

The portrait of God in the OT as the shepherd of his people throws light on why Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, manifested the supreme qualities of a good shepherd. The failing of the OT shepherds and God's shepherding attributes unsurprisingly result in messianic promises of a Messiah who would fulfil God's heart for the faultless caring of his people. In Zachariah 13:7 Christ was prophesied as the good shepherd who was struck down (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998:880). This means that the true shepherd will so protect his sheep that to attack them one needs to first strike the faithfully guarding shepherd. This supports God's promise to raise up a shepherd, one good and gentle, from the house of David who would gather and keep the flock close to him and pasture them (Isa 40:11; Ez 37:24; 34:23). Smith (2013: 56) argues that Psalms 23 and 78 and many other Psalms connect the shepherding theme in David with Christ.

The OT also chronicled that God is primarily concerned about the poor and needy. God always defends the weak, the poor and the needy, especially children (Zuck 1996). His people were admonished to be advocates of, and also defenders of, the rights of the poor, defenceless, and vulnerable, including the fatherless and widows (Prov 31:8-9; Ps 82:3-4; Job 29:12; Lam 2:11,19). God's anger against oppression and injustice towards the vulnerable was unmistakably revealed through the prophets (Isa 1:17; Jer 22:3).

The OT is clear about the shepherding heart of God and his desire for this to be a marked attribute and praxis of leaders and parents in Israel. Their falling short of God's ideals in this regard prepared the way for the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. He provides the perfect example of the shepherd's role. After his departure back to the Father did he expect his followers to learn from the shortcomings of the OT leaders

and embrace the vision of his shepherding ministry? I turn now to the results of my investigation of the shepherding theme in the rest of the NT to answer this question.

The apostles walked with Christ. This experience of his deeds and teaching led them to the overwhelming conclusion that he fulfilled the shepherd's calling unlike the OT leaders and even surpassed them all (O'Brien 2010:535). He is referred to as the "*chief shepherd*" (1 Pt 5:4) and the "*great shepherd of the sheep*" (Hebr 13:20). It is said that the description of Jesus as the chief shepherd is a term coined by the apostle to describe the honour attributed to Christ as the supremely qualified and competent shepherd who cannot be ranked with anyone (Gaeblein 1994:155)

In the spirit of Jesus, James points out that caring for orphans and widows in their suffering is true religion (Ja 1:27a). It could be said that the early Christians understood that one critical aspect of pure worship is to visit the afflicted and poor and minister to their needs. It was a normal practice of the people of God (Israelites) to care for, and to protect, the needy among their ranks as revealed in the book of Tobit. Consequently, as part of the religious service, every three years the tithes were given to the strangers, needy and fatherless among them. This could partly be the reason for calling the attention of the early Christians to help the needy, especially the afflicted (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998:1359).

The NT Christians manifested love, care and protection among themselves. For instance, Paul when describing his ministry among the Thessalonians stated, "*but we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her own children*" (1 Thes 2:7, ESV). This depicts the level of the apostle's love for, and care of, the flock. It could be likened to how the hen surrounds her chicks, warming them in her bosom, and making sure they were adequately fed, and portrays the kind of affection a mother will show to the child at her breast (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998:1281).

There are not many direct references to the measures the early Christians put in place to protect and nurture children. Such treatment can be deduced, though, from the family and community settings in which the activities of the local church were conducted. The early Christians operated family or house-based churches. Children were active partners in their ministry activities (Acts 12:13; 21:5). Paul's letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches address parent-child relationships (Eph 6:1-4;

Col 3:20-22). Parents are admonished to train their children with the kind of instructions that would involve nurturing in the faith and reflecting Christ's shepherding heart and praxis. There was to be firm, loving guidance, but not slavery of children or excessive punishment, so that the children did not become resentful and rebellious (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998:1275). This loving parenting ensures that children are not abused or neglected by their parents. In addition, such parenthood is more likely to produce strong children able to handle life's problems, like abuses. In short, the early Christians demonstrated love, care and protection for the weak and vulnerable, including children.

Section 3 has demonstrated that the canon presents one clear biblical theology for caring for children. It is rooted, firstly, in the shepherd heart of God through Israel's history. This was noted in God's care for Israel and disappointment in her unfaithful and corrupt shepherds (leaders) and his judgment on them. Secondly, it flowed from the prediction of a coming messiah-shepherd, who would perfectly model God's love and care for his people, including the children, and who fulfilled this prophecy. Thirdly, the rest of the NT reinforces the need for the churches and the children to be shepherded in the tradition of the "good shepherd." In the church the vulnerable are to be protected, nurtured and have their needs supplied.

My integrated master's programme was intended to apply the integrated approach, firstly, to gaining a faithful biblical picture of what child protection in the Church of Pentecost, Winneba, would involve; and, secondly, how to strategically bring this about. As already noted, the integrated methodology builds on the basis that by correlating the different biblical and extra-biblical perspectives on a topic, a more faithful understanding of God's will is likely to result. The biblical perspective has certainly contributed a powerful case for the care, nurturing and protection of children. For Christian parents the nurturing will include Christian education, evangelism and discipleship.

4. Establishing the Historical Theology Perspective on Child Protection

4.1 Defining the historical theology perspective in integrated theology

Historical theology is a critical aspect of our theological enquiry. It is primarily concerned with the way and manner in which our forebears have interpreted and applied the will of God in their context. According to Pelikan (1971: xii), historical theology is the “genetic study of Christian faith and doctrine”. This means it is important to recognize that many of the beliefs and practices in our Christian community today are only properly understood when we have adequate understanding of how they evolved (Lane 2006:1; Ratnapalan 2012:15). Allison (2011:30-31) notes this point when he shows how historical theology makes it possible for churches to appreciate how their beliefs and practices have evolved across different time periods to the current state, consequently revealing the continuity as well as the influence of centuries and cultures on those beliefs and practices. Thus the past is important for our quest to understand the present and shape the future.

The historical perspective conveys the idea that God has revealed the meaning of his truth not only to us in the present era, but also to our fathers who have gone before us. Consequently, in our attempt to discern the will of God and restate its implication for the contemporary society, it is important to survey what our fathers believed and practised.

Historical theology like any other discipline evolved through different stages. According to Gunton (2001:6), the development of the discipline has its roots in the Bible itself. That is to say, Scripture is about God and therefore it is theology, but theology applied to different periods and contexts of divine revelation. Bromiley (1978:27) observes that historical theology is not synonymous with history or history of theology, but it is theology in its own right and by all standards. Smith (2013:11) opines that theology entails discerning the will of God and restating it to convey the contemporary implication of what is written in Scripture. This is the heart of post-canonical historical theology. Consequently, there have been some significant changes in the development process of restating the implications of Scripture to the Church and Christian living over time.

I agree with Smith's observation that historical perspective implies our theological predecessors have some lessons to teach us regarding discovering God's will for today as we engage in theological discourse (2013:143). Over the years historical theology has helped churches to gradually attain and practice sound doctrine.

I turn now to the range of methods used in the historical theology discipline. I end with the method I used.

4.2 Methods used in establishing the historical theology perspective on child protection

Several approaches have been espoused for surveying the past in order to grasp what beliefs were held and practised by our forebears. According to Smith (2013:143), the past can be studied in three main ways: the chronological, confessional and the case study. The chronological approach focuses on surveying the ideas of significant scholars of the past concerning a particular topic. This method usually organizes the significant theological ideas in the different periods as well as analysing their development across history. Allison (2011:30-31) refers to this method as the diachronic approach because it examines the development of Christian thought with regards to doctrines across the entire history of the Church.

Another approach is the confessional method. With this approach the researcher focuses the study on various traditions of theological thought over time. It traces the ideas and history of traditions *inter alia* of the Catholics, the Baptists, the Pentecostals, Charismatics and other traditions. Finally, the case study is also used (Smith 2013:144). This method is often a snapshot approach, which is usually narrowed but very detailed. Clearly a number of case studies throughout Church history would be necessary.

On the other hand, Bromiley (1978: xxii) proposes four approaches. The first two focus on the survey of everything and everybody in the past. Whilst one approach uses a snapshot survey, the other method entails a comprehensive survey. The third approach groups all data gathered across a historical period in order to propose certain theories to account for the available information. The fourth method provides explanation for what is said across the historical period; this helps to understand the influences on what is believed and practiced during the period.

I chose the chronological method, which focuses on surveying the views of significant scholars of the past concerning a particular topic. This implies that the journey begins with the fathers and moves through the major periods in theological history. This method usually organizes the significant theological ideas from one period to another. This survey is broad in the sense that it takes into account all the major periods in theological history. It is also extensive because of its careful analysis of the development of theological thoughts during specific periods. This method is suitable for a study in which the researcher is interested in obtaining adequate insight on a particular topic from all significant scholars across theological periods (Smith 2013:143-144). This approach, however, is laborious and time consuming.

Sub-section 4.3 presents the results of applying my historical theology approach to child care and protection across the major periods in Church history.

4.3 Findings of the historical theology perspective on child protection

The first period in Church history is that of *the apostolic fathers* covering the late first century and the second century. The Church in this era found herself in the world of Hellenistic culture. In this culture, family life was an essential part and children were considered a blessing. Children, especially male children, were needed to inherit properties and continue the paternal line (Strange 1996:157). On the other hand, the rate of poverty and the extent of dowering of daughters resulted in the situation where children were not always considered a blessing.

So though large families were cherished, the result was that many children were rendered homeless. The Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 744 contains evidence of female child exposure (Aloisi 2011:1). In a response to these large numbers of homeless children and babies, adoption and orphan care became an essential practice (Uhlhorn 2010:186; Klaus 1997:15-16). However, adoption was hindered due to the fact that for a child to be adopted the consent of the father was required. Consequently many more were left on the streets without homes.

There is adequate evidence that the post-apostolic Church, especially its leaders, was actively involved in the care of orphans and adoption of homeless children (Aloisi 2011: 2). Children who were exposed in the ancient Greek world usually met

death, or slavery or prostitution or Christian adoption. So it was not uncommon to find children abandoned in places where adults would locate them and provide them with housing and care.

In a letter to the church at Smyrna around 110, Ignatius wrote the following: “now note well those who hold heretical opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ that came to us; note how contrary they are to the mind of God. They have no concern for love, none for the widow, none for the orphan, none for the oppressed, none for the prisoner or the one released, none for the hungry or thirsty” (cited in Aloisi 2011:2). This is an indication that the Church fathers believed that Christians should take action to address those suffering in society. Today, the most vulnerable, needy and hurting group in our societies are children (Brewster 2011:3).

In the writing of Justin Martyr (c. 100–165) it is noted that after the early Church observed the Lord’s Supper, the rich donated generously to the church. The money collected was given to the bishop for “care of the orphans and widows, and all who are in need” (cited in Aloisi 2011: 2). It can be observed from this that the post-apostolic Church had a regular practice of gathering resources to care for the children in need, and this practice significantly was associated with a very important ordinance of the Church (the Lord’s Supper).

The leaders of the early Church were commanded to “show compassion to all, visiting the sick, and not neglecting widows and orphans”(Polycarp c. A.D. 110 cited in Aloisi 2011:2). The charge to the leaders not to neglect orphans was critical since the Church found itself in a culture that was replete with orphans and homeless children.

The believers were described by Aristides about A.D. 125 as people who love one another, and “deliver the orphan from him who treats him harshly” (cited in Aloisi 2011:2). This description of the people of God in the early Church again indicates their care of orphans, including by adoption. As observed by Brewster (2011:4) and Miles and Wright (2003: xv), the effort of believers to ensure that children are protected from harm is a Christian mandate.

According to the Epistle of Barnabas written between A.D 100 and 130, those who don’t know the truth and persecute the good are those who ignore the orphans; they

do not work towards relieving the oppressed as observed (Aloisi (2011:2). Child protection was considered a sign of righteousness and knowledge of the truth.

Another important document called “Didascalia Apostolorum,” contains criteria for choosing presbyters. It states that one of the requirements is that the person should be considered a “father to orphans”; also that for those considered for the office of the bishop, the person should be “a lover of orphans” (Aloisi 2011: 2). Similarly it was observed that some of the post-Constantine burial inscriptions contained information about church leaders who were actively involved in the care of orphans and children that were exposed (Cobern 1917:427).

During the fourth century, the ‘Apostolic Constitutions’ recount that Christian children who became orphans should be adopted by one of the believers (Aloisi 2011: 2-3). It noted that adoption of and caring for vulnerable children were the practices and tradition of the post-apostolic Church. Uhlhorn (2010:186) records that during this era Christians took care of vulnerable children and raised them for the purpose of achieving an honourable life, while unbelievers also took vulnerable children but raised them for the purposes of prostitution and to become warriors.

The next period is *the Middle Ages*. This era continued with intentional efforts to care for vulnerable children. Miller (2003:174-175) observes that Christians established many health facilities to provide care for orphans and widows. These facilities were spread across both east and west. Some of them later on specialized in the care of orphans and some also became orphanages. In addition, the Christian churches supported monastic schools that took care of children who were neglected. It was reported during the eighth century that the emperor Leo III required that the bishops looked after of all the children in their locality that were neglected (Miller 2003:127). Also, Mckena (n.d) reports that the monasteries raised large number of orphans, and one such orphan became the bishop of Rome, namely, Pope Sergius II, in the ninth century.

The *Reformation period* was characterised by paradigm shifts in the social context. This was due to wars that created unstable social structures, consequently putting more children at risk (Klaus 1997:15). During this era there were still indicators of efforts by the Christian Church to provide care and protection for children. Martin Luther (1483–1546) maintained that although God gave children to their parents to

educate and protect them, Christians have a responsibility to care for children at risk (Elmer 1975:107). Luther argued that personal faith in Christ Jesus puts an obligation on one to serve one's neighbour, especially those at risk in order to maintain social stability. Aloisi (2011:3) notes Luther's belief about and practice of caring for vulnerable children. For example, he adopted four children who had lost their mother and later adopted seven other children of his relatives who lost their lives (Bainton 1971:30).

John Calvin (1509–1564) was reported to have shown commitment to caring for neglected children. It was reported that he took the responsibility to provide care and protection to several children who became fatherless due to a tragedy (Stauffer 1971:85).

Another significant person that contributed to the role of the Church in caring for vulnerable children was Augustus Francke. The prolonged war, which ended in 1648, rendered large numbers of poor and marginalized children as a result of the destruction of social structures like the family (Klaus 1997:15). Francke believed that it was the responsibility of the Church to care for all the poor and exploited children. He argued that caring for vulnerable children is a mark of godly people. Consequently, he rallied his church to build a home for marginalized children. He believed that the prayers of the poor fatherless children, who are being cared for by the church, serves as a fortress and wall that defend the land from invasion by adversaries (Eby 1952:247).

The *eighteenth century and beyond* also saw the Church's involvement in the care of vulnerable children. George Whitefield (1714–1770), a very famous evangelist of the Great Awakening, took in several homeless boys for care, protection and training in the fear of God. It was reported that during his years of ministry, he concluded every sermon by appealing for funding to take children in his home called the 'House of Mercy' (Aloisi 2011:4-5). Further, Whitefield wrote in his journal that some of the children have been called of God, and are receiving effective training in relation to the call (Whitefield 1986:404).

Another prominent Christian, George Müller (1805–1898), established five houses to take care of children at risk after his conversion to Christianity. He believed that he could support these children through total reliance on God in prayer. In all, about ten

thousand children were housed and cared for over a period close to sixty years (Aloisi 2011:5).

Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) challenged his congregation to do something for the Lord in 1886. The entire congregation supported the idea and homes were established by the Metropolitan Tabernacle to care for homeless children (Dallimore 1985:126). Whenever Spurgeon visited the homes the children would welcome him with resounding noise and form a crowd around him as a way of expressing their joy. Another important feature was that he organized the children in smaller family units with caregivers assigned. In addition, the spiritual development of the children was paramount. For instance, there were Bible quotations written over the beds, and all the children joined Sunday worship services in the Metropolitan Tabernacle as well other churches in the communities (Drummond 1992:427). Spurgeon also challenged the opponents of the gospel of their inability to institute programmes that help the poor; and pointed non-Christians to the several programs by the evangelical Christian communities to help the vulnerable in society (Dallimore 1985:130).

In the Church history survey in sub-section 4.3 it has been shown that the vulnerability of children in societies has never been uncommon. Right from the era of the post-apostolic Church to date, huge numbers of children have been neglected and been rendered homeless. As a result, Christians have made conscious efforts to respond to the plight of vulnerable children. This is to ensure that children grow to become mature and fulfilled Christian adults (Vinay 1997:27). During the twentieth century and beyond there has been argument about whether child protection is the function for the state (central government) or the Church.

This section has demonstrated that during the Church age, care and protection of vulnerable children have been promoted by many of the Church's leaders. They clearly interpreted Scripture to support a theology of children that saw them as precious in God's sight and worthy of being nurtured in a loving safe environment to become mature Christians and productive and valuable members of society. This historical theology concerning children, and especially those at risk, supports the biblical theology presented in sub-section 3.3 and thus strengthens the case made in sub-section 3.3.

I turn now to the results of exploring a systematic theology on child care.

5. Establishing the Systematic Theology Perspective on Child Protection

5.1 Defining the systematic theology perspective in integrated theology

Systematic theology entails what the whole Bible teaches about a specific topic. According to Pepler (2010:1), systematic theology seeks to organize the Christian beliefs into an orderly, rational and coherent fashion. The task of the systematic theologian then is to engage all the pieces of truth presented across the entire Bible in an organized and logical manner (Enns 1989: 648). Systematic theology thus results in the presentation of Christian doctrines, *inter alia*, of the Bible, of God, of man, of salvation, of the person of the Holy Spirit. It is an attempt to establish timeless truths or propositions. Consequently, some scholars refer to this discipline as Christian theology (Erikson 1998: 62) and others as dogmatic theology or dogmatics (Hjort 2003:5; Hasel 1984:115).

Systematic theology also helps in the application of biblical teaching to our contemporary Christian life and ministry context. It does this by restating the doctrines to bring out their relevance to the current situation. This is reflected in Gruden's (1994:21) and Smith's (2013:47) understanding of the discipline.

Some systematic theologians also engage other disciplines such as the sciences, philosophy, history, and apologetics. They help in understanding what is already revealed in Scripture (Smith 2013:47; Oliver 2010:464; Hasel 1984:127). Further, as Erickson (1998:62) has noted, this also helps in applying Scripture in contexts heavily impacted by the cultural and other aspects of society, especially where technological changes are going through exponential growth. Since systematic theology concerns itself with the answers the whole Bible provides with regards to a topic, Scripture becomes the chief and controlling source of systematic theology.

5.2 Methods used in establishing the systematic theology perspective on child protection

After careful engagement and analysis with various definitions of doing systematic theology, I found affinity with the models presented by Osborne (2006) and Lewis and Demarest (1996) for conducting systematic theology. My approach, therefore, is a synthesis of these two models. My first step is stating the problem and clearly

enunciating my pre-understanding. The latter is my current belief system or that of my faith community regarding the issue or problem I am studying. This could cloud my objectivity and thus affect my conclusions. I needed an honest appraisal and testing of my pre-suppositions as this is vital if one's objectivity is to be maximized.

The next step is conducting a survey of how past and present scholars have grappled with the matter. Lewis and Demarest (1996:38) argue that if we objectively and adequately review the interpretation and contextualization of theologians who have gone before us, it helps us understand our own predispositions. This also informs and shapes our own interpretation as well as the restating of the implication of the topic or issue for our own context. This role of historical theology was discussed in section 4.

Then comes the step of establishing the biblical perspective. This was discussed in section 3. The following step is formulating a theological model for our context. That is the statement of our solutions to the problem or practical requirements in a specific situation. According to Lewis and Demarest (1996:26), this theological model is based on the relevant data and should be without contradictions of other biblical teachings. The next step is to engage the developed model with other competing models. This helps to refine our proposed solutions to accept only those that are found to be backed by adequate evidence and non-contradictory (Lewis and Demarest 1996:25). This is also where extra-biblical material comes into play. This step also involves defending my model against alternative hypotheses and proposed solutions.

The final step is the application of the model with its approach and solutions to Christian life and ministry. This focuses on how individual Christians or churches can actually and effectively translate the solutions into daily actions and practices that most faithfully reflect God's will and purposes.

In applying this six step methodology it needs to be noted that a systematic study does not always lend itself to the steps being handled separately. Sometimes the nature of the topic requires overlap.

5.3 Findings of the systematic theology perspective on child protection

The problem I am concerned with is child abuse and neglect and the need for their protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba Municipality and more widely in this municipality. Scripture provides a mandate to train children in the way of the Lord (Prov 22:6). Further, that the great commission to disciple all nations (Mt 28:18-20) includes reaching children who are precious in God's sight (Mt 18:12-14). God wanting all people to come to the knowledge of him and grow in him (1 Tim 2:4) surely includes children. In addition, I hold strongly to Jesus' command that his disciples welcome children in his name and ensure that no child is harmed (Mt 18:5-6).

My preunderstanding in this matter was, therefore, that the Church needs to be committed to the wellbeing of children and thus ensure their protection from all forms of danger and injury that would jeopardize their security and all-round development. Nelson Mandela had a special place for children in his heart and appreciated the importance of treating them well. He (1995) understandably came to the conclusion that "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

My concern about the problem of many children not being protected from abuse is supported indirectly by research. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2014), there are no adequate data on the extent of the problem in spite of recent national surveys in several low- and middle-income countries. However, WHO noted that global research estimates 20% of women and 5–10% of men reported sexual abuse as children, while 23% of people reported being physically abused as children. In addition, many children experience emotional abuse (sometimes referred to as psychological abuse) and neglect. Weaver (1992:218) argues that it is where families and communities are in crisis that child protection involves interventions in these contexts.

Research in the social sciences posits that the value of children to a society cannot be overemphasized. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2017), investing in children is first of all a moral imperative. It has several practical benefits since many children will in the future be needed to play key leadership roles in all the social institutions, *inter alia*, the

economy, government, business, schools and religious institutions. UNICEF's position, the unmistakable lack of protection of many children from abuse, together with my biblical convictions, fully persuaded me that it was imperative to investigate what role the Church of Pentecost in Winneba can and should play in protecting children.

My systematic method then needed to consider how the Church throughout history approached the protection of children (this was already done and is provided in section 4). Apart from the sad examples of child abuse and lack of protection in history, it was observed that the Church was replete with concrete measures by many believers that ensured children were not disparaged, maltreated and exploited; further, that it understood Scripture to place a high priority on child care, and intervention and remedial action for children who had experienced neglect and abuse. Martin Luther (1483–1546) maintained that ones' personal faith in Christ Jesus puts an obligation on him/her to serve his neighbour, especially, those at risk in order to maintain social stability (Elmer 1975:107).

The biblical theology perspective on children was the next part of my systematic theology approach (this was already done and is provided in section 3. It can be captured in the following points:

1. God is a good shepherd and sets the caring standards for church leaders and Christian parents.
2. God is concerned to protect the vulnerable, weak, marginalised and poor in society (orphans being a prime example).
3. God places the responsibility on his people to protect children.
4. Children are precious in the sight of God (this is largely the reasons for points 1 to 3 and 5).
5. God's universal salvific plan includes children.

All elements throw light on how God views children and thus reinforce each other. This means that the matter must not be simply approached by teaching that it is God's will to protect children. The other elements are also needed as they strengthen this point and provide powerful motivation for fulfilling God's will for children. Thus together these truths constitute the basis for a theological model for ministry to children, including their protection.

A most powerful picture of the quality of care God requires is demonstrated in the example of God portrayed as a good shepherd. The good shepherd laid down his life to ensure that his flock received the greatest love, care and protection. This metaphor cannot, of course, hope to exhaust the meaning of God and his Son as chief shepherds. The ministry of Jesus – its supreme cost and its healing, edifying and transforming impact and glorious future goals for his people (especially the marginalized and poor) – takes God's shepherding ministry to a greater level. The Church thus has no excuse when it comes to knowing the quality of child ministry that God requires. There can, therefore, be no doubt that he wants the Church to intervene in one of society's most disturbing ills, namely, the inexcusable and shameful abuse of children. God's attributes of mercy, love and grace must imply that child protection is a Christian mandate.

The biblical theology perspective relating to child care means that protecting children should be one of the top priorities of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba municipality. Protection of children from abuse should not only have a negative dimension of preventing physical and psychological harm, but also the positive dimension of nurturing, including spiritual education where the need for conversion is also made clear.

The next phase in my systematic theology approach is formulating a model of child care for the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba municipality. Firstly, it needs a major biblical-theological teaching component adapted to the spiritual and intellectual levels of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba municipality. Secondly, a second component will be necessary that gives information and statistics about child abuse and neglect worldwide, but especially in the Winneba municipality and efforts to prevent it. Finally, guidelines are required on how to protect children in Winneba municipality. Thus there are three components to the model.

The first component would involve (i) substantial biblical teaching on 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 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 become such leaders in the future; and (v) teaching on childrearing that ensures no abuse.

The second component in the model would require reading relevant sources and research to grasp the extent of child abuse in the world at large, but mainly in the Winneba municipality. This will include observations and research among the relevant institutions (churches, police, welfare, hospitals, and schools) on the extent of child abuse and neglect and interventions to eliminate them. The third component of the model deals with a practical response to the first two components. Both the first and second components logically precede the third component as they provide the motivation for the action covered in the third part.

The third component deals with ways to ensure child protection, which includes preventing and countering child abuse in the Church and the society. The following list is certainly not exhaustive. Christians and the churches should pray for children, especially, vulnerable children (Lam. 2:9). Malherbe (2004) argues that God hears the cry of children in need for help. For example, God heard the cry of Ismael (Gen. 21:17-20). Also, individual Christians as well as the body of Christ in general must speak up against the maltreatment of children in society (Prov.31:8-9). We should serve as advocates for children's protection and thorough holistic rearing. In addition, the Christian body should accept children as an integral part of the great commission. This implies that children should be respected as fully human and capable of conversion, growth in Christ and service within the church and witness outside. This also calls on Christians to take time to listen to the fear, troubles, hopes and dreams of children. The body of Christ should pay much attention to her ministry to children, making conscious effort to remove factors that promote child abuse. For example, the church leadership should conduct background checks, that is, screen teachers and volunteers of children ministry.

The fifth step in the systematic model I chose for doing systematic theology regarding child protection involves interaction with other approaches and solutions. This is intended to refine or broaden the theology model developed through steps 1

to 3. Step 5 also includes a defense of one's model. 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. One example for this claim was declaring February 26th, 2012, "Freedom Sunday" by 5,000 churches across 100 countries that had united in the worldwide cause of justice, including justice for children. Through an initiative called "Not For Sale" (NFS), these churches committed to a day of worship and awareness for victims of child trafficking. As part of the NFS movement, many church members "Fasted for Freedom" throughout the Lenten season to raise funds for NFS activities (Vieth, Tchividjian, Walker, and Knödel 2012:328.)

Other Studies have showed that participation in a church's life and fellowship, serves as protective and preventative factors with regards to child abuse and opens the door to counselling where abuse has been suffered. This is because, firstly, when children attend services and participate regularly in the fellowship, they are protected from abuse due to being in a safe environment. Secondly, it is because a qualified church leadership can facilitate obviating child abuse and provide counselling support where a child has suffered abuse.

The Church is also a valuable resource for those recovering from abuse (Carothers, Borkowki, Burke Lefever, & Whitman, 2005: 263-275). A study in America revealed that more than half of the respondents believed that child protection laws are very important in preventing child abuse, and they support any active involvement of the church in prevention and intervention like reporting abusers to child protection agencies (Rhee, Chang and Young 2003: 27). This indicates some areas where the church can play a part in countering this problem in society.

In the United Kingdom, it was noted that everyone has the responsibility of ensuring that children are secure and safe; and churches are often expected to take an exemplary lead. This is because churches open their doors to everyone, and their places of worship are usually opened when other places have closed their doors. Consequently, church leaders are often called upon in times of crisis in communities, and they play a significant role in helping families within and outside their congregations (Churches Child Protection Advisory Services 2006).

The specific interventions depicted in the above examples are largely covered in component three of my model. But ideas for child protection can be extended to make it more relevant to the context of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba municipality. This would require the church becoming fully cognisant with child abuse in the church and the society where it exists. Step 5 of my systematic approach includes defending the three-component model for achieving child protection.

Brewster (2011:82) believes that although the Church is uniquely placed and equipped to address the needs of vulnerable children, the impact of the Church in this regard is minimal. This is because in many of these cases evangelism leading to conversion is seen as the church's primary or exclusive function – it focuses on spiritual conversion and the future eternal kingdom. The emphasis on meeting the social needs of society, including children, is thought to undermine or negate evangelism (Motiff 2004:14). Hughes (1998:13-14) states that evangelicals have focused their whole attention on evangelism and neglected the kingdom of God.

Some people argue that evangelism of children, especially abused ones, should come second, if at all, to physical and social protection. This supports the view that instead of God speaking through the Church to society, he rather speaks to the Church through the good works in society (Chester 1993:62). This interprets the concern for social justice and relevant interventions as implying belief that God's kingdom comes through such actions. This paradigm has been known in evangelical parlance as the social gospel, which is a false gospel. As a result some evangelicals dissociate themselves from good works in society and focus solely on soul winning and preparing people for heaven. However, it can be shown from Scripture that the church is more of a community than a social institution. Therefore it should be concerned about every aspect of the lives of its members and not just the spiritual (Oladipo 2000:148; Westerhoff III 1985: 78-79).

My conclusion concurs with the position that social action and evangelism are not separate entities, but integral and equal partners (Brewster 2011: 84; Adeyemo 1985: 48-57). This implies that the church's effort to respond to social needs such as protection of vulnerable children from harm is a clear demonstration of God's love (Rin Rio 1985). It is a part of the gospel of our Lord Jesus. It is responding to the

needs of the whole person. Practical love will also often open the heart to acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sadly, some have accused churches of being an integral part of the problem of child abuse and neglect and not a solution. The relevant literature has revealed two extremes on disciplining children: some have claimed Scripture demands harsh, violent or oppressive discipline, while others have opted for the opposite extreme because they claim the innocence of children (O'Neill, Gabel, Huckins and Harder 2010: 383). Both extremes are forms of child abuse as they fail to appropriately meet the needs for positive nurturing and training in godliness. The former not only entails justification for abusive discipline, but also conceals known abuse (Nason-Clark 2000; Schnabel 2004:66-70; Dale and Alpert 2007: 59-74). However, the biblical theology perspective demonstrated that if the Church resorts to sound hermeneutical processes to the interpretation of Scripture, it will understand that her mandate is to protect children and never abuse them (Couture, 2003; Nason-Clark, 2000; Brewster 2011:84).

The main defence of the model proposed for the Church of the Pentecost in Winneba municipality is it built on a sound biblical theology relating to children and also supported in Church history. The model is solidly rooted in the biblical revelation of God as the shepherd (Psalm 23, etcetera). This shepherding heart is vividly communicated in the ministry of Jesus (Jn 10:11, etcetera). According to Malherbe (2004), God is the protector of children and expects nothing less of his people. He commands the Church to protect vulnerable children among us (Exodus 22:22; Deut. 24:20). Furthermore, God punishes leaders and nations that fail in this responsibility of protecting children (Exodus 22:22-23; Matt. 18:5-6). Even non-Christians understand the importance of protecting children from abuse; so there are no competing models in this regard, but only ones that essentially endorse the vision and at least much of the praxis of the model. The local church as well as the global Church needs to make a conscious effort to prevent child abuse and treat the victims.

Garland and Chamiec-Case(2005:22-43) report 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. Is this still the case today? The challenge to the Church of Pentecost in Winneba municipality to make sure that this example is followed in their ministry.

The next section in this Research Report document presents details on the research conducted into how the Church of Pentecost in Winneba municipality have responded to the problem of child abuse in its context. The objective of the integrated master's journey is to help this church to enhance its ministry to protect children in its churches and society from child abuse. The systematic theology perspective developed a strategic plan to do so if the church has failed to honour God in this matter. This required, firstly, deciding on whether or not such an intervention might be necessary through a limited empirical research. Secondly, it was appreciated that this field research would also throw some light on what a biblically faithful operative theology regarding child protection might entail.

6. Establishing the Practical Theology Perspective on Child Protection

6.1 Defining the practical theology perspective in the integrated theology

Gaining the practical perspective is the last of the four theological perspectives. Practical theology is concerned with the complex interaction and relationship between theory and practice. This implies that theory informs practice and practice informs theory. Practical theology uses the practice-theory-practice paradigm in approaching and handling the relationship between theory and praxis. It involves a small-scale or substantial empirical study of some concrete situation in the Christian community and the underlying theory with the goal of informing and modifying, reforming or transforming it (Patterson and Woodward 2000:7). Smith (2013:146) also believes that practical theology has as its main purpose the transforming of existing actions or situations through 'informed strategic thinking' as well as 'action planning'. Similarly, Browning (1991:55) argues that the foundation of practical theology is threefold: Understanding the concrete situation in which we must act, knowing what our praxis should be in this concrete situation, and deciding on what means, strategies, and rhetorics we should use in this concrete situation to achieve the desired praxis.

My study relies largely on Browning's (1993)'s approach to practical theology with some variations and modifications. I chose this approach because of its emphasis on practical implications of all our theological discourse. Browning argues that all theological enquiry begins with practice, examines theories, and ends with practical actions that are faithful to God's will and purposes (1993:6). He, therefore, proposes a practice-theory-practice model outlined in four steps: descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and strategic practical theology (pp. 47-55). The descriptive theology describes in detail the current practice in its context. Browning (1993:47) holds that all practice is theory laden and therefore descriptive theology also seeks to isolate the theory behind practice.

Browning tends to focus on examining the literature and using theories from other disciplines to understand the current situation. I differed from Browning here as I undertook a small-scale empirical qualitative study to provide a detailed description of the situation. I concur with Osmer (2008:41) that empirical study allows a detailed description of the situation or context. I also differ from Browning in that I did the practical research at the end. I included Browning's next step, as my first step, which covers (i) historical theology that entails engagement with church history, tradition and dogma, and (ii) systematic theology.

Browning in my opinion over-emphasizes the current context when finalizing his normative praxis. I concur with Smith (2013:84) that systematic theology should focus more on systematising the teachings of Scripture than on the local context and its vision, as important as these are in finalizing an improved praxis. The fourth step according to Browning's approach to practical theology focuses on the means, strategies and rhetorics necessary to introduce the new praxis (1993:55). This step in a limited way is also in the final phase of my integrative theology approach. So my integrative theology follows the paradigm of theory-praxis(1)-praxis(2).

This practical theology paradigm in my study was achieved by a correlation of (i) the theological perspectives on the matter of the importance of ensuring the safety of children, and (ii) a qualitative research project on child protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba, especially children vulnerable to sexual abuse, labour, prostitution, trafficking and neglect. The correlation step is reported in section 7.

6.2 Methods used in establishing the practical theology perspective on child protection

To achieve my qualitative research I used the interview as the method of data collection. Qualitative study helps to obtain adequate information about the opinions, beliefs and behaviours of the participants with regards to a particular phenomenon. In my study, although I have a fair idea of the ministry of the Church of Pentecost, the qualitative research strategy enabled me to formulate a more accurate picture of the leaders' views and their churches' ministry regarding care of vulnerable children in the Winneba Municipality.

Each of the four districts in Winneba municipality has a pastor in charge and also a leader responsible for the oversight of the ministry to children. All eight were interviewed. This study could have been extended to include other volunteers in the Children's Ministry and also children if it were not for limited time and the necessarily small-scale nature of this research. These eight leaders are strategically placed in the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba Municipality to provide relevant information with regards to this Church's theology of children and child protection efforts.

The eight leaders were contacted via phone calls and my integrated master's programme with SATS explained, particularly the need for the qualitative research. They agreed to participate and interview appointments were booked. The interviews were conducted privately at their convenience with regards to time and venue. Each respondent was given an Inform Consent Form (see Appendix 1) that provided information about the study, clarified the participant's role and assured them of confidentiality and anonymity of their identity. They were given opportunity to ask questions if the need arose. Then the participants signed the consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study.

Prior to the commencement of the interview, the questions guiding the interview (see Appendix 2) were given to participants to study and seek clarification where necessary. The same questions were used in the interview with the four pastors and the four other leaders with oversight over the ministry to children. However, all eight respondents answered the questions with reference to their district situation. The questions were given to them ahead of the interview to ensure that they were comfortable answering them. The interview was face-to-face to enable me to obtain

both verbal and nonverbal clues to make the data as accurate and informative as possible. The responses were captured by taking notes. In order to avoid any tension or uneasiness or a lack of freedom in answering, I chose to eliminate audio recording. However, to ensure accuracy in capturing the data, adequate time was allowed for participants to express their views about each question and for me to record all their responses.

The following questions were used to guide the interview.

- 1) How do you understand child protection?
- 2) Why should a church be concerned about child protection?
- 3) What do the churches in your district do to protect children from abuse?
- 4) What collaboration do they foster with state agencies responsible for child protection in your communities?
- 5) What challenges do they have with regards to child protection efforts?
- 6) What recommendations do you have for your churches with regards to child protection?

The questions were carefully constructed to ensure that they got to the heart of the issue being researched. In addition, the questions were arranged in such a way as to ensure easy understanding and a logical progression. Finally, the open-ended nature of the questions also permitted participants to answer anyway they wanted, based on their understanding and experience. Where necessary, I probed for greater clarity. My focus was largely on the exploration of where the participants and their churches were with regards to promoting child protection. I was very careful to note all responses accurately for later effective analysis.

The analysis of the data was done based on the five-steps described by O'Connor and Gibson (2003:64-90). Firstly, the data was organized according the research questions. This was done to make it easier to pick concepts as each question has a specific focus and purpose. Secondly, the ideas and concepts were put together. This helps to identify recurrent themes among the respondents' answers (Marshall and Ross 1995:114). The third step was building themes. Sometimes, one or more themes may emerge. Fourthly, there was the promotion of reliability and validity in the entire analysis of data and findings. Validity refers to the accuracy with which the research measures the data collected (O'conner and Gibson 2003:72). Reliability is

the consistency of the findings, and requires diligent efforts throughout the research process (p. 72). Fifthly, a summary of the findings and themes were documented. This involves finding possible explanations by comparing the findings with the literature. This also entailed giving meaning to the findings and noting their relevance to the study.

6.3 Findings of the practical theology perspective on child protection

In this section the responses, and their analysis, of the four pastors as well as the four ministry leaders who participated in the qualitative study are presented (for full details on the answers see Appendix 3). Tentative conclusions are also noted. It was observed that there were no significant differences in the responses of the pastors and the leaders of the children's ministry.

All eight respondents demonstrated an appreciable conception of the concept of child protection. It was perceived as plans or measures put in place to protect children from abuses such as child labour, sexual abuse, trafficking, and neglect. Also that it entails securing a safe environment for children so that they can develop holistically. Two respondents felt that child protection has more to do with adults taking care of children in such a way that they can take advantage of the opportunities in their environment to become better persons in the future.

UNICEF (2006) defines child protection as “preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse to children – including commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child labour and harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage.” Similarly, Save the Children (2013) defines child protection as “measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children”. The findings of the study revealed all eight participants had this understanding of child protection.

In addition, all the eight respondents' views also reflected the conclusions of the biblical perspective that Christian parents and churches are to foster a nurturing and protective environment for children. They understand from Scripture that God is the shepherd of his people (Psalm 23), and Christ is the good shepherd of the Church (John 10:11). Further, that this means every effort to safeguard and nourish the sheep is to be made. They also appreciated that these models of shepherding were

to be followed by parents and church leaders. They clearly interpreted Scripture to support a theology of children that saw them as precious in God's sight and worthy of being nurtured in a loving safe environment to become mature Christians and productive members of society. But their acknowledgement of the biblical perspective (see sub-section 4.3) seems to be superficial (see also below).

The rationale for the church's involvement in child protection was also explored. It was noted that Ghana has laws that are against child abuse. They require institutions like the church to take measures to ensure that children are safe. The church is also obligated to make information about suspected abuse of children available to state institutions so that they can act accordingly. Six respondents made reference to the fact that the church as an institution is expected by the state to be involved in child protection. This is because the church is part of the community that is to be involved in child protection. The systematic perspective showed this as well. For example, the churches in the United Kingdom are called to take an exemplary lead in child protection efforts (Churches Child Protection Advisory Services 2006). Similarly, the church is more of a community than a social institution and consequently it should be concerned about every aspect of the lives of all its members (Oladipo 2000:148; Westerhoff III 1985:78-79).

However, it was noted that only one of the pastors and one of the ministry leaders made reference to the Bible as the basis for the church's involvement in child protection. Although no reference was made to a particular biblical text, and for that matter the key references noted in the biblical perspective section, these two respondents indicated that God has given in his Word the mandate to his Church to protect the vulnerable in our society, especially children. This understanding is congruent with contributions from the biblical perspective. For example, Malherbe (2004) argued that God is the protector of children and expects his people to do nothing less than that. God commands the Church to protect vulnerable children among us (Exo 22:22; Deut. 24:20). In addition, God punishes leaders and nations that fail in this responsibility of protecting children (Exo 22:23; Mt. 18: 5-6).

The inability of the respondents, especially the pastors, to make reference to specific passages as the basis for child protection could be attributed to limited biblical knowledge on child protection and nurturing of children in a loving environment. This

would account for little or no motivation for the church to be actively involved in children protection, including child nurturing (see also below). It is, therefore, recommended that the church develop a theology of children that encompasses the theological truths summarized in the findings of the systematic perspective with its practical implications (sub-section 5.3). This theology of children with its praxis should be included in ministerial formation as well as training of children ministry leaders.

With regards to the measures put in place by the church at the moment, it was noted by all the respondents that special services are held on Sunday for children. These meetings are handled by volunteers, who are trained to share the word of God with children. It is believed that this programme on a weekly basis will empower the children to become responsible Christians and citizens. This is because the children do not only learn about the Christian faith, but also other life issues such as good moral conduct, academic improvement and how to live healthily.

In addition, it was reported that the church practices, such as naming ceremonies and child dedications, are festivals of the church that contribute to child protection. That is, the naming gives the child recognition and identify. In the same vein, child dedication points to the fact that the child is accepted fully into the faith community. Of significance was the revelation that there are no specific measures that directly address child protection in the ministry of the church. It is difficult to see how church services/meetings and the above mentioned festivals make other measures to ensure protection of the children unnecessary. The situation regarding child protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba is inconsistent with the findings of the historical perspective. For example, the Church age was replete with concrete measures to safeguard children.

Furthermore, the findings show that there were no strategic alliances with state agencies such as the DOVSU of the Ghana Police Service and the Department of Social Welfare that are involved in child protection – its prevention and countering of child abuse. It became evident that although the pastors and the ministry leaders are aware of these agencies, the churches have limited knowledge as to what kinds of partnership can be forged. This could account for there being no partnerships. But it

also may be because Sunday worship services with children are considered adequate.

In conclusion, the results show 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.

Generally, the findings point to a weak theology of children and insufficient praxis of child protection in the Church of Pentecost congregations in Winneba municipality. The current situation only views children in terms of God's salvific plan that includes children (conversion and sanctification). Clearly something far broader is required in the light of child abuse throughout the world and in Winneba.

7. The Implications of the Research Findings with the Four Pastors and the Four Children Ministry Leaders

The goal of doing integrated theology is to discern the will of God, and to restate the will for our contemporary context. This implies that the end product of all theological enquiry is the transformation of the praxis of the local church. As Smith (2008:206) notes: one begins such a study with a real-life problem or situation that calls for attention.

The significance of the integrated method of doing theology can now be grasped. With reference to the Church of Pentecost in Winneba, the first three theology perspectives provided a consensus on a sound biblical understanding of God's will for children and the implications for the local church, specifically those of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba. This then became the standard by which to critique the situation in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba revealed in the practical theology perspective. The small-scale empirical research indicated that the four districts of the

church fell short of the operative theology regarding child protection formulated in the climax of the systematic theology perspective.

The churches, then, in the four districts of Winneba would need the formulation of a strategic plan to apply the recommendations of the systematic theology perspective. Firstly, this would require the development of a major biblical-theological teaching component (a syllabus). Sub-section 5.3 gives ideas for what should be included here. Further, this theological programme should also demonstrate the importance Scripture places on the importance of godly, able leadership in the home, church and society. Clearly, raising children to become such leaders in the future necessitates being raised in a safe environment. This biblical-theological teaching should be intentionally adapted to the spiritual and intellectual levels of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba. Drafting of the syllabus would be the responsibility of the eight leaders in the Winneba district.

Then a programme would be needed to facilitate teaching the syllabus to Christians in and outside the churches in Winneba. For example, the syllabus could be developed into a number of Bible Studies to be used to stimulate small group discussions and actions in the churches in Winneba. Some sermons every year could deal with aspects of the syllabus that would require extra emphasis. This teaching programme would need to be designed by the eight leaders in the Winneba district.

Secondly, it would be necessary to source adequate information and statistics about child abuse and neglect worldwide, but especially in the Winneba municipality and efforts to prevent it. Sub-section 5.3 elaborates a little on how this can be done, but further measures could be sought to ensure the gaining of a currently accurate picture of the failure to protect all children and the range of destructive results of such neglect and breakdown in child care. A strategic plan is also needed to achieve this information with researchers appointed and deadlines set. This too would need to be condensed into a readable document to be studied as part of the first Bible study with some mention in the sermon series to bring home more powerfully the great need of child protection in society. The document would need to be agreed upon by the eight leaders, some of whom might have been part of the research team.

Thirdly, steps would need to be formulated preventing child abuse in the church and the society where the church exists and providing support to abused children. Sub-section 5.3 presents a few ways to do this. The church would be well advised to also invest in training all volunteers and children workers in child welfare and protection issues. In some cases, children workers and volunteers should sign a statement of commitment to child protection before they are given regular access to children within the ministry of the church. It is also recommended that the Church of Pentecost develops her own theology of children document and child protection policy. Here again the eight leaders would be expected to play a key role.

People would need to be appointed to plan the specific activities to achieve prevention of child abuse and safeguard their protection. The eight leaders would at least play an advisory role in this process. Deadlines would be required, as failure here might prevent the project getting off the ground. Regular evaluations of the praxis would need to be built into the action plan and appropriate interventions if there is any failure. People would also need to be selected for this task.

This research report would be the ideal document to initially give to the eight leaders interviewed to convince them of the need for a new operative theology regarding the protection of children and how to achieve it. My role could be to meet with them for further discussion of my research and to arrive at an agreed approach on an operative theology regarding prevention of child abuse with the corollary of promoting healing where necessary and positive development.

If the child ministry model developed in my research for the Church of Pentecost in Winneba is effectively applied, there will be a truly God-pleasing approach to children in the church and wider community. It will help bring down the statistics of vulnerable children not being protected from sexual abuse, child labour and child neglect.

8. A Critique of Integrated Theology

The integrated approach to theology as used in my master's programme amounts to a practical theology project. The only difference is that the praxis-theory-praxis paradigm is not strictly followed. The approach is rather theory-praxis(1)-praxis(2). Further, this integrated method devotes more attention to historical theology and

places less focus on the strategy and actions necessary to successfully launch the new, preferred and more biblically faithful praxis. It is my conclusion that the integrated methodology is a holistic approach to doing theology that, therefore, stands a better chance of arriving at theologically balanced, sound, and comprehensive conclusions. Further, I have found my integrated journey to confirm SATS' belief that in order to raise thinking practitioners who will faithfully discern the will, nature and purpose of God, and restate it for their contemporary context, the integrated approach filtered through the Christocentric and missional lenses is a helpful choice.

In applying integrated theology a theological discourse to child protection in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba, I gained a wide range of insights from several theological and non-theological disciplines (which was not able to be fully reflected in the research report of the whole integrated journey). The practical perspective proved to have enormous value for understanding the Church of Pentecost in Winneba's responses to child protection and their understanding of the church's view of, and responsibility towards, children.

I found the order in which the different theological research was conducted to be logical and enabled a logical and coherent development of theological understanding and preferred praxis. Beginning the master's programme with the biblical perspective supported my evangelical belief that the Bible should be the starting point and chief and controlling source of our entire theological enquiry. In addition, the integrated programme helped me to appreciate and appropriately temper my own preunderstandings on the topic.

Then going on to the historical theology exercise encouraged me to see how past and more recent scholars have grappled with the problem and the solutions they applied. This gave me a better understanding of the influence of context. This perspective meant I was able to appreciate the fact that some giants had gone before me, and that their conclusions could throw some light on my study.

Then came the systematic perspective, which is a correlation and synthesis of the contributions of the biblical and historical perspectives and extra-biblical materials and some other elements of good practice in child protection and its advocacy. This arrived at a broader theological understanding and how this should affect praxis with

regard to child care and protection. This was followed by a small-scale qualitative research into the situation on the ground in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba. The systematic perspective served as a theological model that effectively constituted a measuring rod that enabled a sound way of critiquing the Church of Pentecost in Winneba's approach in this matter and recommending improvements. This part of the study helped me realize the importance of not stopping at a theoretical understanding but analyzing the concrete situation and moving in a planned way to transformation of praxis. I now clearly see another strength in the integrated method as it starts with theological enquiry and discourse and ends with specific, applicable practical applications to strengthen ministry in some real life church context.

Better still, I am thrilled by the Christocentric and the missional lenses through which the entire process is guided. The person and the works of Christ are at the center of all the discourse. This implies that the contributions of the perspectives are filtered through the unifying and central theme of person and work of Christ – preparing for his first coming (OT), his coming (the Gospels), and living out the salvific fruit of his salvation and thus preparing for and anticipating his second coming (the rest of the NT). In addition, the *missio Dei* is another important element. God's agenda is to restore all mankind to himself, and to establish his righteous and benevolent rule over all creation. That is to say that all our theological conclusions must be faithful to this mission. This is because this mission has become the mission of the Church.

In spite of the enormous positive features of the integrated approach, I observed some weaknesses. In the first place, the biblical perspective is tedious and took a lengthy time. The work involved in the exegetical study and the biblical and biblical theology studies alone can take all the amount of time available for the masters' program. Though the time restraints did not allow for extensive biblical theology research and discourse, it provided useful and important insights on the biblical teachings on the topic.

One other challenge with integrated theology is the overlapping of the contributions of the various perspectives. This is because the biblical and historical perspectives form part of the systematic perspectives. There is thus some unnecessary repetition, especially with regards to the conclusions.

Although there are seeming weaknesses to the integrated theology approach, I am now convinced that it is a very helpful way of undertaking the theological enterprise. I was personally thrilled by the exposure to various biblical passages, historical perceptions and praxes, scholarly sources, and the amount of understanding gained on the topic. I, therefore, would recommend this approach to anyone interested in a well-rounded insight into any chosen topic, that is, in discerning God's nature, will and purpose with regard to any area of the church's life. It certainly has facilitated my becoming a more accomplished theological practitioner.

APPENDIX 1: Inform Consent Form

You are kindly invited to participate in this study that seeks to investigate the ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba Municipality to children vulnerable to child abuse. This is an academic research, and form part of MTh program.

As an interviewee, you will be required to respond to questions that the researcher will ask you, and your responses will be recorded.

You are assured that information obtained from you is strictly for the purpose of this study, and will be treated with all the confidentiality it deserves. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the report/publication of the findings.

The findings of this study will help adopt measures to strengthen the effectiveness of ministry to children vulnerable to child abuse.

Kindly note that your participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to decline your participation at any time of the study.

Participant:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Researcher:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

APPENDIX 2: Questions used in the interviews

1. How do you understand child protection
2. Why should a church be concerned about child protection?
3. What does your church do to protect children from abuse?
4. What collaboration does your church foster with state agencies responsible for child protection in your communities
5. What challenges do you have with regards to child protection efforts by your church?
6. What recommendations to do you have for your church with regards to child protection?

APPENDIX 3: Results of the interviews

Results of the interviews with the pastors

Question1: How do you understand child protection?

The pastors have an appreciable idea of the concept of child protection. Child protection was perceived as plans or measures put in place to protect children from abuses such as child labour, sexual abuse, trafficking, and neglect. One respondent commented “you are trying to prevent children from an impending harm”. It was also observed that child protection ensures children are safeguarded from abuse. For example, some respondents reported that some children are involved in child labour, early marriage, and sexual abuse. Others also believed where child protection efforts are in place, children are free from abuses such as emotional, verbal and intellectual.

It was reported that child protection is all about ensuring a safe environment for children so that they can develop holistically. The respondents believed that child protection cut across a wide range of the development of the child. This implies that adults should ensure the environment of children can promote development in all aspects. For example, a pastor commented, “I think that this is when the child is not afraid of anything in his/her environment”. This implies that, when there are measures put in place to ensure children are not harmed, the children are not afraid in their environment. In another sense, it means that the children are free from fear as they move about in their environment.

Some respondents also reported that child protection has more to do with adult taking care of children in such a way that the children can take advantage of the opportunities in their environment to become better persons in the future. One pastor indicated that “adult should ensure that the opportunities and the privileges of children are not taken away from them so that they can become better persons tomorrow”. This concept of child protection includes an intentional effort to prepare children to take advantage of their environment. It also points to the fact that when children are abused, they are more likely to lose the opportunities to grow into adults who can actualize their full potentials.

Finally, some of the pastors also believed that child protection should also ensure that what children view on the television set and the internet are safe. The media can expose children to contents that can destroy their future. The call for child protection efforts places the onus on adults to make sure the rights of children are not neglected. The children should be helped to know their rights and responsibilities, and how to use these rights and responsibilities to their advantage.

Question 2: Why should the church be concerned about child protection?

The rationale for church's involvement in child protection was also explored. The results revealed that Ghana has laws that are against child abuse. These laws require institutions like the church to take measures to ensure that children are safeguarded. The church is also required to make information about suspected abuse of children available to state institutions to act in case of child abuse. Most of the pastors made reference to the fact that the church as an institution is recognized by the state to be involved in child protection.

Another reason for being concerned about child protection was that the church is part of the community. As a result, the church should join the fight against ills in the community. Child abuse is considered evil and a crime, and therefore the church should be involved in fighting this problem in the community. For example, one pastor reported, *"in this community, there are bad people around who can abuse children and the church must act"*. Closely related to this is the idea that the church is recognized in the community as a place that welcomes and values everyone. The church does not discriminate; it is a place where the less privileged can be helped to find their God-given potentials. One respondent retorted that "the church is a voice for everybody".

The vulnerability of children was also mentioned as one other reason why the church should be concerned about child protection. This highlights the advocacy role of the church. Consequently, it is expected that the church will speak against this ill of child abuse in our societies through their vulnerability. Further, it was explained that religious leaders have great influence in our communities. As a result, the church is better placed to lead the fight against child abuse. This implies that if the church takes up her advocacy ministry to ensure that children are not involved in prostitution, child labour and trafficking, other members of the community will join the

fight. For example, the church can educate her members to be better parents and that will reduce child neglect as was indicted by one of the participants.

Also, it was reported that the church is a spiritual entity to champion the agenda of God. God's agenda is to bring all humanity to reconcile with Him through Jesus Christ. Consequently, the church has "a higher mandate than that put on it by the state to protect children" as indicated by one of the pastors. This points to the responsibility placed on the church by God to ensure that children are not harmed. For example, the respondents believe that child abuse can reduce the chance of children growing to become fulfilled Christian adults. As reported by one of the respondents, "churches run based on people, and it is better to get them young so that their chances of becoming what God intends are enhanced".

Another pastor revealed that if children are protected, it will affect all the parameters of the church in the future. This is because the children are the future leaders of the church. It also implies that children who are abused are more likely to lose faith in the church. The children must see the church as a group of people who have their interest at heart. This will influence their decision to stay with the church even in their adult life.

Question 3: *What does your church do to protect children from abuse?*

With regards to what the church is doing at the moment to protect children, all the pastors made reference to teaching children. The church has a ministry wing called the Children Ministry. The children ministry has teachers (volunteers) who prepare Bible lessons to teach children on a weekly basis. These volunteers are trained to organize child-friendly ministry activities such as teaching Bible lessons, prayer, praises and worship. This means that the volunteers have the requisite knowledge and skills to share the word of God with children in ways that they will appreciate it. Not only in the word of God but sometimes the children are educated on other issues such as child abuse and tips on healthy living. Participants believed that this knowledge will empower them to take actions to protect themselves. There are also materials (syllabi) that were developed specifically for the children.

The church believes that the volunteers take care of the children in the church environment to ensure they are safe. Also, in some cases, the children ministry

teachers also become advocates for children in the community due to the training they receive. In addition, some respondents believe that the opportunity offered the children to be in the church environment is a form of protection. For example, one pastor commented, “being in the church environment is a safe place because the church tries to teach and do the right things”.

Another pastor indicated that “we have places of worship suitable for children, with chairs that are child-friendly”. Similarly, it was reported that beyond teaching the Scripture, they also received training in moral conduct. It is believed that sometimes the training improves the confidence level of children. This makes it possible for some children to speak up against abuse or report any form of abuse directed at them or friends.

Furthermore, child naming and dedication is another practice which, is believed to have contributed to child protection. This is a special gathering where the child is named and prayed for. It is a sign of the church’s commitment to value children, and to create a space for them. As one participant commented, “in this meeting, the whole gathering is in honour of the child”. This practice points to the fact that the church values children in her ministry. It promotes the identity of the child. The blessings that are pronounced on the child and his/her family are believed to give them a form of protection against evil people who would like to abuse children.

Closely associated with this, is the idea that the church recognizes children in her gatherings, especially, during festival such as Christmas and Easter celebrations. For example, in this gathering, the children are given opportunities to play key role such as to conduct Bible reading, praises and worship and also preaching.

Question 4: What collaboration does your church foster with state agencies responsible for child protection in your communities

This question sought to find out what strategic alliances are formed, especially with state agencies tasked with child protection. All the respondents indicated there are no collaborations with agencies responsible for child protection issues in their communities. It was also evident that the pastors had no information on the modus operandi of collaborative efforts to fight child abuse in the communities. For example,

one pastor indicated that “we are thinking of collaboration but I am not sure how we should go about it”.

It appears that the respondents find it difficult to identify common grounds for alliance, and how these alliances can be harnessed for effective child protection programmes. Similarly, all the respondents revealed that they are contemplating the kind of collaboration to establish with state agencies. However, they are reluctant to take the initiative towards collaboration. It was also revealed that they prefer the agencies coming to the church than them going to the agencies to seek alliance.

On the other hand, two of the pastors have collaboration with Compassion International Ghana, a Christian Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) dedicated to holistic Child Development as well as child advocacy. For example, one pastor revealed that through this partnership, when one of their children was sexually abused, with the support of Compassion, the perpetrator was jailed. This implies the church can do more when she fosters strategic alliances.

Question 5: *What challenges do you have with regards to child protection efforts by your church?*

In the first place, the perception of discipline was mentioned as the main challenge of child protection by the pastors. It was observed that there are two extremes with regards to discipline. One end holds that adults need to be harsh on children. For example a pastor indicated that “adults will tell you, as for children, you have to be hard on them before they obey instructions”. This idea of parenting makes some parents focus on harsh punishments as their main approach to correcting unacceptable behaviour among children. Some of them make reference to “spare the rod and spoil the child” (Prov. 13:24, KJV). The practice of harsh punishment as a way of discipline sometimes leads to physical and emotional abuse of children.

The other extreme is the liberal style of parenting. This group believes that children should be allowed to do the things they want. This is based on the argument that when the children grow, they will learn to behave in acceptable ways. This implies that the Bible’s command to train children the way they should go so that they will not depart from it (Prov.22:6) is not at home with them. This idea contributes to child neglect.

Another difficulty encountered by the church in an attempt to protect children is the involvement of opinion leaders and family members in the event of a child being abused, especially sexually. For instance one respondent revealed that “when a child in our church was sexually abused, and we reported the case to the Police through the help of Compassion International Ghana, the family members and the chief were angry with us”. Some of the respondents mentioned that this confrontation by the families and traditional authorities can negatively impact the activities of the church in the community. Consequently, some pastors are careful to take up cases like child abuse even if they have the evidence.

Finally, the issue of leadership at the local Assembly (grassroots) level is a huge challenge. One pastor lamented, “to have the right people who know the right thing and will take the initiative to protect children is our big problem”. This suggests that in the local church, leadership ability to take measures to ensure children are safe is poor. Some of the leaders do not know about child protection as was indicated by some of the pastors. Another concern was the resource constraints. It was also observed that due to limited resources such as money and people, the church tends to focus her attention on the productive ages (youth and adults). As a result, little attention is paid to the issues of children. As was reported by one respondents, “if we have the money we can then equip our leaders at the local level.”

Question 6: *What recommendations to do you have for your church with regards to child protection?*

It was observed that all the pastors want something done as soon as possible about the extent of child abuse in the communities where they serve. Consequently, each respondent made suggestions to strengthen effective ministry to children vulnerable to child sexual abuse, child trafficking, labour and neglect.

Firstly, it was suggested that the church should have a clear plan of action with regards to child protection in her ministry. The church should make the annual budget cover all levels to ensure the availability of funds to support child protection efforts. In order to make this functional, there should be a regulation to ensure that the church at all levels complies with this directive.

Furthermore, it was recommended that the church should come up with guidelines on what constitute the actions to be taken with regards to child protection. Some pastors opined that the church should be clear on what her practices support when it comes to child abuse and child protection.

Also, it is believed that the church should be intentional in initiating partnership efforts with state agencies and other NGOs tasked with the issues of child protection. In Ghana, state agencies like the Domestic Violence and Victims Supports Unit (DOVSU) of the Police Service and the Department of Social Welfare are the key players of child protection issues. The church should invite personnel from these institutions to educate her members on child protection issues as well as the role of the church in this agenda.

Another recommendation was that the leadership should equip the teachers to deal with child protection issues. In addition, child protection issues should be developed into Bible study materials for members. This study material should be included in the syllabi for teaching children in the church. It is believed that this will help promote the beliefs and practices of the church with regards to child protection.

Finally, the church should serve as an advocate to educate the communities where they serve on child abuse and protection. The church is considered a prophetic voice of God to speak against the ills in our society.

Results of the interviews with the Children Ministry Leaders

Question 1: How do you understand child protection?

It was observed that there was no significant difference in the understanding of child protection between the pastors and the ministry leaders.

Child protection was considered an attempt to ensure that children are in a safe environment. It is mainly about ensuring that children are free from abuses.

Protection of children involves removing from our environment things that can harm children. Things such as child labour, child sexual abuse and child prostitution can destroy the children as revealed by the respondents. In addition, it was also reported that taking children off the street and providing a home or safe place is a form of

child protection. In the nutshell, child protection is seen as efforts geared at ensuring that children are safe, free from abuse, as well as at liberty to express themselves.

Question 2: *Why should the church be concerned about child protection?*

The responses of the leaders are similar to that of the pastors. It was interesting to note that whilst none of the pastors made reference to a Bible verse, one of the ministry leaders did.

The church should be actively involved in child protection because the church has the mandate to ensure people are saved. Children also need to be saved because they will also be judged and condemned if they do not know the Lord. Similarly, it was mentioned that children are the heritage of God, and the church should take good care of them. For instance, one leader commented, “if you read Psalm 127:3, it says that children are the heritage of God. I think the church should take the issue of children seriously”. This is an indication that God will be angry if His church does not fight for the safety of children.

In addition, children are considered the future leaders of the church. Consequently, the church should ensure the children are adequately prepared for that role in the future. For example, one participant mentioned that “if we don’t protect them, they will grow up to be leaders with pain”.

It was revealed that children who were abused can become abusers, and some may fall out of the Christian faith. One respondent indicated that “I was abused as a child, and I think this is affecting my Christian life”. This implies that if the church does not put measures in place to protect children, the church is likely to have some adult members that may be struggling with one difficulty or the other as a result of abuse during childhood.

Another reason for the involvement of the church in child protection is the law. The relevant laws of the country are against child abuse places an obligation on institutions like the church to ensure that children are protected. For example, one participant mentioned that “the church is in this country and it must be law abiding”. Another person revealed that “the church may be affected if the security officers uncover abuse, and later found out the church is involved”.

Further, it was also observed that nowadays other groups of people are teaching children concepts that will make them stray from the Christian faith. One leader lamented, “some group of people with evil intentions are initiating children into practices like homosexuality, satanic churches and many other things that will destroy them”. Consequently, the church should arise, and take giant steps in the community to ensure children are safe, protected and saved.

Question 3: *What does your church do to protect children from abuse?*

This question sought to find out what is already happening in the area of child protection in the ministry of the Church of Pentecost. The responses of the pastors and the ministry leaders were almost the same. However, the ministry leaders did not mention child naming and dedication as part of activities contributing to child protection.

It was observed that the church is consistent in organizing Sunday services with children. These meetings are designed specifically for the children. There are trained volunteers who share the word of God with children in ways that they can appreciate. These volunteers have received training, and to a large extent have the interest of children. The purpose of these special services is mainly to share the word of God with the children. This implies that the main outcome is that the children demonstrate their commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It can be seen that this activity is actually the prime focus of the universal church as all creation is to be restored to God through Christ Jesus.

In addition to Sunday services, other activities such as children rallies and camp meetings are organized occasionally to get the children entrenched in the Christian faith. Some respondents also indicated that sometimes, the church embarks on follow up visits to get acquainted with the home environment of the children. It also permits the opportunity to offer help to the child and family where necessary.

Further, it was reported that sometimes, a week is set aside to create awareness about children issues. This creates the opportunity for advocacy. Sometimes the advocacy focuses on educating both children and the entire membership on child abuse in the community as well as the role of adults in protecting children.

In spite of the fact that the respondents believe that sharing the word of God with the children contribute to child protection, it was argued by some of them that the church does not have any program in place that directly addresses the vulnerability of children in her ministry. With regards to their understanding of child protection, it is believed that teaching children the word of God contributes indirectly to child protection. For example, one respondent retorted “we don’t have any programme that directly address child protection apart from teaching children on Sundays”. Another person indicated “nothing apart from Sunday services” is done. This could probably point to the fact that the respondents believe the church should do other things. For instance, the church can be more intentional in putting up measures to ensure that vulnerable children are protected.

Question 4: *What collaboration does your church foster with state agencies responsible for child protection in your communities?*

This question probed the participants to find out what collaborations exist between the church and state agencies tasked with the responsibility of child safeguard and protection. The perspectives of the ministry leaders are consistent with that of the pastors.

The findings from the perspectives of the leaders revealed that there are no forms of collaboration with state agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and the Police Service in the aid of child protection. For example, one respondent said, “no collaboration with any organization”. It was also observed that although all the participants know that there are state institutions responsible for child protection, they are not too sure of the kind of collaboration to be initiated and maintained as part of child protection efforts by the church. The willingness on the part of some respondents to partner with the Police for example was revealed. As was indicated by one participant, “we are planning to work together with the Police”. Another person commented, “we thinking of partnering with the Children’s Ward at the Trauma Hospital”.

Question 5: *What challenges do you have with regards to child protection efforts by your church?*

The respondents observed a number of challenges to child protection efforts by the church. Firstly, the issue of misconception about children issues including child abuse. One of the reasons cited for this misconception is the misunderstanding of discipline and punishment. Some adults believed that disciplinary measures constituted constitute abuse of children and therefore avoiding such measures means there is no child abuse. For example, one respondent reported that “when children are taking to the sea for fishing instead of being in school, the parents will tell you we are giving them training”. The concept that some disciplinary measures may constitute child abuse is a major cultural concern within the Winneba Municipality. However, in the Christian community some support the idea of harsh discipline, making reference to ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’ (Prov. 13:24).

Closely associated with this misconception is ignorance. Some people think child abuse, especially, sexual and child prostitution do not exist. They believe people are just making it up. For example, one respondent lamented that “people think these things do not happen; people just make noise about it”. It is obvious that ignorance may cause people to remain adamant not to take any action. Similarly, some adults also believe that they have gone through the worst form of treatments during their childhood but the Lord has kept them through it. As a result, they do not see the need for making a conscious effort to safeguard children.

Another difficulty was that some families prefer to keep child abuse as a secret. This makes it difficult to obtain adequate information for action. It also reduces the family’s support of the church in taking action to fight child abuse. For instance, when child sexual abuse occurs, the families like to make it purely a family affair. They don’t want the church to take up the matter for redress.

Furthermore, it was also observed that generally, the attention of the church is on adults. The issue of child welfare is limited to the volunteers that teach children in the church. The support of leadership of children ministry is poor. For example, there is no budget to help address the needs of children. One respondent reported that “when one of our children was knocked down by a car, it was only the volunteer teachers who contributed money to support him”.

Question 6: *What recommendations do you have for your church with regards to child protection?*

As in the case with the pastors, the leaders of children ministry also made some suggestions that if implemented could improve the child protection efforts initiated by the church.

In the first place, it was recommended that the preparedness of the church to help families with child abuse should be clearly communicated. The church should assure parents of confidentiality in handling all issues related to child abuse. This is to ensure that families can trust the church to confidentially help provide appropriate support in times of child abuse.

In addition, all the members of the church should be educated in child development issues, especially, child abuse. Providing adequate and appropriate training in child abuse is critical in equipping the church as well as the community to fight it. This will also facilitate the willingness of the entire congregation to put in place measures to safeguard the children.

Another recommendation was that the church should create the opportunities for children to express their views and concerns about issues that affect their development. There should be open fora for the children to freely communicate their thoughts and feelings with regards to what can be done to ensure their safety. This suggestion further points to the fact that the church can use some of her festivals such as Easter and Christmas celebrations to talk about issues of child protection and child development.

It was also recommended that the children should be educated on child abuse. Children should be helped to understand what constitutes child abuse. In addition, the children should also be educated on what role they can play in child protection. This will make the children active partners of the child protection efforts.

Finally, it was recommended that the leadership should pay special attention to the ministry of children. As a result, there should be proper screening and background checks of volunteers (teachers and helpers) who are responsible for teaching children during church services. The argument was strongly made for the fact that the church should follow the same vigorous processes that are undertaken to select leaders to serve in other aspects of the ministry. This will ensure that all those who work with children in the ministry of the church do not abuse children. The volunteers

should receive regular training on child development issues, including child protection.

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