

Practical Theology and Mission: A Case of Sexual Abuse of Children and the Challenge of Evangelism

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Secular society has brought to the public's attention in the 1970's the serious problem of child sexual abuse in our contemporary world. While non-Christians have championed the cause of protecting children from abuse, Dr. Uka observes that only the Christian Church can bring true healing for a child who has suffered traumatic abuse. The Gospel is holistic in its application to all of life. The practical application of theology to the needs of the weak and defenseless means that the Church should take this problem seriously. Child sexual abuse should be addressed by the churches and their leaders in order to bring healing and redemption of the Gospel to our fallen societies.

INTRODUCTION

It was not until the 1970's that child sexual abuse was acknowledged as a serious social problem worthy of public attention. Although studies on the prevalence of child molestation had been carried out as far back as the late 1920's, the research did not receive much attention at that time.¹ The Church has, however, been aware of the evils of an unconverted soul and had been preaching against all forms of sins at any time. Child sexual abuse might be quite old in human society but the awareness of its existence and the rate of its prevalence is current especially in societies with taboos against sexual immorality within the kin-group.

It was the Women's Movement and Child Protection legislation that brought issues of rape and child abuse to the public view. In 1974, the Child Protective Movement lobbied and succeeded to have the American Congress pass the Child Abuse Prevention Act, mandating mental health workers and educators to assist in the detection and reporting of child sexual abuse.

The Bible, on the contrary, is replete with cases of abuse of God's gifts by man whose heart is corrupted by sin. Sexual perversion and abuse had been noticed early in human society as recorded in Genesis 6:5 when "the sons of God began to commit sexual sins with daughters of men" and God was angry with them. Paul also identified similar cases of sexual perversion in the imperial city of Rome (Rom. 1:18ff) and went on to condemn perpetrators of such evil. He

went further to warn Timothy that sexual sins would be among the acts which would manifest the extent of man's alienation from God in the last days (2 Tim. 3).

Although the awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse may be relatively new in secular society, the church, basing her authority on the Bible, has never been silent on her condemnation of sexual sin. The Bible, which is God's Word for man, has been the source of her information on God's views about everything. With the authority bequeathed to her by her Lord and Saviour, the Church has acted on behalf of Jesus Christ as the "Defender of the oppressed", the "voice of the voiceless" and the "Protector of the helpless" in every age and society. In our own period that is fast going materialistic, there is an urgent need for the church to step up her crusade against evil because of the rapid technological growth and development that threatens the existence of human life on earth.

Since the secular authorities have shown a lot of interest in the eradication of child sexual abuse (though belatedly), the church, which has pioneered the crusade against such evil, should in these "last days" review her strategy and role as a practical aspect of her message of salvation. Therefore the main thrust of this paper is the church's new role and effort in the campaign against the evil of child sexual abuse. It is relevant to all involved in the practical "ministry of making men whole" - be they clergymen, doctors, social workers, police and other law enforcement agents, counsellors, teachers, parents, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and all those interested in the general welfare of human life. The Church's clearer vision of this mission will give a spiritual guideline to their agencies involved in the programme. In other words, this paper will add the theological dimension to the on-going crusade to rid the society of the evil of child abuse.

The Church's approach to practical challenges to faith in a fast-changing world falls within the premises of Practical Theology. Its scope in our own time should be widened to tackle all dehumanising problems that militate against living a practical Christian life here and now. All sinful habits that defile the individual should be properly examined within the areas of Practical Theology. The Christian faith is both "spiritual" and also "practical". We must relate our faith to the contemporary problems of our world. God and his Word are relevant to our situation at any time. The Bible offers answers to every human problem. The Church in her modern evangelical outreach should reflect theologically on the nature of Christian hope and the practical pastoral responsibility of communicating the Gospel to the contemporary decadent society. Solution to the problem of child sexual abuses should be sought within the context of Christian evangelism and mission to the sin-sick world.

Since an organised research into the problem of sexual abuse of children is relatively new, well documented results were centred in industrialised places like the United States, Canada, Sweden and the Netherlands.ⁱⁱ African societies have not been privileged to receive detailed and organised survey of the incidence and prevalence of the problem of sexual abuse of children. There are possible reasons for this neglect of study. One is the long-established incest taboos in many traditional African societies which was carried over into Christian era. Since many Africans still live with this long established tradition, they think that sexual abuse of children is non-existent or probably minimal. But this is not completely true. Secondly, Africans are not literate enough to document all known cases of child sexual abuse that are reported and consequently no one can speak authoritatively with viable and reliable statistical data. We shall, therefore, no longer think that the problem does not exist in African societies.

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN: TOWARDS A DEFINITION

Sexual abuse is of different forms and shapes, but for the purposes of this investigation, it would be understood as the exploitation of young children under the age of sixteen by paedophiles, older adults or peers. It may be a form of taking advantage of helpless and weak children for personal sexual satisfaction in any form. The abuse might be through seduction or as a mark of Oedipus Complex theory of Freud.ⁱⁱⁱ Seduction takes the form of false enticement with gifts like money, clothes, promises of opportunities for higher education, promotion or offer of jobs. Some abuse may take the form of forceful coercion- "rape", kiss and exposure to prostitution and pornography, and any other way that can ruin the moral and physical life of a child. In other words, any form of manipulation of an under-aged or underprivileged child for personal selfish sexual advantage of the perpetrator is an abuse.

Both male and female children are likely victims of sex abuse. It affects children across all racial, religious and socio-economic groups. However, girls are known to be on the higher risk level than boys. For instance, a survey conducted in 1990 confirmed that one in every three to four girls and one in every ten boys have been sexually victimised before the age of eighteen.^{iv} Men are vastly over represented as perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Finkelhor, for instance, discovered in a recent survey he conducted with his team, in which they sampled 1,481 women and 1,145 men, that men constituted 98% of the offenders against girls while 83% of the offenders against boys were women.^v Women are known to torture young maids physically or hire them out to older men for money which is paid directly to them (the women) and a part of the sum given to the "victim" for basic maintenance- food and clothing and medical care which is often poor. Some men abuse young girls (rape) and boys (homosexuality). Some informants have reported of some forms of obscure

types of abuse. One is the type of corporal punishment in which parents or older adults apply red pepper on the sexual organs of little children caught in immoral sexual acts. Other adults subject little children to the ordeal of flogging their genitalia as a mark of strong discipline.

INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

Random surveys as well as controlled community surveys have shown enormous variables in the incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse of children in both Africa and the West. Though peculiar in their ways and types, the abuses do not differ tremendously from one another. The variation in prevalence is a function of the way one defines sexual abuse -either involving physical contact or non-contact sexual experience and exposure, geographical location, exposure, etc. As already stated, it must be emphasized that, since the problem of sexual abuse runs across all racial, religious and socio-economic groups, it is a general human enemy.

For instance, community surveys carried out in some industrialised countries indicate that sexual abuse is not more common among people of a lower social class or less common in higher economic strata. Both children of the rich and poor are potential victims of sexual abuse. However, some reported cases show a disproportionate number of children from the lower social class, primarily due to poverty which exposed them to force rape or lured into lewd sexual acts or relationships. In such a case they become victims of circumstances. The rich might shield their children most of the time from sudden attack by paedophiles. Ethnicity and religion like social class are not risk factors for sexual abuse of children in community-based surveys. A Christian child is as exposed as a Muslim or an unbeliever. This goes to confirm that sexual abuse is a common enemy of stable and decent human society and demands all hands on deck in the crusade against it.

The church's special and privileged position in society could be effectively used in this task. Consequently, many people, even non-Christians, expect the Church to lead in this battle. If the church is going to lead in it, she needs to be aware of the strength of her enemy as well as God's abundant resources ("whole armour") at her disposal in the battle ahead (Eph. 6:10-18).

Except the gender issue, there is no specific demographic variables that can be identified as risk factors for sexual abuse of children. However, it is important for a Christian to understand certain features relating to family structures which need special attention in the bid to prevent sexual child abuse.

First, young girls who are sent out early in life to serve as "nannies" or "house-helps" in urban centres are exposed to a lot of danger. Young girls leaving their parents to serve people living in urban centres are often sent out early in the morning to hawk wares for their mistresses at motor parks, railway stations, sports-studio or squares where people gather. The hawkers stay out all day till night except when they return to refill their trading trays for more wares. Some mistresses and masters do not do this as a form of punishment but as a source of increasing family income. Some parents at times send their own children to do this type of work which can be likened to child labour. Some of the children become exposed to the danger of rape.

Secondly, the presence of step-fathers and brothers in a house-hold or that of older domestic servants from different backgrounds has more often than not been a source of danger particularly to girls. Although cases of this type are not very common in many African societies because of the long-established incest-taboo laws, they are, nonetheless, not totally absent. A recently concluded survey by Russell confirmed that girls growing with their step-fathers were over seven times more likely to be abused by them than girls growing with their natural fathers. Common in Africa is the problem of a young girl living with her married elder sister. She often becomes a "secret" or "illegal second wife" to her brother-in-law, especially when the sister is frequently out of the house on business and leaves her younger sister to run the home as a house-help. Men who are involved in this type of crime are those of low moral character. Thirdly children living without their mothers or without one or both parents, living in broken homes, are at a greater risk of abuse, either within or outside the family.

The nature of sexual abuse, the secrecy and shame surrounding it, the criminal prohibition against it, and the helpless youthful age as well as the dependent status of the victims inhibit voluntary disclosure.^{vi} Parents and teachers who are very close to children should therefore watch when a child is not behaving properly or suffering from some uncomfortable pains. The nature of the abuse is as varied as its prevalence. Some female victims as well as male victims admitted that they had experienced actual or attempted intercourse. They include those who were raped or lured into "child prostitution" in hotels and brothels. Boys are less likely to be on the sibling abused class, more likely to be forcefully abused and more frequently subjected to anal abuse especially by older pupils, guardians, mentors, troop leaders, teachers or captains and coaches of clubs and organisations of the youth.

Extra-familial sexual abuse is more common than intra-familial abuse among boys and girls. This is mainly due to the close-knit nature of African families and the traditional condemnation of incest. Men are generally over-represented in the evils of child sexual abuse. For instance, Finkelhor's survey

reported of male offenders being more than female offenders against either boys or girls. Most of the offenders were ten or more years older than their victims but boys were more likely to be abused by young offenders most of whom are adolescents.^{vii} Women's sexuality is shrouded in secrecy. Only in modern times have cases been reported of "privileged women" who are corrupt and depraved who manipulate young handsome boys and lure them into immoral sex acts, boys young enough to be their children! They also seduce girls into acts of lesbianism. Such women are still rare because of long established inhibitions of women sexuality.

EFFECTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Research has shown the principal effects of the abuse on the victim. One is immediate and the other is a long-term effect. The immediate may include physical wounds, bruises or pain on a young victim who was forcefully assaulted and abused. Both the immediate and ultimate long-term effects leave physical and spiritual marks on the victim. Young girls often report of having their genitalia torn, especially the hymen if there was a real struggle to penetrate. They might bleed profusely. Some have been shown to have contracted Sexually Transmitted Disease (S.T.D.). In some cases unwanted teenage pregnancies and abortions have been registered. The long-term effect has something to do with traumatic and spiritual experiences that might last throughout life if not handled with strong prayers and counselling. A sense of guilt and shame, self-pity and self-blame might continue to plague a victim. Bitterness, rage or aggressive behaviour might as well be a result of the abuse of childhood purity, innocence and self-esteem. In about sixty sampled cases, a very broad range of behavioural difficulties and abnormalities were noticed in sexually abused children. Such difficulties were not far too different from the observations of similar surveys conducted in other places by C Cosentino, H.F.L. Meyer-Bahlburg and other members of their team.^{viii}

Although their survey was carried out among American and Canadian children, we noticed similar problems when compared with the results from the survey among Tanzanian, Ghanaian and Nigerian children.^{ix} Among the sexualised behaviour patterns were open and compulsive masturbation, seductive behaviour (especially in growing girls), sexualised play with dolls and age-inappropriate knowledge. A few parents reported of sexual aggression among boys who were victims of such abuse sometime in their early childhood. Twenty-five cases of outstanding problems of cross-gender identity conflict and complex (wishing to be the opposite sex), were overtly manifested in a particular social welfare centre among children of school age who had been previously abused. Cross-gender behaviour was a feature of a few young girls who were victims of sexual abuse in a Safari Centre in Tanzania who fell victims by some

foreign tourists. The girls started behaving like boys, dressing up and harassing other girls as if they would like to have sexual intercourse with them just like boys do.

Some parents of such children had reported of anxiety and post-traumatic stress in the victims, still persisting some years after the incident. These are expressed in such overt actions like fear, (in the dark and lonely places - especially by those raped in dark places), night-mares and sleep disturbances. Some reports gleaned from psychiatric hospitals in Ghana showed evidence of children who manifested internalised psychopathological traits like depression, mood disturbances, and low self-esteem. All these are not found in one single individual victim but they are the traits exhibited by those who had been abused. One may exhibit one trait or two as the case may be.

Other factors that determine response were the age of the victim, the nature and time of abuse, the intensity of the abuse and the type of attention given after the abuse. In other words, the intervening variabilities of the manifestations of the experience of the sexually abused children were dependent on a number of factors. For instance, an abuse that was carried out by someone close to a child - either a stepfather or brother or even a natural father and an uncle etc., can leave a victim in fear of staying or sleeping alone with an adult at night in a room. The one whose abuse involved real sexual intercourse that was violent or forceful had increased trauma. Lack of parental support at the point of disclosure of the incident and the degree of self-blame or self-pity also lead to increased symptoms of depression in victims. Boys and girls have surprisingly responded in similar ways in a number of cases of reported abuse.

However, obvious and noticeable differences in response have been observed in the reactions of both sexes. This again is a factor of a number of variables. Although there is insufficient number of boys who openly admit or report of sexual abuse, both boys and girls examined in the survey that produced this work responded to similar experiences in similar ways- stress-related symptoms, etc. For instance, girls are at a greater risk of abuse than boys and the response gathered through a series of interviews, examination of police reports and records of social workers, showed similar psychopathological manifestations. The general treatment of a combination of psycho-analytic and cognitive behavioural techniques have contributed positively to improvement of self-esteem, social behaviour and self-identity in both sexes. Invariably when the Gospel message is applied to both sexes, the miracle could be wonderful. Here lies the hope of a theologian.

Those maids abused by their "masters" have the tendency to exhibit more serious behavior problems than non-abused children with no psychiatric out-patient history. Symptoms of anxiety, depression, academic and behaviour problems as already stated were reported by a few teachers in Nigeria who happen to encounter such children who were victimised sometime. Such sexually abused "nannies" seem to exhibit a greater tendency of sexual aggression or seductive behaviour which may put them at a greater risk of revictimization. Some of the girls tend to be attracted to any older adult in an attempt to get attention because they are used to be "bed-mates" of older men who abused them early in life. A few male victims, to some extent, tried to reassert their masculine power and resentment through aggression, destructive or disobedient behaviour while depressive behaviour symptoms were more obvious in girls.

Psychotherapy is all right because it has its own role, yet there is a vacuum, a feeling of emptiness which only the Christian Gospel and message of salvation can satisfy. Christian theology has not worked out an elaborate and detailed methodological approach to the treatment of the sexually abused children in the way socio-psychology and therapists have done and that is why it seems to have occupied a great attention in the above discussion. The cleansing power of the gospel which clears the victim of the guilt of self-pity and self-blame needs to be made clear to him/her from the Bible. The follow-up stage of reintegration should come to clear the victim of the guilt which is capable of incapacitating him/her for life. The power that can declare the freedom of God lies not in psychology but in Christianity as expressed in the gospel. To this we turn now to in the next section as a practical theological discourse for the healing of a victim. Paul's emphatic message in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is clear on the punishment of those involved in sexual sin. Other passages exist. In recognition of the content of the Bible and its stand on practical life issues, the role of the Church can be worked out without necessarily going into the in-depth analysis of the physiology of human existence or the anatomy of human body.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHALLENGE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Although the incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse of children might be quite old in human society, the awareness of its existence is definitely new to many people. The Bible is clear on its condemnation of sexual immorality, particularly fornication, adultery, homosexuality, prostitution and other sex perversions. Yet there is no specific verse of the Bible condemning child sexual abuse. It is, nonetheless, one of the sexual sins that would exclude the perpetrators from the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In today's world, sexual

abuse of children is not only seen as a social evil and crime but also as a sin against God and divine principles. No wonder many people including non-Christians are engaged in a serious battle against it. The secular society has got a very detailed legislation against it in municipal law. Many agencies are seriously seeking a solution to it without even consulting the Church.

Invariably, some of the agencies currently engaged in the crusade to eradicate sexual abuse of children are manned by individuals who are committed to a life of faith in Jesus Christ. Thus their faith in Christ has unconsciously influenced their condemnation of an act that is not only sinful but also criminal and dehumanising. The Church through such members who have experienced the saving power of Jesus Christ should be involved in the same campaign for a total war on the danger which sexual abuse of children poses in society. Professionals like the Christian lawyer, Christian medical officer, Christian social welfare worker, Christian counsellor, Christian policeman, Christian clinical psychologist or Christian psychiatrist should act in concert with the clergyman who acts as the fulcrum on whom the contributions of other workers revolve. The church will not reject the contribution and methods of any agency provided such contributions and methods are not anti-God. She will need to decipher which of the methods and approaches will best fit into the Biblical injunctions and beliefs. It is unchristian to adopt any approach to render psychological normalcy to a patient if the method wrenches the heart of the Christian Gospel.

The Bible is clear on sin, repentance and salvation. Those involved in sexual immorality seem to be sin-sick and under the control of Satan. The Church should, therefore, not leave the protection and healing of sexually abused children only to the secular social welfare workers, psychologists, lawyers, medical doctors, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who may claim to have elaborate intellectual knowledge of the physical and psychological make-up of man. The theologian may not be an accomplished psychologist but he is the interpreter of the Word of God where he who made man has expressed his views and carefully laid down divine rules for a healthy life. Besides, the Psalmist fully acknowledged the unfathomable wisdom of God as the greatest scientist (Ps. 139:13-16). The Bible has fully accounted for God's interest in the cause of the weak and poor and has consistently championed their cause. The Church should therefore, not keep silent on such moral and social evils like the sexual abuse of young children. Preaching is not enough. There is need to complement the roles of the other workers in society who are trying to build a clean and morally just and stable society.

Preventive measures are numerous. The theoretical analysis of the incidence and prevalence of the sexual abuse of children made at the early part

of this study can be studied by a theologian as a preliminary step to the general understanding of the intricacies of the problem before a spiritual biblical solution is sought. If this is accepted by a theologian, he will then first intensify his Christian teaching on salvation of the individual as the first principles of practical Christian approach to the prevention of the crime. The teaching will help to heal both the victim and his/her attacker who also needs spiritual healing. One who is "sin-sick" and whose life is being controlled by the powerful evil forces can do any base and immoral thing. Sexual abuse of children is just a manifestation of the thoughts and minds which are not right with God.

Beginning with the victim first, a department of children's evangelism needs to be designed and developed by a very committed theologian. The name is not important but it should be a department that would be responsible for Bible Study and Christian religious programmes for children. It may be called Sunday School Department or Children's Evangelism Department or Ministry or any other name that a church chooses to call it. Through such ministries, children are made to know early in life God's view and position on matters of sexual immorality and other things necessary for salvation. The content of Proverbs 22:6 is still a timeless injunction from God. Well-trained teachers of the Bible whose Christian faith is not in doubt should be employed to be role models and character builders of the children in the church. Those who had been caught or known to have committed crime against children should never be involved in this type of programme. Children of different ages should be separated and some activities should be restricted to gender differences. No rumour of abuse should be ignored. Thorough investigation should be carried out to ascertain the veracity of any allegation or suspicion in order to retain the reputation of the church and the confidence of parents in the programme, so that they might continue to send their wards.

On the side of parents, they should be encouraged to appreciate their divine responsibility of providing both spiritual and physical needs of their children. It is, therefore, important to teach and train children through personal example. Parents should be helped to commit their lives to Christ through a number of Christian activities in a church. A sound Christian theology can be worked out from the Bible by a theologian to look for practical solutions to problems of life. The Bible has a strong and relevant answer to every human problem and the Christian should be directed and helped to find God's divine answers embedded in his Word. Here lies the importance of discussions in the church on social problems from the biblical and Christian perspective. If any parent gives his child a good start in life, the possibility of a morally sound society could be built and the family is the beginning of such a foundation and of any church. The children brought up in a strong Christian family are likely to avoid the lure and false enticement of peers or older adults. If a Christian child

is victimised, his or her strong faith in the Lord already built up can prompt him or her to report the case immediately for prompt treatment and such a child recovers faster and escapes the traumatic effect of the abuse in later years than is the case with children who do not know the Lord. A recent survey of children has shown that 30% who are from a strong Christian background and faith responded favourably to treatment faster than the others without a strong Christian faith and hope.

In addition to preaching, prayer should be intensified, for the life of a child shattered by the awful experience of sexual abuse. That of the paedophile should be rebuilt because it is also shattered by sin. Any known paedophile could be given an organised series of teaching and counselling sessions arranged by the church. It is not out of place for a church to ring up the police and social welfare department to arrange the arrest and confinement and treatment of hardened and unrepentant paedophiles for the safety of the children within an area. The church can engage the services of Christian lawyers and policemen to arrest and confine such dangerous people in places where they could be monitored and properly treated. This is already happening in some developed countries.

An elaborate programme of rehabilitation and reintegration of healed victims of sexual abuse should be developed by the church as a part of the whole ministry of the church. By this ministry, a strong follow-up programme should be organised to help clear both female and male victims of child sexual abuse of the sense of guilt and shame that usually torment a victim even years after the event. A practical teaching and ministration should emphasize that when a child becomes a Christian he/she should learn to forgive self and others, including those who attacked him/her. We shall later come to this point because of the problems which develop later in life from a lack of forgiveness. Some become overly aggressive in attacking others sexually in order to retaliate terrible experiences in childhood. Others experience depression, leading to frigidity and fear of sex, because they have not totally forgiven and forgotten a bitter experience of the past.

In many communities, the church serves as a centre of both social and spiritual activities where people often gather regularly for one programme or the other. Known paedophiles within a community, no matter who they are, should be denied access to close contacts with children. In homes, proven cases of incestuous fathers, stepfathers or uncles should be removed from the home and referred for individual or group psychotherapy and behavioural intervention. A church that enlists the support and permission of law enforcement agents can carry out this type programme more easily than any other group or individual because of the unique and special position that the church occupies in society.

A church counselling team should be mobilised to assist in homes run by social welfare organisations and other N.G.O.'s where victims of sexually abused children are treated and rehabilitated or where perpetrators of such crimes are given psychotherapy. The presence of the church is important to supply the spiritual element which is lacking in the package of therapy which the secular agencies offer.

A theologian who is versed and learned in Scriptures will know how to fit into such programmes and that is one of the challenges of Practical Theology- the ability to participate in secular events yet holding the power of the Gospel and making it shine in dark places. Practical Theology adds a divine face to every human activity, be it in industry, school, hospital, commerce, bank or games. In such homes the prayer and counselling team of the church, properly trained by their pastor, will support the therapy offered by the secular agencies with strong Christian teaching and prayers. Here lay chaplains trained by the church are found useful by the church to render a twenty-four hour ministry, even when the pastor is away on other assignments of the church. If the church is not strong financially to carry out an independent project, she can send trained Christian workers to assist as volunteers in government-sponsored or N.G.O.'s programmes. The ability to participate in an unobtrusive manner is a mark of Christian humility and virtue.

The ultimate goal of every treatment is to ensure that the shattered life of an abused child is rebuilt and also to ensure the child's safety from additional attack and molestation. This is where the church again should act as the custodian of every child, particularly those from poor homes where parents can not afford to provide protective measures. Parents should be taught the dangers of giving of their young children as nannies or house-helpers. Besides, a child who has been treated physically and psychologically still needs a strong Christian teaching of love, repentance, forgiveness and salvation.

We have mentioned this point earlier but it is important to underline it as a part of the practical, theological contribution to the programme of total healing of a child after an abuse. When a child or young person has been assured of his or her salvation, the guilt or self-blame or self-pity will clear. Grudge and anger block the chances of a happy heart. When some one is a Christian or offers his/her life to Christ in sincerity, the old things are washed away. This is where Paul's statement becomes relevant and appropriate. When one becomes a Christian, the one becomes a brand new person (2 Cor. 7:17), the old is past and the new sets in. The cleansing power in the blood of Jesus Christ is available to all who believe and an ex-victim of an abuse appropriates the promises of God, when he/she truly accepts Christ, the one has nothing to fear

again. A new life has set in. A new Lord and Master has been accepted and new loyalty is expected.

The Church must emphasize the unique privilege of a believer to all new converts. The assurance of salvation to a young believer by a highly anointed man of God representing the Church and the Lord himself is of immense value to the health of a healed victim of the sexually abused. A victim who becomes a Christian during the process or soon after the therapy will be made to accept the abundant promises reserved for him in Christ as a result of the new faith. The acceptance of biblical promises and obedience to the stipulations of forgiving one's enemies, even the attacker and one's self, will inevitably bring healing to the victim. The nightmares and trauma of the past incident will clear away and new joy will fill one's heart. A sincere faith in Jesus clears the feeling of self-blame and self-pity. Self-blame has often been used by unrepentant and unconverted victims of sexual child abuse in later years as a justification for the overwhelming feeling of powerlessness in relation to adults. Blaming one-self reinforces the child's sense of being "damaged goods", stigmatised or responsible for the abuse. A child who offers his/her life to Christ should, therefore, see oneself as a complete brand new person, washed in the blood of Christ. He/she should begin to live a life of hope and faith in God. The church is given the authority to declare this freedom and forgiveness to a truly repentant and converted person as a part of "making one whole" for the Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

No matter how weak we might be, however marred, spoiled or brutalised, every human being is made in the image of God and made for eternity. Our true human dignity is revealed in our appreciation of the fact that we are God's own creatures, made in his image. It is important that theology reminds man of this unique privilege, that he is a true image of God. The church's role in the "Ministry of Healing" is to recapture the "wholeness" in man which is often defaced or tainted when sin touches him. A *holistic theology* of healing incorporates all the contributions of other agencies and unifies them into the spiritual "whole" in Christ. That is how "recreation, salvation, redemption and wholeness" become an aspect of Practical Theology. This involves the process of taking a human being back to his original image of God which is polluted by any particle of sin.

So on realisation of the prevalence of the crime of sexual abuse of children in our contemporary society, the church should, as a matter of divine responsibility, include a programme that would make her ministry cover it as an important service. This is because any other form of therapy which doctors, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists offer still does not touch that aspect of

human life where the image of God is entrenched. It is the Church's ministration that repaints and restores the image to its normal brightness when it is defaced. In the recent past, it is the secular social agencies that have mapped out an elaborate programme for the treatment, prevention, and protection of children from child abuse. A theologian should have access to the current attempts of other welfare agencies interested in human health and blend all their efforts with his divine contribution that validates all other genuine contributions and roles.

Child sexual abuse is not only a serious social problem that affects a large proportion of the society, but is also a great sin against God and man because it tries to stain and deface that image of God in a human being. Treatment efforts of the church and other agencies should help the Church in her own attempt to restore the "dignity of a human being" by redeeming the fading image of God in him. There is need to focus on prevention of further attacks on children. Families and other agencies should help the church in her efforts to protect and preserve the health and life of our children for a better society. Since sexual abuse is a manifestation of a sinful life, Gospel teaching and preaching should be intensified by the church. A life submitted to the Lord will never be involved in such acts that threaten the life of society. Parents and all who love children should not oppose the church's spiritual care of the children and society in her evangelism. The "disease" of this sin will be cured if the Lord Jesus is given his rightful position there. That is the "panacea" to the immorality that is plaguing human life in the world. Theology should relate to the practical problems that plague man here on earth. Herein lies the responsibility of the church in this chaotic age.

End Notes

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- ⁱ G.V. Hamilton. *A Research in Marriage*. New York: Albert & C. Boni Pub. 1929. See also A.C. Kinsey et.al. *Sexual Behaviour in Human Male*. Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953.
- ⁱⁱ E.D. Leuman (ed). *The Social Organization of Sexuality*. Chicago: The University Press. (1994). Cf. R. Badgley et.al. *Sexual Offences against Children*. Ottawa: Canadian Government Pub. Centre, 1984.
- ⁱⁱⁱ M.Krull. *Freud and His Father*. N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986. Chapter 1.
- ^{iv} D. Finkelhor et.al. "Sexual Abuse of Adult Men and Women," *Child Abuse Magazine* 14 (1990), pp. 19-28.
- ^v D. Finkelhor et.al. "High risk children" in D. Finkelhor (ed). *Source book on Child Sexual Abuse*. Beverly Hill Ca. : Sage Pub., 1986, Chapters 2 & 3.
- ^{vi} See S. D. Peters et. al. "Prevalence" in *Source Book on Child Sexual Abuse*, D.Finkelhor (ed) pp. 10-15.
- ^{vii} D.Finkelhor. *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Reason*. N.Y.: Free Press, 1984.
- ^{viii} See C. Cosentino, et. al. "Sexual Behaviour Problems and Psychopathology Symptoms in Sexually-Abused Girls". *Journal of American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry* ,34 (1995) passim.
- ^{ix} See U.R. Onunwa & Israel Katoka, "Sexual abuse of children in Africa: Causes and Remedies, *JPT* , 15/3 (1994) 20-36.