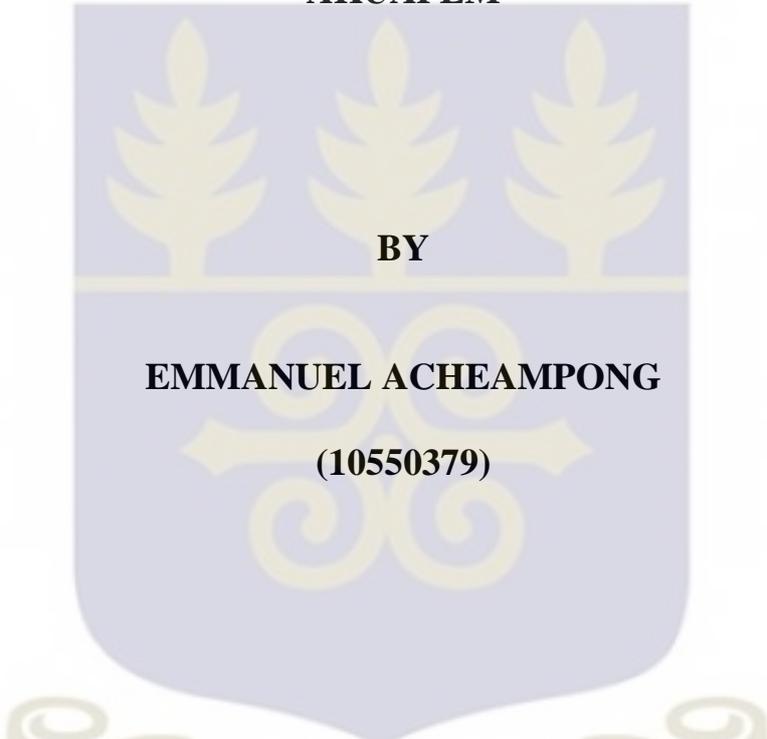


UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AMONG PRESBYTERIANS IN
AKUAPEM**

The image shows a large, faint watermark of the University of Ghana crest in the background. The crest is a shield-shaped emblem with a light blue background and yellow/gold symbols. It features three stylized leaves or branches at the top, a central circular motif with a cross-like shape, and decorative scrollwork at the bottom. The text of the thesis is overlaid on this watermark.

BY

EMMANUEL ACHEAMPONG

(10550379)

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.PHIL) DEGREE
IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS**

DECEMBER 2018

DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Emmanuel Acheampong for the award of M.Phil Degree in Study of Religions in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon under the Supervision of Dr. Ben-Willie K. Golo and Rev. Prof. Chris Thomas

.....
EMMANUEL ACHEAMPONG
(STUDENT)

.....
DATE

.....
Dr. Ben-Willie K. Golo
(SUPERVISOR)

.....
DATE

.....
Rev. Prof. Chris Thomas
(CO-SUPERVISOR)

.....
DATE

ABSTRACT

The Christian faith has several important doctrines. One of such doctrines is the doctrine of the Trinity. According to Trinitarian theologians, the doctrine is built on three biblical trusts: There is God, God exists in three persons and each of those persons is fully God. However, several criticisms have been raised concerning the theological appreciation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Major among these include Modalism (persons are the ways God expresses Himself), Arianism (the Son is a creature and not divine) and Tritheism (there are three distinct gods). These criticisms have led to the distortions of the theological affirmation of the doctrine. Therefore, for some Christians, the Trinity is a concept that confuses the understanding of the nature of God. This is explained by the fact that the doctrine remains one of the controversies in Christian theology to explain. Misconceptions about the Trinitarian nature of God therefore exist and have degenerated into a belief in God either as three distinct divine beings or as one God revealed in different ways at different times.

Christians understanding of the doctrine of Trinity and the relationship among the persons of the Trinity needs further empirical exploration. Though most empirical studies done regarding the Trinitarian nature of God are westernized, in Africa, particularly Ghana, limited literature seem to exist on the Presbyterian's conception of the doctrine. This study contributes to discussion and knowledge regarding Trinitarian theology and the contemporary questions and issues associated with it from the context of the Akropong-Akuapem Presbyterians' of Ghana.

Methodologically, this study employed a qualitative research method using in-depth interviews to explore the conception of the doctrine of the Trinity. The phenomenological research design was employed since it is the most ideal in exploring meanings people

attach to human phenomena such as their conception of the Trinity of God. The samples for data collection include the clergy and lay of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Akropong-Akuapem since it is one of the first and premier congregations of the Presbytery in Ghana. A sampling of the unit of analysis was done using purposive sampling. Inductive thematic analysis will be performed on the interview data where coding and theme development are directed by the content of the data.

Conceptually, the argument of this study was grounded in Perichoresis and Trinitarian theology which was identified mainly through contextualization. To deeply explore the issues, relevant theological literature, prominent scholarly work as well as relevant biblical texts from both the Old and New Testament were used.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear wife Cynthia and our quadruplets Ayeyi, Aseda, Nhyira and Adom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very much thankful to God for the ability He granted me to embark on my postgraduate studies at the University of Ghana and to complete this research on the understanding of the doctrine of Trinity among the Akuapem Presbyterians. Without his abiding grace, mercy and love, I could not have come this far and I am grateful to Him.

I acknowledge with deep gratitude the tremendous support I had from my supervisors, Dr. Ben-Willie K. Golo and Rev. Prof. Chris Thomas who made time out of their busy schedules to read my work at every stage and offered useful suggestions and advice. Without their support and direction, I could not have completed this work. May the good Lord bless them.

Also, I wish to thank all the people who graciously welcomed me to interview them for this study, especially Evang. Dr. Ebenezer Abboah- Offei, Rev. Dr. Victor Zizer, Rev. E.Y. Omenako and Rev. K.B. Asante.

Furthermore, I thank Mrs. Cynthia Acheampong, the Head of Language Department, Hark Mount Sinai Senior High School, Sir Wise, an English tutor at Okuapemman Senior High School, all in Akropong-Akuapem and Ms. Joyce Adu a staff at Institute of Chartered Accountant, Ghana, who edited the final work and offered useful suggestions to help put the material in the right shape.

Finally, I am indebted to Mrs. Matlida Amissah-Authur, the wife of the former Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, Mr. Jude Hama, former Scripture Union National Director, Ghana and Nana Akua Sarpong of Peduase for their financial support and encouragement throughout the programme of study.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GAC -	General Assembly Council
GET -	Grace Evangelistic Team
KJV -	King James Version
PCG -	Presbyterian Church of Ghana
PHB -	Presbyterian Hymn Book

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study	5
1.4 Research Questions	5
1.5 Scope of the Study	6
1.6 Methodology	7
1.6.1 Methods of Data Collection	7
1.6.2 Sources of data	8
1.6.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure	9
1.6.4 Instrumentation	10
1.6.5 Method of Data Analysis	11
1.7 Conceptual Framework	12
1.8 Literature Review	14
1.9 Ethical Considerations	21
1.10 Limitation of the Study	22
1.11 Organization of the Chapters	23
1.12 Significance of the Study	24
1.13 Conclusion	25
CHAPTER TWO	26
THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY	26
2.1 Introduction	26
2.2 What is the doctrine of Trinity	27
2.3 The origin of the Doctrine of Trinity	31

2.4 Understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity	35
2.5 Biblical Roots of the Doctrine of Trinity	37
2.6 Biblical Exposition on the doctrine of Trinity.....	38
2.7 Some Trinitarian Arguments	43
2.8 Relationship between the Persons of the Trinity.....	44
2.9 Theological Relevance of the doctrine of Trinity.....	45
2.10 African Theological understanding of the Trinitarian Doctrine.....	47
2.11 Conclusion.....	47
CHAPTER THREE.....	49
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY	49
3.1 Introduction	49
3.2 Historical Background of Presbyterianism.....	49
3.3 Study Area.....	53
3.3.1 Demographics	55
3.3.2 Culture	55
3.3.3 Religion.....	56
3.4 Presbyterianism	57
3.5 Conception of the doctrine of Trinity among Presbyterians	62
3.6 Introduction to the Akuapem State.....	63
3.7 Akuapem Concept of God.....	65
3.8 Brief History of Akropong Christ Church.....	69
3.9 Brief History of Grace Congregation, Akropong- Akuapem	70
3.10 Conclusion.....	72
CHAPTER FOUR.....	74
THE REALITY OF TRINITY AMONG AKUAPEM PRESBYTERIANS	74
4.1 Introduction	74
4.2 Presentation of Findings and Discussions	74
4.2.1 Background Information.....	74
4.2.2 Presbyterian Membership	77
4.3 Understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity	79
4.3.1 God Represented as Three persons	80
4.3.2 God Manifesting Himself in three Ways	80
4.3.3 One Divine Essence Possessed as three individual beings.....	81
4.4 The Persons of the Trinity	81

4.5 The Relationship between the Persons of the Trinity.....	82
4.6 Roles and functions of the persons of the Trinity.....	83
4.7 Arguments/ Debates/Misconceptions concerning the doctrine of Trinity.....	85
4.8 Understanding of God through the Trinity.....	88
4.9 Humanity and Divinity of the Son	89
4.10 The Trinity in Akuapem Presbyterian Practices/Activities.....	90
4.11 Living and Practicing the Trinity	92
4.12 Conclusion.....	95
CHAPTER FIVE.....	96
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	96
5.1 Introduction	96
5.2 Summary	96
5.3 Conclusions	100
5.4 Recommendations	101
5.4.1 Interaction between Theology and Philosophy.....	101
5.4.2 Training of Trinitarian Theologians	102
5.4.3 Development of a Trinitarian handbook.....	102
5.4.4 Trinity Sunday on the Almanac	103
5.4.5 Annual themes of the Church	103
BIBLIOGRAPHY	104
APPENDICES	109
Appendix A: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	109
Appendix B: THE APOSTLES CREED.....	112
Appendix C: THE NICENE CREED.....	113
Appendix D: THE ATHANASIAN CREED	114

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Membership across age at Akropong Christ Church	70
Table 2: Membership across age at Grace Congregation.....	72
Table 3: Gender of respondents	75
Table 4: Age (years) of respondents	75
Table 5: Educational Background of respondents	76
Table 6: Akuapem Indigeneityof Respondents	77
Table 7: Number of years of being a Presbyterian.....	77
Table 8: Trinity Understood by Respondents As:.....	79
Table 9: Roles and functions of the persons of the Trinity	84
Table 10: Understanding of God through the Trinity	88
Table 11: Attributes of God and the Trinity	89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: District Map of Akuapem North.....54

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

One of the most central statements of the Christian church is ‘I believe in God’¹, and this is equally the stand of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). The nature of God which is fundamental to all Christians is better understood through several doctrines of the church. The doctrines of the Presbyterian Church are based on reformed theology² which is derived from the teachings of persons like John Calvin, Zwingli, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards and Karl Barth just to mention but a few. The historical doctrine of the Presbyterian Church is summarized in documents³ such as the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt . In all these documents, one of such doctrines which stands tall and needs to be explored for better understanding in the church today is the doctrine of the Trinity.

According to Westminster Confession of Faith,

“ There is but one only living and true God: who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will for His own glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal, most just and terrible in His judgements, hating all sin and who will by no means clear the guilty. In the unity of the Godhead, there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor preceding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.”⁴

The component of the above confession has caught the attention of many individuals to have a second look at the doctrine.

¹ Rachel Henderlite, *A Call to Faith* (Virginia: John Knox Press, 1955), 29.

² James H. Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996), 17

³ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 19

⁴ Catalogue of Publications, *Westminster Confession of Faith*. (Glasgow, Free Presbyterian Publications, 1995), 24-27.

Kombo, in his book, *Theological Models of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, said the doctrine of Trinity is a great unknown. He added that the Trinity is viewed as a riddle wrapped up inside a puzzle and buried in an enigma making it difficult to understand or explain. The doctrine is also seen provoking challenge, figuring out on the bases of how an entity called the doctrine of the Trinity can be multiple (three) and at the same time single (one). The author stated that the puzzle on the doctrine of Trinity is so clearly contrary to any rational thought so as not to warrant a second thought from a sensible person. He added that even if, the Trinity could be understood, of what practical and religious value, will it have for ordinary people.⁵

If scholars like Kombo, have this to say about the doctrine of Trinity, then it will be prudent and of a good significance for researchers of our time to engage the doctrine of Trinity for a better understanding with its practical and religious values to the Christian faith.

According to Trinitarian theologians, the doctrine of the Trinity is built on three biblical trusts. There is God; God exists in three persons, and each of those persons is fully God.⁶ In other words, the doctrine of the Trinity recognizes that God is one God, co-existing in three distinct Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Contextually, the ambiguity of the term "person" has been noted by both Oneness and Trinitarian proponents as a source of conflict in understanding who God is.⁷ For many theologians, the doctrine of the Trinity enables Christians to speak of God in the most appropriate way and to comprehend and describe His being and this must be by all who appreciate and tries to describe his nature.

⁵ James Henry Owino Kombo, *Theological Models of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Carlisle Cumbria : Langham Global Library, 2016), 2

⁶ Fox P., *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001) , 17

⁷Alister McGrath E., *Understanding the Trinity*, (Michigan : Zondervan Publishing Company, 1990), 130

The word "Trinity" is a term used to denote the Christian belief that God exists as a unity of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of the persons is distinct from the other yet identical in essence. In other words, each is fully divine in nature but each is not the totality of the other persons of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is about one God, existing in three persons.⁸ Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian way of speaking about who God is and to highlight the nature of God. On this basis, Christian theology that is not based on the principles of the Trinity results in the teaching of heresies.⁹

Accordingly, while the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinguishable expressions of the one God, they are not three separate expressions of God. Thus, they are not each expressing only a fraction of God. Rather, the wholeness of God is expressed in each distinction. Overwhelmingly, the Bible teaches the Trinitarian concept of one God existing as three persons and not polytheism, that is, there are three separate Gods called the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Moving forward, the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity has always been an issue of debate for many philosophers, theologians, and for that matter Christians not forgetting the PCG. The philosophical problem with the doctrine of the Trinity is that if the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there is one God, then there is a logical problem. This problem has been known as the 'threeness-oneness' problem among theologians.¹¹ The debate has always been about the person of the Holy Spirit and that of the Son in relation to the Father. Thus, the relationship between the persons of the Trinity.

⁸ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*. (Virginia, John Knox Press, 1958), 106.

⁹ Ware, B.A., *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles and Relevance*. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 13.

¹⁰ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 106.

¹¹ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, (Wheaton Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 40.

For some Christians, the Trinitarian nature of God is a concept that constantly confuses them about who God is. The doctrine of Trinity is mysterious¹², which is accompanied by a great mystery. The doctrine of Trinity is seen as very difficult to understand.¹³ This is explained by the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity remains one of the most difficult beliefs of Christian theology to explain. The misconceptions about the Trinitarian nature of God has degenerated either into a belief in God as three distinct divine beings or as one God revealed in different ways at different times. Therefore, Christians understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and the relationship among the persons of Trinity needs further empirical exploration. Many theological works have emerged and many discussions have taken place at the academic level to re-conceive and re-consider the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christians understanding of God. However, most of the empirical studies are westernized and that in Africa, particularly Ghana, limited literature seem to exist especially on the Presbyterian conception of the doctrine of the Trinity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Like all other Christian denominations, Presbyterians believe that the doctrine of the Trinity affirms the oneness of God and also the doctrine affirms the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit¹⁴ as distinct Persons who reveal themselves as God. Although the doctrine of Trinity is abstract¹⁵ and esoteric¹⁶, the reality is that it is useful and important to the Christian faith. There are however so many misconceptions and ambiguities' surrounding the understanding of the doctrine of Trinity. It, therefore, raises curiosity as to how Akuapem Presbyterian comprehends the doctrine of the Trinity within their socio-cultural

¹²Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*. (Wheaton Illinois: Crossway Books, 2011), 20

¹³ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God* , 20

¹⁴ Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations: The doctrine of God in the Majority World*. (Cumbria: Langham Partnership, 2015), 55.

¹⁵ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 107

¹⁶ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 107.

context beyond the controversies. Again, how do they comprehend the Trinity and how do they express this in ways that deal with the heresies and contradictions to the doctrine?

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to explore the Akuapem Presbyterian understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and how this is expressed in their Christian life and relationship with the persons of the Trinity within their context.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the Akuapem Presbyterian understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and the arguments surrounding it.
2. Investigate how the doctrine of the Trinity is lived and practice among Presbyterians in Akuapem.
3. Discuss how the doctrine of the Trinity influences the Akuapem Presbyterians' understanding of God and how they respond to this doctrine in their relationship with the persons of the Trinity.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

The main research question is:

How do Akuapem Presbyterians understand the doctrine of Trinity and in which ways do they express the doctrine in their Christian life within the church setting?

Sub Questions:

1. What is the doctrine of Trinity and the debates surrounding it?

2. How do Presbyterians in the Akuapem society understand the doctrine of the Trinity?
3. How do Presbyterians in Akuapem live and practice the doctrine of the Trinity?

1.5 Scope of the Study

Akuapem houses one of the first and premier congregations of PCG. That is, the history of PCG will not be complete until mention is made of Akropong- Akuapem in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It is believed that the weather condition there was very favourable to the early missionaries who brought Christianity into the country. The first and premier congregation that has existed over the period was the Akropong Christ Church which was one of the churches selected for such research work. The Grace Congregation, on the other hand, is a modern church birthed from the Akropong Christ Church. The Grace Congregation has a characteristic of modernism to traditional Presbyterianism in their way of worship and it spells out variation in the order of service of the two congregations which helped the researcher to effectively and meaningfully measure the peoples understanding of the doctrine of Trinity .

The Researcher is familiar with the practices of the selected congregations and had a good rapport with members who are key informants from whom data was solicited. The doctrine of the Trinity had also become an essential component of the Christian faith since it forms the basis for an argument in instances where the faith of Christians is challenged by other religions.

1.6 Methodology

This study employed the qualitative research method using in-depth interviews to explore the concept of the doctrine of the Trinity among Presbyterians. The qualitative research method is an exploratory method which is used to gain an understanding of certain underlying reasons on how individuals try to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions. Qualitative research should involve critical self- scrutinizing by the researcher, that is, the researcher must constantly take stock of certain actions of the people to be interviewed and always be guided by active reflexivity.¹⁷ The qualitative research method is based on the fact that a researcher cannot be neutral or objective or detached from the knowledge and evidence they are generating. Instead, they should seek to understand their role in the process.¹⁸

The application in this study is based on the richness and depth of its explorations and descriptions on the doctrine of Trinity. Thus, the qualitative approach is used to gain information and deeper understanding of the diverse conceptions of the doctrine of the Trinity among Presbyterian since it has the ability to uncover complex understanding and opinions. Since qualitative studies are used in understanding and describing the world of human experience, it was the optimal approach to use in investigating the understanding and conception of the Akuapem Presbyterians on the doctrine of the Trinity. In qualitative research, the sample space is typically small and respondents are selected to fulfil a given data.¹⁹

1.6.1 Methods of Data Collection

Collection of the relevant qualitative data for this study was done using interview guides where open-ended interviews were conducted with the participants. This helped the

¹⁷ Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 55

¹⁸ Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 55

¹⁹Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 55

respondents with the opportunity to voice out their opinions and views on the doctrine of the Trinity.

Prior appointments with the key informants were secured. At the meeting with each respondent, the purpose of the study was explained, and all questions in this regard answered. The responses from the interviews were audio-recorded and complemented with written notes (i.e. field notes) by the researcher with the permission of the participants. Written notes include observations of both verbal and non-verbal behaviours' as they occurred and immediate personal reflections about the interview.

1.6.2 Sources of data

The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data.

The primary source of data was obtained directly from the study's unit of analysis (ordained and lay members of the Presbyterian Church) through the use of interview guides. The primary data collection method provides original data directly from the study population and un-biased information, although the method could be time-consuming.

The success of the research depends more on the information provided by the correspondence and so a due procedure must be followed to get the best for the data collection. The response from the interviews was audio-recorded and complemented with written notes (i.e., field notes) by the researcher with the permission of the participants. Written notes include observations of both verbal and non-verbal behaviours as they occurred and immediate personal reflections about the interview. Data collection was carried out in English and a local Ghanaian language predominantly Akuapem- Twi depending on which language the participant was most comfortable with. Those who opted for the Akuapem Twi interviewed were transcribed for better placement within the

context of the research. Each interview lasted between 30- 40 minutes to avoid interviewer fatigue.

Secondary data, on the other hand, was obtained from the Church reports and other publications (books) on the subject of study from referred journals, theses and theological lectures, catechisms just to mention but a few. The use of secondary data in this study is to make the data collection more specific since the researcher will be able to make out the gaps and deficiencies, and any additional information that needs to be collected.

1.6.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The unit of analysis, that is the study population, includes the ordained and lay members of the PCG in Akropong- Akuapem specifically that is, Akropong Christ Church and Grace Congregation all of PCG. This choice was by the fact that PCG started from Akropong-Akuapem in December 1828 when the Basel Missionaries first landed on the Gold Coast. The Basel Mission made a significant contribution to the nation-building in the Gold Coast as they established and developed the first and real school system²⁰ in the town. The benefactors of this school system who were taught in their native language were seen as leaders and catechist of the congregation who were always teaching the other members of the church.

Akropong Christ Church, the First Presbyterian Church is therefore seen as a typical and a traditional Presbyterian Church whilst Grace Congregation depicts a transformed nature of Presbyterianism. It should be put on record that, the peculiarity associated with these churches makes it possible for people with various reasons to travel from far and near to worship with these two churches. Notable among the reasons is to be with the first Presbyterian Church in the country with the name “Opanyi de Panyi” associated with the

²⁰ Maureen Iheanacho, *Theophilus Opoku – Indigenous Pastor and Missionary Theologian*, 1842-1913(Accra: Sub Saharan Publishers, 2014), 11-12.

Akropong Christ church and the healing and deliverance focus of Christianity within the Grace Congregation.

Sampling was done purposively since it is used in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth studies. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. The clergy and the lay members of the Church were purposively selected since the researcher wants to discover, understand and gain insights into the understanding and conceptions of the doctrine of the Trinity, and must therefore, select a sample from which the most can be learned.

However, the purposive sampling technique has the following weaknesses:

The sample has not been chosen using random selection, making it impossible to ascertain the possible sampling error. Indeed, the selection of units to be included in the sample is based on ease of access (those who are willing to grant interview readily and sincerely without any force).

It is also impossible to make statistical inferences from the sample to the population. This could lead to problems of generalization.

A sample size of fifteen (15) Presbyterians participated in the study. In the case of qualitative research, small samples of less than twenty (20), enhances the validity of fine-grained and in-depth inquiry.²¹

1.6.4 Instrumentation

Interviews can be a great source of information and are a commonly used method in qualitative studies. Interviews may be structured, semi-structured or open-ended depending on the researcher's familiarity and knowledge about the study and the purpose

²¹ Crouch, M., "The Logic of Small Samples in Interview Based Quality Research". *Social Science Information*, 45, no 4, (2006) : 483-499

of the interview, as well as the nature of the study.²² Collection of the relevant qualitative data for this study was done using interview guides where open-ended interviews were conducted with the participants. This was to present the respondents with the opportunity to voice their opinions and views on the doctrine of the Trinity. To ensure that the interview guide contains relevant items that can answer the research questions and objectives, the instrument was structured into sections with sections focusing on the objectives of the study .

The first section, however, elicits the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The major demographic variables include age, gender, highest educational background, ethnicity and marital status. These demographics are relevant in exploring how they relate to the research questions and objectives of the study. Specifically, the interview guide covers a wider range of items relating to the research questions including Conception of the Trinity among Presbyterians, Understanding of God through the Trinity, Augments/ Debates/ Misconceptions of the doctrine of the Trinity among Presbyterians, Importance of the doctrine of the Trinity to Presbyterians, the application of the doctrine of the Trinity among Presbyterians, Understanding of the interrelatedness of the Persons of the Trinity, how Presbyterians live and practice the Trinity, Presbyterian teachings that promote the understanding of the Trinity just to mention but a few.

1.6.5 Method of Data Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis was utilised on the interview data. Under inductive thematic analysis, coding and development of themes are dependent on the data content. Specifically, after the field study, both written and recorded materials will be immediately transcribed. The actual analysis begins with reading through the transcribed responses and

²² C. J Drew, L. M. Hardman and L. J. Hosp, *Designing and Conducting Research in Education*. (CA Sage: Thousand Oaks, 2008).

listening to the audio records in order to have a good grasp of all the data. The transcriptions will be very detailed to capture features of talk such as emphasis, speed, tone of voice, timing and pauses.

The key ideas and emerging themes from the interviews will be identified. These themes will then be pooled together and integrated into a common one. Thereafter, a generation of concepts for ease of organizing the presentation of the findings will be done.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

The study was grounded in contextualization as seen under Trinitarian theology, that is, the doctrine of the Trinity. The researcher was of the view that the best way to solicit for peoples understanding of a concept such as the doctrine of Trinity was to be carried out in the field of contextualization. The word contextualization was first coined in the early 1970s in the circles of the theological education fund for the church's ministry.²³ It is therefore seen that the basic argument from David Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* is that missionary message of the Christian church incarnated itself in the life and world of those who embrace it.²⁴ Theology that is contextualized realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms and so forth are to be considered along with scripture and tradition as valid sources for theological expression.²⁵ Doing theology contextually means doing theology that takes into description the faith experience of the past that is recorded in scripture and kept alive, preserved, defended and perhaps even abandoned or concealed.²⁶ In addition, contextual theology takes into account the experiences of the present indicating that theology needs to address the full experiences and context of the

²³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll New York : Orbis Books, 2007), 420.

²⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 421

²⁵ Stephens B, Bevans, SVD,, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002) , 4

²⁶ Bevans, SVD,, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 5.

past.²⁷ According to Bruce J. Nicholls, contextualization is defined as “the translation of the unchanging content of the gospel of the kingdom into a verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their separate culture and within a particular existential situation.”²⁸ George W. Peters also looked at contextualization as a means to discover the legitimate implication of the gospel in a given situation.²⁹ Harvie Conn also identifies with the above definition as “the process of conscientization of the whole people of God to the hermeneutical claims of the gospel.”³⁰

Notwithstanding the above definition of the term contextualization, it serves to underscore the fact that they all enjoy some common grounds when it comes to using it to explain a concept with a belief. Theologically, contextualization can be analyzed in terms of the theology from which they emanate. Despite the fact that the theological root differs in a variety of respects, one of its important differences has to do with the way in which scripture is viewed because the Bible is the product of human authorship and divine inspiration.³¹ Hesselgrave David, in his book, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally, An Introduction to Missionary Communications* asserts “Contextualization can be thought of as the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, words and will of God in a way that is faithful to God’s revelation, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of the Holy Scripture, and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential context. Contextualization is both seen to be verbal and non-verbal and has to do with theologizing, bible translation, interpretation and at times application in lifestyles,

²⁷ Bevans, SVD, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 5.

²⁸ Nicholls Bruce J., “Theological Education and Evangelization”, In Douglas, *Let the Earth Hear*, 647

²⁹ David J.Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An introduction to Missionary Communication*, (Michigan : Zondervon Publishing House Grand Rapids, 1991), 136

³⁰ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*: 137

³¹ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*: 142.

evangelism, Christian instruction, and church planting just to mention but a few, which are all major activities involved in carrying out of the Great Commission.³²

Within the broader text Contextualization is seen as relating and applying the gospel's profound wisdom to transform individuals in a community in a practical, sensible, relational, behavioral and workable way to address issues of human need, belief and behaviour. Contextualization, in Africa and for that matter Ghana within the Akuapems recognizes culture as a prominent virtue to assess peoples understanding of a particular concept, such as understanding the doctrine of Trinity in their setting.

1.8 Literature Review

In this section, an attempt has been made to bring out relevant information on the doctrine of Trinity from scholarly data. The literature review has therefore been on the explanation of the doctrine of Trinity, the persons, that is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, their functions or roles, and how the church perceives the doctrine among other things.

Millard J. Erickson, in his book, *Making Sense of the Trinity* demonstrates the biblical foundation, logic and importance of the doctrine of Trinity.³³ Erickson stamped on the reality of the doctrine and echoed that it is taught and presupposed throughout scripture and the most significant scripture verse is in Deuteronomy 6:4.³⁴ The author added that the teaching regarding God's oneness or the Trinity is not restricted to the Old Testament but the New Testament portions like James 2:19 which mention belief in one God.³⁵

³²Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 143 – 144.

³³ Millard Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, (USA : Baker Academy, 2000), 18.

³⁴ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 18.

³⁵ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 18.

Erickson has given the historical account of the Trinity which entails the deity of the Son as well as that of the Father. The church began preaching its messages on the deity of Jesus Christ and that of the Father and assumed that both were God. Soon people began to ask questions regarding what it meant, in trying to resolve the differences, the doctrine of Trinity emerges, that all three, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are divine, but they are not three Gods but one. It became necessary for the church to hold onto the new doctrine of God's three-in-oneness. Belief in the deity of the Holy Spirit stems from the Council of Nicea and the Council of Constantinople in 381³⁶ and it was stated that the deity of the Holy Spirit is less directly taught in Scripture than that of the Father and of the Son.

Some groups saw the doctrine of the Trinity as an obstacle to faith and hence teaching that was a mistake in the first place posing a hindrance and an embarrassment to Christianity. They added that the doctrine could have been omitted from the Christian faith and theology without any loss. However, the author enumerates some of the importance of the doctrine as a major distinguishing feature of Christianity which sets it apart from other religions. First, he reiterated that the doctrine is important to other doctrines of the faith like salvation. The researcher takes an equal stand with the author on the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity in our present time.

Secondly, Erickson pointed out that, sometimes the idea used is that the persons of the Trinity hold the same property in joint tenancy, that is, what belongs to one belongs to the other. The view is that if one person in the joint tenancy dies, the other receives the other person's share. It comes out that none can act without the other; each partner becomes liable for the actions of the other. This stress on more of "threeness" than the "oneness".³⁷ The oneness is more of a legal or biological oneness than the oneness of essence. Erickson

³⁶ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 26.

³⁷Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 56

goes on to describe the idea of the interpenetration of life and personality within the Godhead, as bound together in such a close unity that the life of each flows through each of the other, and each has access to the thought and experiences of the other and also all three are involved in all of the works of God.³⁸ This reality is expressed by the Greek word perichoresis.³⁹ or the Latin terms circuminsessio or circumincessio.⁴⁰ To the researcher, Leonardo Boff, in his book, *Trinity and Society*, puts it better. “The relationship of communion between the three Persons, one totally within the other, the fact of Father, Son and Holy Spirit being consubstantial, allow contemplation of the full interpenetration of one Person by another.”⁴¹ This describes their relationship as cohabitation, co-existence and interpenetration of the divine Persons by one another. There is a complete circulation of life and a perfect co-equality between the Persons, without any anteriority or superiority of one over another. He added that everything in them is common and communicated one to another, except what cannot be communicated: in other words what distinguishes one from the other. It was explained that the Father is fully in the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son is fully in the Father and the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is fully in the Father and the Son.

Erickson again pointed out to offer a model or analogy of the relationship among the members of the Godhead which will help in the understanding of the phenomena. The model was seen as all three Persons constitute three centres of consciousness within the one being, capable of interacting with one another. It was added that the Persons of the Trinity are bound together by a centripetal power of love which makes them inseparable.⁴²

³⁸ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 64

³⁹ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 57

⁴⁰ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, (London : Burns and Oaths/Search Press Ltd, 1988), 93

⁴¹ Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 93

⁴² Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 67.

Erickson, in his concluding chapter mentioned of some intellectual problems⁴³ connected with the Christian belief which challenges one's faith on the trinity. It comes about as a result of what seems to some people to be unethical⁴⁴ aspects of God's nature and actions. One of such unethical issues is about the problem of evil, which by all standards describe the most serious intellectual challenge to Christian belief. If God exhibits all of his abilities and powers, then he is able to prevent natural disasters, diseases, human mistreatment of other humans just to mention but a few. If God is all-loving, he must prevent all the under listed evils, yet evil is very much and obviously part of our life in this world. In addition, the scholars put it that, the idea of atonement⁴⁵ is unethical or improper. The Scripture puts it that God the Son has assumed the place of humans, bearing the penalty of their sins. The Father has laid that guilt on the Son, with the consequent necessity of death and some see it as radically unethical arrangement propounded by the Father for the Son to suffer.

The Trinity is a necessary and proper theological inference drawn out of biblical materials or in other words, there are biblical foundations⁴⁶ of Trinitarian faith and without the doctrine of the Trinity, the biblical material cannot make sense.⁴⁷ Similarly, Ware agrees to this by noting that in the scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity is revealed. He maintains that this doctrine is built on biblical truths such as "there is one God, God exists in three distinct persons and each of those persons is fully God."⁴⁸ In addition, it is generally believed that any theology not based on the principles of the Trinity results in the teaching of heresies.⁴⁹ If any doctrine makes Christianity Christian, surely it is the

⁴³Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 74.

⁴⁴ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 74.

⁴⁵ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 74.

⁴⁶ Anne Hunt, *Trinity*, (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 5.

⁴⁷ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 5.

⁴⁸ Ware, B.A. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles and Relevance*. (Wheaton: Crossway Books 2005),

⁴⁹ Heresy, according to its Greek root word denotes "opinion" or "school of thought".

doctrine of the Trinity and this comes about as a result of the fact that “the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed are all structured around the three-in-one God”, and therefore indicates the essential importance of the Trinity.⁵⁰ Three main heresies exist in contradiction to the Trinitarian doctrine. These are Modalism (the persons are ways God expresses himself, as in Oneness theology), Arianism (the Son is a creature and not divine, as with Jehovah’s Witnesses), and Tritheism (there are three distinct gods, as in Mormonism and Hinduism).”

The central tenet of Modalism is that God has made himself known in three different forms or modes and this was how Ware⁵¹ views it. This heretical view was espoused by an early Christian named Sabellius who proposed that there is only one God, God the Father who decided to manifest himself in the “mode” of the Son and thus entered into human history as Jesus Christ of Nazareth.⁵² The biblical examples of the baptism of Jesus, or Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, according to Ware demonstrate that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present at the same time.⁵³

Arianism was espoused by a man named Arius, who was a Presbyter from Alexandria, and Arianism denied the full deity of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ Arius did not believe that God the Son was created by God the Father, nor did the Holy Spirit. Arius proposed that Jesus was fully human, the highest created being of God but was not fully God. To support their view, Arians depended heavily upon biblical texts such as John 1:14; 3- 16, 18 and 1 John 4:19 that call Christ God’s “only begotten” Son. If Christ were “begotten” by God the Father, they reasoned, it must mean that he was brought into

⁵⁰ Lewis Ayers. *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

⁵¹ Ware, *The Doctrine of The Trinity: Historically Assailed but Biblically Affirmed in The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, (Louisville Kentucky, 2013),

⁵² Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, “Against Sabellius. In Nicene and Post- Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church” vol. IX, edited by P. Schaff. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1891.

⁵³ Ware, B.A. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles and Relevance*, 13.

⁵⁴ Ware, *The Doctrine of The Trinity*, 3

existence by God the Father . Arians sought to justify this view by arguing that from human experience, the word “beget” refers to a father’s role in conceiving a child. Arians also pointed to Colossians 1:15 that refers to Christ as “the first-born of all creation” to substantiate their argument that Christ was at some point brought into existence by God the Father, and was therefore not of the same nature as God.

In recent times, Arianism is the part of the official teaching of Jehovah’s Witnesses, a cult which was founded in 1881 by a man named Charles Taze Russel. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that there is no biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity and that there is only one divine being from all eternity. This divine being is Jehovah God, the creator and preserver of the universe and all things.⁵⁵

Tritheism teaches that the Trinity consists of three equal, independent and autonomous beings, each of whom is divine.⁵⁶The doctrine of Trinity according to the Christian does not mean there are three gods and this has been the stand of Unitarians⁵⁷ who are always charging Christians as such. Tritheism places a strong emphasis on the plurality of the Godhead but at the same time deemphasizes the unity that the biblical doctrine of the Trinity would espouse. The conclusion of this heretical teaching is to say that God is three persons and each person is fully God.

However, there are three manifestations of the being God. It is the being God that has manifested Himself to us in three personalities of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son due to incarnation for the purpose of paying the price for our sins and meeting the just requirement of the law has a human and divine nature. The two natures are however not to be confused. The Holy Spirit is God. You see in the work of the Holy Spirit as a comforter

⁵⁵Ware, *The Doctrine of The Trinity*, 3.

⁵⁶ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father, God the Son*,(Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1996). 85

⁵⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father, God the Son*, 85

that He manifests in human form. He is not an abstract object but a person. In this way, we have a Trinity: One God, three persons.⁵⁸

A study by Ware concluded that the Trinitarian teaching of the character and nature of God should provide Christians with an unshakeable confidence in knowing that while this doctrine is unique to biblical Christianity and questioned by those who deny the truth of God's clear revelation, it has and will continue to stand the test of time.⁵⁹ The one true God eternally exists in three distinct but equal persons who are fully God. The words of the Apostle Paul eloquently capture this truth when he says, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Cor. 13:14).

Anthony concluded that the origin, unity, goal and fulfilment of the Church and of her mission are all found in the Trinitarian life and mission,⁶⁰ which is worked out in the Church and through her. Into this restored communion and love and transfiguration, the world is continually called to become the new creation within the old. Thus the Church is always bringing the world into the Church and the life of the Holy Trinity in order to be transfigured, and through this transfiguration, the Church, in turn, bears witness in the World of the new creation and eternal life in God. According to Boff, Christian faith recognizes the Trinity, that is, the divine communion of three distinct persons, equal in dignity and existing in the reciprocity of love and life, the prototype of everything else, the ecclesial community in its visible social reality which individuals should model the Trinity through an egalitarian and communitarian organization.⁶¹ The Trinity, Boff insisted,

⁵⁸ Grobler, H.B., "The Role of God in the Father/Son relationship during Identity Formation"- A Gestalt Theoretical Perspective. (Koers Online) 75, no 2, (2010):387-403

⁵⁹Ware, *The Doctrine of The Trinity*, 3.

⁶⁰ Anthony Kelly, *The Holy Trinity: Source of Unity in the Church, the Core of the Church's Life, and the Fountain of the Church's Mission*. (Wilmington, Del. :Michael Glazier, 2016)

⁶¹ Hunt, *Trinity*, 123.

means more than just entering into the divine life in the next life, created as we are for communion with God. Boff continually argued that the Trinity, therefore, is the model in this life for our society in general and our church in particular.⁶² The Trinity must, therefore, serve as inspiration and model for our social structures and relationships, motivating and indeed demanding structures that are characterized by individual participation. The understanding of the Trinity must, therefore, be seen in an individual's life and character. In addition, LaCugna puts it that the theoretical framework of Trinitarian theology yields a wisdom, a discernment, a guide for seeing the various hand of God at work in our salvation and it informs our understanding of how we should live our lives and what it is that supports the flourishing of human beings and of all creation.⁶³

It could, therefore, be observed from the above position of the authors that an engagement of the above stands of the individuals will bring about the best understanding of the concept of the Trinity among the Presbyterians in Akuapem.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

Adherence to ethics in research is critical in promoting the rights of research participants. The significant ethical issues to be considered in this study included respondents' consent and confidentiality. To secure the consent of the selected participants, permission was sought from the leadership/ Session of the Presbyterian Churches selected by explaining all important details of the study, including its aims and purpose, while confidentiality of the participants would be ensured by not disclosing their names or personal information on the consent form. Only relevant details that would help in answering the research questions were included.

⁶² Hunt, *Trinity*, 123.

⁶³ Hunt, *Trinity*, 181.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants would be made aware that they are not obliged to participate in the study and are free to withdraw from the study at any time without justification or prejudice. Gaining access to research sites involves obtaining permission to sites and individual and negotiating approval with these individuals at a site who can facilitate the collection of research data.⁶⁴

To gain access into the Church to conduct this study, a letter of introduction was obtained from the University to the leadership of the Church, explaining that the student was a researcher who was on an academic research assignment and should be given the necessary assistance.

1.10 Limitation of the Study

The research base was limited to Akuapem Presbyterian's resident in Akropong understanding of the doctrine of Trinity due to time and resources. The research seeks to examine such an important concept only from a perspective of the individuals who specifically worshipped with the two chosen congregations out of the five PCG churches in Akropong Township. The selected churches helped in the generalization of the understanding of the doctrine of Trinity among the Akuapem Presbyterians and the PCG as a whole.

In addition, another limitation had to do with the researcher's background as a Christian and his interaction with other preachers and speakers who make pronouncements such as "Don't expect to understand the Trinity, just believe it or accept it"⁶⁵ which had the tendency of influencing his selecting of the research topic. Nevertheless, he kept most of

⁶⁴ Creswell J.W., *Educational research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluation Qualitative and Quantitative Research (2nded)*, (New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005).

⁶⁵ Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, (Cumbria : Langham Global Library, 2015), 23.

these inclinations and views under control and approached the study objectively. Also, the phenomena that were studied were a bit challenging since Christians at times had to explain a belief that on the surface makes no sense and appear to be unnecessarily complicated⁶⁶, however, the researcher was able to take note of the dominant issues on the doctrine for description and analysis.

1.11 Organization of the Chapters

The above research has been organized under five main chapters as listed below:

Chapter One gives the general background to the whole study. The areas under consideration included an introduction to the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives, research questions, scope and its limitation of the study. The methodology defines the method of data collection, sources of data being primary and secondary, the sampling size and the sampling procedure, instrumentation and finally captures the method of data analysis. Other important components of the chapter include the ethical consideration, Literature Review, Conceptual Framework, Organization of the Chapters and Significance of the study.

Chapter Two discusses in details the doctrine of Trinity. The study did a discussion on what the doctrine is all about, the biblical roots of the doctrine of the Trinity, conception of Trinity, Trinity and the Bible, Trinitarian arguments surrounding the doctrine of Trinity, relationship between the persons of the Trinity, theological relevance of the doctrine to the Christian, and African Theological understanding of the Trinitarian Doctrine just to mention but a few.

⁶⁶Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*,23.

Chapter Three looks at an investigation into the Presbyterians understanding of the doctrine of Trinity. In doing so, the historical background of PCG was looked at and that of Akuapem Presbyterianism. A brief history of the two congregations (Akropong Christ Church and Grace Congregation, Akropong-Akuapem) of the PCG selected for the study was considered.

Chapter Four discusses how the doctrine of the Trinity influences the Akuapem Presbyterians understanding of God and how they respond to this doctrine in their relationship with the persons of the Trinity. The session considers some responses and findings to the doctrine of the Trinity and application of the doctrine of the Trinity among Akuapem Presbyterians and the above findings were discussed accordingly.

Chapter Five captures the summary, conclusions and some recommendations to the individuals as well as the PCG as a whole and also how the controversies surrounding the concept of the Trinity could be managed for the growth and betterment of the church.

1.12 Significance of the Study

The importance of the doctrine of the Trinity to the believer cannot be ignored since it focuses on the central part of the Christians belief in God. Denial of the doctrine of the Trinity implies directly or indirectly, a denial of the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit.⁶⁷For Christian teachings, this study will help to promote Christians' understanding of the relationship between God the Son and God the Holy Spirit to God the Father. This has become necessary as part of laying out the constraints that a solution must satisfy the logical problem of the Trinity in order to preserve an orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity among Christians. Exploring Presbyterians understanding of the

⁶⁷Jowers D.W., "The reproach of Modalism: A difficulty for Karl Barth's doctrine of the Trinity." 2003. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 56(2): 231-246.

doctrine of the Trinity is essential for the elaboration of vital and relevant teachings for the shaping of the Christian life.

For the Presbyterians in Akuapem, the findings of this study will help them understand the three persons of God and their interrelations. Specifically, the findings of this study will help them recognize the God they meet in the Bible, in history and in their own lives as well as God's complexity, otherness and mystery.

In academia, this study is expected to expand the frontier of knowledge regarding Trinitarian theology and the contemporary questions and issues associated with the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, this research will expand the philosophical and theological discussions on the fundamental importance of the doctrine of the Trinity.

1.13 Conclusion

The doctrine of Trinity belongs to the core of Christian beliefs. The church and for that matter, PCG is seen always reciting the phrase “Father, Son and the Holy Spirit” in most of their liturgies. The question that needs to be asked is, does the doctrine of the Trinity make any difference to the individual’s belief? Do the Christian or believer of today understand the confessions being made daily in their fellowship with their maker with reference to the Trinity? Notwithstanding, its familiarity, most Christians seem not to make meaning out of it, let alone to live it or practice it in their everyday life. It does therefore not affect their Christian life in any way. It is against this background that the doctrine of Trinity must be studied in earnest for the individual to come to terms with the value it adds to their theology. Trinity, with all its challenges, needs to be appreciated and understood to some extent by all who affirms it in their faith and this is what the study seeks to do in line with the PCG in Akropong-Akuapem.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY

2.1 Introduction

As the church gains more popularity and more established, Christians further refined the mystery of the relation between the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in Philosophical terms just as it did occur at the council of Nicaea 325 and Chalcedon 451.⁶⁸ The Christian community then and now wisely placed the Nicene Creed within the liturgy of the church, emphasizing that God's nature and ways are mysterious, and cannot be encapsulated in a dogmatic formula. The divine-human encounter takes place with God, one in three persons, God transcendent yet with us and for us. It is believed that the way we think about God affects the way we respond to him. If you think of God as powerful, He manifests Himself with power in your life. Every individual has a theology and that is how you see and experience the nature of God. In other words, our theology affects the way we live and the way we see things around us. Most Christians including those who belong to PCG view God as triune.

According to John Macquarrie, in his book, *Christian Theology*, stated emphatically that the Christian confessed: "For us, there is one God, the Father, from whom all things and for whom we exist; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."⁶⁹ Further development brought about the expression in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It is against this background that Trinitarian theology puts the Trinity at the centre of all doctrinal understanding, influencing everything we believe and understand about God. The chapter, therefore, considers what the doctrine of the Trinity is all about, the roots of Trinity, Conception of the Doctrine of the Trinity, Trinity and the

⁶⁸ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 9.

⁶⁹ John Macquarrie, *Christian Theology*. (London : SCM Press Ltd, 1994), 191.

Bible, Biblical Support of the Doctrine of the Trinity, The Trinity and the Old Testament, The Trinity and the New Testament, Trinitarian Arguments, Relationship between the Persons of the Trinity, Theoretical Relevance of the doctrine of Trinity and African Theological understanding of the Trinitarian Doctrine just to mention but a few.

2.2 What is the doctrine of Trinity

The doctrine of Trinity of the Godhead is a constructed biblical revelation that teaches Christians more about the nature of God or how He exists. God is seen not to exist as a personal Spirit being alone but exhibits His nature as the Holy Trinity. Trinity in simple terms according to Rachel Henderlite, in his book *A Call to Faith*, put it as “there are three persons in the Godhead”.⁷⁰ Trinity is the union of three divine persons, that is, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, in one divinity, so that all the three are one God as a substance, but three persons. The term Trinity is formed from “tri” meaning three and “nity” meaning unity. According to the same author, certain theologians have understood the Trinity to mean one divine essence possessed by three individual beings⁷¹ or taken to mean one being living in three relationships as a man may be at the same time a father, a son and a brother.⁷² The doctrine of Trinity is an important part of the Christian theology in spite of the difficulty and complexity associated with it. It is seen that, without the Trinity, the Christian faith would be much poorer. The doctrine seeks to preserve the richness in the being of God and the manifold activities through which God has revealed Himself to humanity and his power in the world today.⁷³ The doctrine of Trinity is abstract and esoteric⁷⁴ in the words of Rachel Henderlite, because the concept is highly theoretical and its practical applications often comes with challenges in religious connotations but yet it is

⁷⁰ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 105.

⁷¹ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 106.

⁷² Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 106.

⁷³ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 107.

⁷⁴ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 107.

seen to be useful and meaningful to the Christian faith in the whole world since the centre of Christianity is the worship of God which is revealed as triune.

The idea of Trinity is not a strange belief on the soil of Africa. It is on record that Africa played an important role in the formative stages of development of the concept of the Trinity. Much credit goes to the African theologian, Tertullian,⁷⁵ who is believed to be the first theologian to coin the word “Trinity”. The doctrine of Trinity states that there is one God who is in essence or substance, but three in personality. The three Persons are co-equal, co-eternal, inseparable, interdependent, and externally united in one absolute Divine essence and being. Augustine, in his treatise on *Christian Doctrine*, expresses the Trinity on eternal truths as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and each of these by Himself is God, and at the same time, they are all one God.⁷⁶

The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit; the Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the Father or the Son: but the Father is only Father, the Son is only Son, and the Holy Spirit is only Holy Spirit.⁷⁷ The Trinity is not an abstraction but with inferences from the scripture, it is seen as a living, working, creating and redeeming. God as our triune being works on our salvation. Salvation, according to Ryken and Lefebvre, in their book “*Our Triune God*”, defines it as God’s choice to save humanity by his predestined grace⁷⁸ as found in Ephesians 1:4-5. Salvation, therefore, is seen as a redemptive act to free those who believe in the Trinity from the bondage of sin. It is also seen as adoption, that is, the legal act by which God makes Christians his own sons and daughters to be in a close relationship for the common good of his plan. It is also viewed as propitiation that is the atoning blood sacrifice that takes away the guilt and secures

⁷⁵ Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, 55.

⁷⁶ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 96.

⁷⁷ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 21.

⁷⁸ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 24.

forgiveness. It is also best described as reconciliation since God is seen as a unifying force in the universe which is geared towards alienation from God and estrangement from one another. They added that salvation finally is seen as sanctification and glorification, in which God makes his people morally spotless and as shinningly beautiful as his sons and daughters.⁷⁹ Salvation, therefore, is seen as a form of election by God the Father, in Christ the Son, through God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is therefore seen as the nature of God to man.

The main stand of the Christian on Trinitarianism is based on the fact that God is one.⁸⁰ This one God manifests Himself in three persons, identified as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit which coexists within the same divine being.⁸¹ The three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each of them by itself is God, and at the same time, they are all one God.⁸² The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God and all together describes the Godhead. The threeness-one of God should not be seen as tritheism, that is, a belief in three equal and closely related Gods and to avert this difficulty or assumption, theologians and the church concentrated on the unity or oneness of the Trinity to share the same essence and nature.⁸³ The three persons share in the same honour⁸⁴, glory⁸⁵ and also shares in perfect will, knowledge and love.⁸⁶ The three persons are not different names for the same objective being, however, they interact with one another and some also pick up some qualities that make them unique and spell out some

⁷⁹ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 24.

⁸⁰ Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, K.K. Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, 24

⁸¹ Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, K.K. Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, 24

⁸² John Macquarrie, *Christian Theology*, 190.

⁸³ John 10:30

⁸⁴ John 5:23

⁸⁵ John 17:5

⁸⁶ Matt. 11:27 and 1 Cor. 2:10

distinctions among them. For instance, the Son became a man and dwell among Christians.⁸⁷

It is evident in scripture that the Father sent the Son into the world, and in the Son's absence the Holy Spirit took over in the life of the church without going through another sacrifice on the cross. These can however not be the other way round. For instance, the following could be said about the persons of the Trinity. Their distinctive role can be seen as such: The Father deliberately blesses, chooses and predestined his people. The Father lovingly bestows, reveals and lavishes his grace on his people.⁸⁸ God the Father is seen to cater for His own, He is merciful, gracious, supreme head of the Christian family, He purposes Christians salvation, He is the creator, guide and protector, overall head of the Trinity, He takes care of everything that happens here on earth and in heavens, gives command, supplies basic needs, He loves and all things revolve around Him just to mention but a few.

God the Son could also be looked at as the mouthpiece of the Father, part of creation, brings about salvation, carries out the command of the Father. He gave himself through His death on the cross. He became a saviour to the world and Christians gains access to the Father through him, dependent on the Father and the Father wields power to the Son to work on His behalf⁸⁹ just to mention but a few.

God the Holy Spirit is also seen as the Spirit of God, Power of God, Force of God, Comforter, Director, Intercessor, Protector, Part of Creation, Prompter, Counselor, Carries the command of God, Helper and so forth.

⁸⁷John 1:14

⁸⁸ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our True God*, 23.

⁸⁹ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our True God*, 23

Notwithstanding the above-stipulated order which makes people think of distinction among the persons of the Trinity, for instance, where God the Father was seen as a Creator, the Son was a Redeemer and the Holy Spirit a Sanctifier. The above distinction could not stand the test of time because, in the New Testament era, the Son was also seen as a Creator,⁹⁰ the Father as the Redeemer,⁹¹ and both the Father and Son as Sanctifiers' or the Father is the one who organizes and oversees the plan of salvation, through the Son salvation is accomplished because He died on the cross for sins committed by humanity and rose again to give eternal life to man. The Holy Spirit helps in the application of salvation. It is the Spirit which takes what the Son did and makes it beneficial to humanity.⁹² It could, therefore, be said that, what the members of the Godhead do, they always do it together.

2.3 The origin of the Doctrine of Trinity

According to Cyril of Jerusalem, once the Trinity has been invoked, the baptismal water possesses sanctifying power in view of the fact it is no longer mere water, but water united with the Holy Spirit, who acts in and through it.⁹³ The foundation of the early doctrine of the Trinity is traced back to the baptismal formula, that is, the words pronounced by the person performing the sacrament as in the case of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19 as follows:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: KJV

⁹⁰Scripture (KJV): **John 1:3**, All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. **Colossians 1:15-16**who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

⁹¹ Scripture (KJV): **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

⁹² Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our True God*, 22

⁹³ Kelly J.N.D, *Early Christian Doctrine*, (London : Adam and Charles Black Ltd, 1958), 425

It could also be traced to the doxologies in the Epistles where it is a liturgical expression of praise to God. It is normally a short, unique and spontaneous ascription of praise to God, together with the Logos-doctrine of *the Apostle John*⁹⁴, that is the series of declaration about Jesus deity and eternal nature recorded in John 1:1⁹⁵ and 1 John 1:1.⁹⁶

The different foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity have resulted in different positions regarding the Trinity. One of the classical creeds of the Trinity was the Apostles' Creed which was used by the early church from the second century. The Apostles' Creed⁹⁷ (attached in Appendix A) follows a Trinitarian structure and teaches the existence of God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although the Creed does not explicitly mention the term Trinity, it is structured around this most fundamental of Christian doctrines .

During the second century, the biblical language of the Apostles' Creed was sufficient for the time, hence there was no need for exact and rigorous Trinitarian distinctions until heresies arose⁹⁸ in AD 325 challenging Jesus' divinity. However, arguments on the Trinity during the first two and a half centuries started not so much with all three Persons as the deity but that of the Son was the main focus of the Trinitarian debate.⁹⁹ In spite of these debates, the literature is unclear on the distinction between deity and divinity, though these are important concepts in the history of Trinitarianism.”

The fourth and fifth centuries witnessed a great deal of philosophical reflection and controversy over the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁰⁰The two creeds to which contemporary

⁹⁴Penner M., *The doctrine of the Trinity at Nicaea and Chalcedon*, 2003.

⁹⁵Scripture (KJV) John 1:1, In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God.

⁹⁶Scripture (KJV)1 John 1:1, The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life.

⁹⁷ Book of Confession, study edition, Part 1 of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), (Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996), 21

⁹⁸Penner M, *The doctrine of Trinity at Nicaea and Chalcedon*, 2013

⁹⁹Shedd, W.G,T. *A History of Christian Doctrine*. (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1889)

¹⁰⁰Flint, T. P. and Rea, M. *The Trinity: Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*.(Oxford University Press, 2009)

Christians typically relied upon regarding the Trinitarian doctrine are the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 380/381 which came about as a result of the meeting of the two Councils of Nicaea in A.D 325 and Constantinople in A.D.381¹⁰¹ and the Athanasian Creed (c. 500). These two creeds have largely been a product of discussion within the contemporary individuals on the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Council of Nicaea, was convened in the year AD 325¹⁰² to settle the controversy that had arisen over the doctrine propagated by an Alexandrian presbyter named Arius, who held that Christ is not the same essence, or substance, as the Father, and that God is a single person (the Father), and the Son is a product whom the Father has made. This view was condemned¹⁰³ at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, resulting in the promulgation of the Nicene Creed¹⁰⁴ (attached to Appendix A). The Nicene¹⁰⁵Creed is the only authoritative ecumenical statement of the Christian faith accepted by the three major branches of Christendom: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestants. In other words, it is an all-embracing, and yet concise, description of God's actions as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To give a proper footing to the doctrine of Trinity, the Athanasian Creed¹⁰⁶(attached to Appendix B) is one of the strongest defenders of the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. The Athanasian Creed maintains that the 'threeness-ness' of the doctrine of the Trinity means "they are not three Eternals, but there is one eternal....there are not three almighty, but there is one almighty....there are not three Gods, but there is one God. Fundamentally, Athanasian Creed produced biblically sound

¹⁰¹ Presbyterian Church, *Book of Confessions, study edition*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁰² Presbyterian Church, *Book of Confessions*, 1

¹⁰³ James H. Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*. (Louisville Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996), 9

¹⁰⁴ Book of Confession, *Study Edition, Part 1 of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996) 9, 11

¹⁰⁵ The Nicene Creed was the first and in fact is the only creed used ecumenically by the vast majority of Christians throughout the World. For more than fifteen hundred years, it has been the hall mark of orthodoxy. See *Book of Confessions, study edition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996) 1

¹⁰⁶ (<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/athanasian-creed>) Accessed on 1st July, 2018.

and intellectually virtuous doctrines concerning the Trinity.¹⁰⁷ The Creed has been used by Christian churches since the sixth century. It is the first creed in which the equality of the three persons of the Trinity is explicitly stated. The Athanasian Creed is usually divided into two sections: lines 1–28 addressing the doctrine of the Trinity, and lines 29–44 addressing the doctrine of Christology.¹⁰⁸ However, for the purpose of this study, the focus is placed on lines 1–28 which deals with the Trinity.

The theoretical arguments of this study are grounded in the Creeds of which the Presbyterian faith is built upon as indicated in their brief statement of faith, based on the Apostolic Benediction,¹⁰⁹ expressing trust in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The above could be summarized as: i) There is exactly one God, the Father Almighty; ii) Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not identical and iii) Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are consubstantial.

The Creeds are clear in its definition and defending the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ.¹¹⁰ Deducing from the theoretical literature, there seems to be a lack of proper conceptualization of the Trinity for the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. This resulted in the “precision of thought and the philosophical categories used to characterize the Trinitarian among Latins and Greeks including essence and persons. In other words, there is a difficulty for clarity of terms and thought in the expression of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity to help build a solid doctrinal foundation” backed by its philosophical soundness due to the language differences between the Latin and the Greek speakers. For the purpose of this study, “Persons” will be

¹⁰⁷ Penner M., *The doctrine of the Trinity at Nicaea and Chalcedon*, 2013

¹⁰⁸ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of the Christendom*, (New York: Harper Brothers Publishing, 1877)

¹⁰⁹ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 152.

¹¹⁰ Bratcher D., *Ecumenical Christian Creed*, (New York: The Voice Institute, 2014)

used to describe the distinctiveness of the Trinity since most theological studies have continued to use it and that a better term is yet to be found.¹¹¹

In conclusion, probably no doctrine was the subject of more controversy in the early church than that of the Trinity. Certainly, the teaching of “one God in three Persons” was accepted in the early church, paving a way for a systematic study of the doctrine till date.

2.4 Understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity

A study of the doctrine of the Trinity in early church history begins with the recognition that both the oneness and threeness of God are theological realities which are established in Trinitarian theology. Getting the full understanding of the nature of God is difficult for many people because the topic seems very abstract. We cannot see, hear or touch God just as we can experience other objects around us.¹¹² This makes it difficult to talk meaningfully about the doctrine of the Trinity. Generally, without the doctrine of the Trinity, the biblical material cannot make sense, and that the doctrine is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life and for that matter it must be seen to be alive in the life of Christians of today. To develop and understand the doctrine of God, one needs to look at God's self-revelation in history. However, this set in the problem of conceiving God in a triune way as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, if any doctrine makes Christianity Christian, surely it is the doctrine of the Trinity.

This is based on the fact that “the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed are all structured around the three-in-one God”, and therefore indicates the essential importance of the Trinity.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Hampton J.K., *The Trinity of God*, 2014.

¹¹² Alister McGrath. *Understanding the Trinity*. (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1987), 38.

¹¹³ DeYoung, K. L. *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010).

The doctrine of the Trinity is a way of saying that God's grace which Christ brought to the world is the same grace which the church brings to the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also clear that the position of the doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God whose characteristics are in three persons: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are the same in substance, though distinct in subsistence, describing God's existence in three Persons.

However, philosophically, a review of the relationship between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit presents a logical problem. In other words, though the doctrine of the Trinity is arguably one of the most important doctrine of the Church, it is also one of the most confusing and misunderstood doctrines, since it lies outside the realm of natural reasoning or human logic and hence the Trinity is the greatest mystery of the Christian faith.¹¹⁴ However, several efforts have been made by many theologians and philosophers in explaining the doctrine of the Trinity. Despite the worthy efforts of these scholars, the Trinity is still largely incomprehensible to the mind of man. The difficulties in appreciating the relationship between the "Persons" of God suggest that the Trinity is a logical concept and therefore, cannot be made subject to human reason or logic. Because of this, opponents of the doctrine argue that the idea of the Trinity must be rejected as untenable. In other words, God in His existence as the three-in-one is beyond the limits of human comprehension. In summary, it is clear that constructing a conceptual definition of Trinity has been very challenging resulting in several propositions. The challenge has also resulted in others erring on the side of either oneness or threeness of the doctrine on Trinity.

¹¹⁴ Paul Louis Metzger, *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology* (New York: T & T Clark., 2005), 5.

2.5 Biblical Roots of the Doctrine of Trinity

Great authors such as Greene McCreight echoed that words or concepts found in the holy book that is the Bible are said to be authoritative¹¹⁵. It has become an accepted principle in those words that are located in the Bible are viewed as very important to the carriers of the Bible. Such words or concepts found in the Bible are said to be biblical and so are very important and fundamental to the Christian doctrine. However, certain words and concepts are not stated categorically in the Bible even though by extension, they occupy a wider space in the Bible. Among such words or concept is the doctrine of the Trinity. The question which is mostly asked in our day today is; “Is the term Trinity biblical and by extension, is the concept the doctrine of Trinity also biblical?”

The above question has been answered in diverse ways but whether it is biblical or not may not be the issue, the main concern is its influence and importance on the Christian faith as the study seeks to bring to bear.

Professor Gabriel M. Setiloane, a renowned Christian scholar, views the doctrine of the Trinity as an intellectual discipline without a biblical base. He was of the view that the concept of the doctrine of the Trinity was having a limited application and therefore inappropriate to be used in the description of God as the African people know him.¹¹⁶

Others are equally of the view that the doctrine of the Trinity came about as a result of Christian misunderstanding of the person of God. Such misunderstanding includes, how can God be the Son as well as the Spirit, and how do we relate the Son and the Spirit and many more. Notwithstanding the above discourse associated with the all-important concept of Trinity, the doctrine comes up authoritatively to describe the nature of God,

¹¹⁵Greene McCreight, When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit: On Ecumenical Baptism Formular” in Pro- Ecclesia Vol. VI, no. 3. 1997, 296

¹¹⁶ Setiloane, G.M., “MODIMO : God Among the Sotho-Tswana” in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, 1973, no 4, 65.

that is, the way God wishes to be known. The scripture clearly depicts God in Trinitarian terms making the concept biblical.

Whilst Greene McCreight explains “biblical” as that which appears in the pages of the Bible, it is apparent that for the orthodox patristic writers, that which counts as “scriptural” and therefore authoritative encompassed that which is augured, inferred or constructed¹¹⁷ on the basis of the biblical witness read within the guidance of the rule of faith. The concept of Trinity is biblical not just because it is argued, inferred or constructed from the scriptural witness.¹¹⁸

Also, Heick puts it that, the doctrine of the Trinity itself: “... is the underlying and governing thought of the biblical history of redemption . In addition, the Trinitarian faith expresses a doctrinal experience of the church, the necessity of which has been tested by the practical needs of piety through centuries. The problem presented itself unconsciously in the baptismal formula of the earliest Christianity.”¹¹⁹ If we are to reject the term Trinity on the ticket that it is not in the pages of the bible, then it must go with a whole lot of other important terminologies which was obtained from non-biblical source but has now been accepted as scriptural and therefore stands authoritative on biblical grounds.¹²⁰

2.6 Biblical Exposition on the doctrine of Trinity

Gathering all the facts about God is entirely difficult for many people because the nature of God seems abstract. However, scripture establishes a reliable framework for thinking and talking about God. According to McGrath Alister, scripture authorizes us to talk about God in certain very definite ways and it lays down the framework for discussion of God as

¹¹⁷ Greene McCreight, *When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 297

¹¹⁸ Greene McCreight, *When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 296.

¹¹⁹Heick, O.W., *A History of Christian Thought*,(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995), 143.

¹²⁰ Greene McCreight, *When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 297

triune.¹²¹ It is the scripture that bears witness to God as he has revealed himself to humanity as Trinity. The reality that there is only one God is both taught and seen throughout scripture. The most clearly stated scripture¹²² in the Old Testament is in (Deuteronomy 6:4)¹²³ which serves as the basis of the command that followed “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (verse 5). The above depicts Monotheism which means exclusive worship of and obedience to the one true God¹²⁴ and not Monolatry.¹²⁵ The proof of God as one is also evident in the Ten Commandment which asserts that He is God, the true God and the only one God to be worshipped. In the New Testament, the belief in God as one can also be traced in (James 2:19).¹²⁶ The Apostle Paul also gave evidence in (1 Corinthians 8: 4, 6)¹²⁷ about Gods uniqueness’ on the grounds that there is only one God. Again Paul wrote to Timothy in (1 Timothy 2: 5-6)¹²⁸ that there is one God and one mediator.¹²⁹ When God is viewed in the sense of “one”, it focuses on qualitative nature of God which indicates His sovereignty in nature, will and action and not as a quantitative or numerical figure which calls for the exclusive devotion to God.¹³⁰ The oneness of God also means that He is

¹²¹ McGrath , *Understanding the Trinity*, 38

¹²² Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 18

¹²³ Scripture: **Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (KJV)**: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: 5 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

¹²⁴ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 18

¹²⁵ Monotheism professes belief in and the worship of only one God and that other gods are forceless idols which do not exist; Monolatry acknowledges the existence of many gods but allows worship of only one God. See the following scriptural witnesses: “the gods of the people are idols” (Psalm 96:5); “all gods bow down before him” (**Psalm 97:7**) and 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 regarding whether idols have forces or not. The phrase “ God is one” in Romans speaks of Gods impartiality to save all through Christ , and thus is in line with soteriological /Christological monotheism.

¹²⁶ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 18; Scripture: **James 2:19 (KJV)**: Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

¹²⁷ Scripture: **1 Corinthians 8: 4, 6 (KJV)** : As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. : but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

¹²⁸ Scripture: **1 Timothy 2: 5-6 (KJV)**: For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

¹²⁹ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 19

¹³⁰ Green, Pardue and Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations* , 6

incomparable¹³¹ as cited in the following scriptures. (Exodus 15:11, Psalm 35:10, Isaiah 40: 12-17, Isaiah 44:7, Isaiah 45: 21-22)¹³² indicated by Green. The oneness of God entails also the unity of the triune God, that is biblical monotheism and Trinitarian faith are inseparable.¹³³ (Matthew 28:19)¹³⁴ reveals that the Trinity is made up of three persons. Most individuals like Karl Barth view persons as an individualized being with his own personality and this idea easily could land an individual to think of three Gods in one.¹³⁵ The other dimension of the threeness of God can sound as tritheism that is a belief in three equal closely related gods and to avoid it, we try to speak of the unity or oneness of the Trinity.¹³⁶ In avoiding the challenges of the persons of the Trinity, one can say that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share the same essence/nature, honour and glory (John 10:30, John 5:23, John 17:5)¹³⁷ to the extent that they have perfect communion in will, knowledge

¹³¹ Green, Pardue and Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, 6

¹³² Scripture: KJV: **Exodus 15:11**, Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? : **Psalm 35:10**. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him? : **Isaiah 40:12-17**: Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. **Isaiah 44:7** And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Isaiah 45:21-22 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

¹³³ Green, Pardue and Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, 6

¹³⁴ Scripture: KJV: Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

¹³⁵ This is a difficult topic. Karl Barth refused to use the term “person” in relation to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit because his contemporary understanding associated “person” with personality or the I center axis of consciousness. Instead, he uses “mode of being”. Barth said that there is “only one Willer and Doer that the Bible calls God.” not “three divines ‘I’s but thrice of the one divine ‘I’ (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-75] pp348,351). But the New Testament witness is that Jesus has his own will and action (only the Son is born of the Virgin Mary, baptized at the Jordan river, suffered under Pontius Pilate, is fully divine and fully human), which is quite different from the action and the will of the Father. See Green, Pardue and Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, page 7.

¹³⁶ Green, Pardue and Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, 7

¹³⁷ Scripture (KJV) **John 10:30** I and my Father are one: John 5:23 that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

and love (Matthew 11:27, 1 Corinthians 2:10) .¹³⁸ The three-in–oneness of God is clearly stated in 1 John 5:7 (KJV) which puts it that:

1 John 5:7 (KJV) For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Unfortunately, the more recent translation of the Bible like the Revised Standard Versions and the New International Versions omit this verse in their entire Bible which results in a matter of concern.¹³⁹ The reason for the omission or the deletion brings about criticisms which add to the controversies of the doctrine of Trinity.

Another area of concern about the doctrine as we journey through the Bible is the Baptismal Formula which is recorded in Matthew 28:19 which stress on the equality of the persons of the Trinity as:

Matthew 28:19 (KJV) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Jesus himself making such a statement puts a heavyweight on the formula, however, despite the fact that three persons were designated here; the word “name” which is singular was used. There is a conflict with the baptism into the name of Jesus as recorded in Acts 8:16.

Acts 8:14-17 (KJV)

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (*for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

¹³⁸ Scripture (KJV) **Matthew 11:27** All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. **1 Corinthians 2:10** But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

¹³⁹ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 29.

Erickson, in his book, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, explained that the baptismal formula was not the prescribed one as we are made to believe but a simple statement of the nature of baptism.¹⁴⁰ In addition to the above discussed so far, the structure of the Pauline writings significantly indicates Paul's thought of the Godhead. For instance, in the book of Romans, Paul's longest and most doctrinal writings discuss the judgment of God on Gentiles and Jews from Romans 1:18 to Romans 3: 20. Then from chapter 3:21 to chapter 8:1, he deals with justification through faith in Jesus Christ and finally from chapter 8:2 to chapter 30 looks at the complete biblical discussions of the Holy Spirit and life in him.¹⁴¹

The author of the gospel of John deals more directly than any other New Testament writer¹⁴² with the relationship of the members of the Trinity and one of such was on his prologue from John 1:1 which says "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Biblically, the doctrine of the Trinity recognizes that God is in three Persons who are co-equally and supremely divine. Therefore, if the Unitarian notion that the Son is only a creature and the Holy Spirit is simply an attribute is to be accepted, then the benediction becomes the invocation of the grace of a creature, the love of God, and the communion of an attribute. These violate the biblical principles that "The Lord is our God, the Lord alone" (Deuteronomy 6:5), and "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other God's before Me (Exodus 20:2-3) and also, in the New Testament, we read, "There is no God but one" (1 Corinthians 8:4) .

To conclude, many passages from the New Testament mention the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as co-equals in the work of God. These biblical passages among many others affirm

¹⁴⁰ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 34.

¹⁴¹ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 37, 38

¹⁴² Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 39

the oneness of God. However, one of the major reasons accounting for many people finding the biblical doctrine of the Trinity hard to understand is that the Bible clearly teaches monotheism, thus God is One God. (Deut. 4:35-36, 6:4).

2.7 Some Trinitarian Arguments

The doctrine of the Trinity is seen to be mysterious, that human mind may never be fully able to understand it, let alone to explain.¹⁴³ How the doctrine of Trinity is viewed has made it possible for people to express their different view on the doctrine. German Philosopher Immanuel Kant asserted that “the doctrine of the Trinity taken literally has no practical relevance at all, even if we think we understand it, and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends all our concepts.”¹⁴⁴ Some viewed the doctrine of Trinity as an intellectual discipline without biblical base trying to understand God using analogies¹⁴⁵ and examples of things seen in three parts yet could be described as one. Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, in their book, *Our Triune God*, mentioned some of such analogies. First of all, the Trinity can be likened to water which can exist in three forms like solid, liquid and vapour or the three parts of an apple namely core, flesh and skin.¹⁴⁶ The doctrine could also be seen as and compared to an egg which gives the parts as shell, yolk and the white part. All of such has its own defects which make the person of the Trinity seems like parts or pieces of the Godhead, or the Trinity is seen as something that is indifferent forms at different times or under different conditions but not truly simultaneous. Notwithstanding, the above view of the doctrine of Trinity, people make use of limited application of it and therefore unfortunate in describing God.

¹⁴³ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 20.

¹⁴⁴ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 20.

¹⁴⁵ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 53.

¹⁴⁶ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 43.

Many Christians of today find it very difficult to understand and explain in details what pertains to the doctrine of Trinity or the nature of God. Even those who are having formal education are struggling with such facts of the doctrine. Martin Luther found it difficult and hard to understand one God existing in three persons, yet he affirmed what was in scripture and said that, “Since I see that it is so distinctly contained and grounded in scripture, I believe God more than my own thoughts and reason and do not worry about how it can possibly be true that there is only one Essence: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.”¹⁴⁷

According to Erickson, in his book, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, another argument he proposed was that the doctrine of Trinity does not always support the spiritual wellbeing of the individual¹⁴⁸ and for that matter the church. For instance, the author argues that if God is all-powerful, then He is able to prevent all evil such as natural disaster, sicknesses and diseases. If God is all-loving, then such evils will never find its way into human lives, however, evil is still part of our life. People, therefore, fault God for allowing such negativity to be part of the Christian walks with the Lord which he could have prevented. The problem of evil, therefore, places some limitations on the all-powerful role of God in the Godhead whereas the Trinity seeks the wellbeing of the individual.

2.8 Relationship between the Persons of the Trinity

The section analyzed the distinctiveness of the persons of the Trinity and how they relate to one another. Ryken and Lefebvre, in their book, “*Our Triune God*”, stated that Christians are chosen by God the Father, in Christ the Son, through God the Holy Spirit,¹⁴⁹ In other words, salvation is administered by the Father, accomplished by the Son and

¹⁴⁷ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 74.

¹⁴⁹ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our Triune God*, 21.

applied by the Spirit.¹⁵⁰ In another dimension, salvation was planned by the Father, procured by the Son and obtainable and confirmed by the Spirit. There is the need to have a way of distinguishing the three persons of the Trinity from one another.

Biblically, God the Father is the one over us with power to judge. God the Son is the one in front of us with power to cleanse, and God the Holy Spirit is the one in us with power to minister. In other words, Christians see God not just as the Father, He is not just the Son, and He is not just the Holy Spirit. This, therefore, demands that Christians never concentrate on one or two to the exclusion of the other.

Each member of the Trinity also has a different role, function, or mission in carrying out the divine plan. Though the members of the Trinity are equal in divine being, there is a subordination of function.

The eternal communion of love that Father, Son and Spirit share as the Trinity involves a mystery of inter-relationship and interpenetration of the divine Persons, a mutual indwelling without loss of personal identity. As Jesus said, “the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (John 10:38). Each person of the Trinity is contained within the others; they dwell in one another, they envelop one another.

2.9 Theological Relevance of the doctrine of Trinity

Historically, the church has placed great importance on the doctrine of the Trinity, which has been held universally across the World. One of the most important of the Trinity among Christians is the appreciation of the divinity and unity of Godhead. Considering the divinity of God, and the fact that the three persons represent God, and then logically, divinity can be ascribed to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is one God and within

¹⁵⁰ Philip Ryken and Michael Lefebvre, *Our True God*, 21.

that God are three personalities. There is one essence and there is one nature. The Trinity must be held in harmony with the singleness of the divine essence or substance. By the unity of God, it means that there is but one God and that the divine nature is undivided and indivisible.

To fail to acknowledge the reality of the Trinity not only undermines the Christian faith, but it also denies God's design for relationships in society. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons in the community. The Trinity leads us to the glorious revelation of the individual within the community. They exist in relationship. They cannot and do not exist independently of one another.

The Trinity provides the intellectual and moral foundation for the equal dignity of men and women. They also provide the pattern for healthy, God-honoring relationships.

The Trinity also helps Christians to make sense of their salvation in Christ.¹⁵¹ In salvation, the Father plans it, the Son sees to execute the plan through His life, death, and resurrection and the Holy Spirit through His works of regenerating, sanctifying, sealing, and indwelling actuates the plan in the life of the believer. God has given his truth through the Trinity because the doctrine reveals in scripture all that the personalities seek to do. For instance, the many things that the Son did have no meaning if He is not God.

Notwithstanding the above, importance of the doctrine of Trinity to the Christian religion, its validity is equally challenged by other religions simply because other Christian denominations like Jehovah Witness¹⁵² and other sects denied the full deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵¹ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 15.

¹⁵² Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 14.

2.10 African Theological understanding of the Trinitarian Doctrine

The people of Africa who accepted Christianity already believed in the existence of God and the spirit world and this was evident in the various names that were given to God. Christian evangelism as it was carried out by European missionaries in the early days of missions in Africa, and also by those African preachers whom the missionaries had trained as their co-workers, aimed at reducing African religion and culture¹⁵³ to nothing to enable them to conquer territories as far as their aim and vision of missionary work was concern. It could also be stated that religious beliefs and practices, rituals and sacrifices are all means to prove that Africans seem to believe in God before the introduction of Christianity. The African before Christianity viewed God as supreme, powerful, loving, caring and all-knowing as John Mbiti maintained that, the Supreme God that the African held on to was the same as the God of the Bible. Bolaji Idowu, in his book, *“Towards an Indigenous Church”*, portray that God reveals¹⁵⁴ himself to the African and they agreed to worship him before the advent of Christianity. Africans were introduced to the doctrine of Trinity in the first century when the Ethiopians were introduced to Christianity before then the people of Ethiopia were into Paganism and Judaism.¹⁵⁵

2.11 Conclusion

The fundamental truth established so far from our discussion put it that Christian orthodoxy holds the doctrine of Trinity to very high esteem, however, the intellectual tools used to capture and convey it varies depending on the epoch, cultural context as well as availability of alternative intellectual images. It is also clear that Trinitarian developments

¹⁵³ Dickson Kwesi A., *Theology in Africa*, (Darton: Longman & Todd Ltd , 1984), 90.

¹⁵⁴ Bolaji Idowu, *Towards an indigenous Church*, (London : Oxford University Press ,1965), 24-26.

¹⁵⁵ Green, Pardue and Yeo, *The Trinity among the Nations*, 58.

require rigorous intellectual skills and sound philosophic categories to accurately apply God's revelation to gain a proper understanding of the doctrine.

Trinitarian beliefs were held by Christians long before the Council of Nicaea. The orthodox teaching of the Trinity is that all three persons of the Trinity exist eternally and concurrently. The persons are not just different forms of God. The doctrine of the Trinity has enriched our understanding of many other doctrines, and we will continue to learn more about it as we grow in grace and knowledge. It makes sense that God's nature is reflected in everything that God does, and that means it affects all other doctrines because our doctrines are based on what God is doing in the people he has created. The challenge in Trinitarian theology as espoused by Anne Hunt, in her book "*Trinity*" is how to talk coherently and intelligently about the reality of God as both three and one¹⁵⁶ as discussed above especially in the context of how a Christian will be able to put bit and bits together to make meaning of such a concept in a particular setting or denomination. PCG needs to put a mechanism in place to enable its members to articulate the much relevance of the doctrine of Trinity in the church setting.

¹⁵⁶ Hunt, *Trinity*, 14.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY

3.1 Introduction

God in the Christian faith is viewed within the perplexity of unity and plurality: the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God which defines the doctrine of Trinity that is one God worshipped in the Trinity.¹⁵⁷ According to James Henry Owino Kombo, in his book, *Theological Models of the doctrine of the Trinity*, T. F. Torrance defines the Trinity as “the innermost heart of the Christian faith, the central dogma of classical theology and the fundamental grammar of our knowledge of God.”¹⁵⁸ Having conceptualized and surveyed the doctrine of Trinity in the previous chapter, the research seeks to consider the doctrine which is seen to be the most complex in our Christian belief to one of the reformed churches, the PCG to which the researcher belongs. The major components of this chapter are the historical background of Presbyterianism, Conception of the Trinity among Presbyterians and Presbyterianism and Akuapem as a state just to mention but a few.

3.2 Historical Background of Presbyterianism

Presbyterians are part of a wider family church that has been reformed since the sixteenth century.¹⁵⁹ The term Reformation is used in a number of senses and according to Alister McGrath, in his book, *Historical Theology, An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, which mentioned four elements as Lutheranism, the Reformed Church (Calvinism), the Radical Reformation and the Counter-Reformation or Catholic

¹⁵⁷ James Henry Owino Kombo, *Theological Models of the doctrine of the Trinity*, (Carlisle Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2016), 1.

¹⁵⁸ Owino Kombo, *Theological Models of the doctrine of the Trinity*, 6.

¹⁵⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought, An introduction*, (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 2.

Reformation.¹⁶⁰In its broadest sense, the term is used to represent all four movements, however, in a more restricted sense it stands for the Protestant Reformation.¹⁶¹Martin Luther (1483-1546) became a catalyst for what is called the Protestant Reformation.¹⁶² Reformation which concerns the life and morals of the church goes beyond its doctrine. For many, philosophy was about the process of living, rather than a set of philosophical doctrines. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was obvious that the church in Western Europe was one more in urgent need of reform. During those times, it was as if the lifeblood of the church had ceased to flow through its veins. The church legal system was badly in need of overhauling and ecclesiastical bureaucracy had become notoriously inefficient and corrupt.¹⁶³ During the Protestant Reformation in Europe, which began with Martin Luther, some Christians who agreed with Luther in his criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church went on to disagree with him in other theological matters. While there were theological differences between the Reformed and the Lutherans, there was also a difference of opinion about the best (most “biblical”) way to structure the church. The protestant reformation meant two things. The Protestant protested against the church, that is, the Roman Catholic Church. The medieval church was not what the Protestant understood a New Testament church to be.¹⁶⁴The Protestant Reformers, therefore, wanted to state or testify to what they believed the Church of Christ should be. The reformed Church seeks to change whatever is not right to whatever is correct indicating that its purpose was and is to make right those things that were or are wrong in the church.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Mcgrath, *Historical Theology, An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 158.

¹⁶¹ Mcgrath, *Historical Theology, An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, 158.

¹⁶² Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 13.

¹⁶³ McGrath, *Reformation Thought*, 2

¹⁶⁴ Clifton Kirkpatrick and William H.Hopper, Jr., *What unities Presbyterians*, (Louisville, Kentucky:Geneva Press, 1997), 15

¹⁶⁵ Kirkpatrick and Hopper, Jr., *What unities Presbyterians*, 15.

The genesis of Presbyterianism as a movement occurred during the 16th Century Protestant Reformation.¹⁶⁶ At the time the Church split and different theological movements bore different denominations, Presbyterianism was especially influenced by the French/Swiss theologian, John Calvin, who is credited with the development of reformed theology and the work of John Knox.¹⁶⁷ Many branches of the Presbyterianism are remnants of previous splits from larger groups. Some of the split churches died to doctrinal controversy, while others have been caused by disagreement concerning the degree to which those ordained to church office should be required to agree with the Westminster Confession of Faith. Presbyterian faith and life flourished in Scotland rather than in England as the Scots resisted English influence over their lives.¹⁶⁸ It is said that the Scots were the first to feel Martin Luther's impact after Patrick Hamilton who studied in France brought Luther's teaching to Scotland. The reformation continued ever since until the Scottish Parliament proceeded to abolish Roman Catholicism and establish a Presbyterian church from top-down and adopting Knox's "*The Forms of Prayer*" (1560) which showed their indebtedness to Calvin, who placed much emphasis on the Bible wherein lies the prescription of the elements of Christian worship.¹⁶⁹ Presbyterians built churches and missions across the continent. For instances, in 1836 Marcus Whitman and Reverend Henry S. Spalding took to the Oregon Trail to set up mission stations and churches among the Cayuse Indians.¹⁷⁰ In addition to building churches and missions across the globe, Presbyterians always seek to the development of the individuals they came in contact with. They seek to the provision of schools and other recreational centres for the benefit of its members. It could be mentioned that regarding children education, Patty Smith Hill, a Presbyterian in Louisville, Kentucky, pioneered kindergarten education in the 1880s and

¹⁶⁶ Kirkpatrick and Hoper Jr, *What unites Presbyterians*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ Kirkpatrick and Hopper, Jr., *What unites Presbyterians*, 13.

¹⁶⁸ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* 29.

¹⁶⁹ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* , 30.

¹⁷⁰ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* , 87.

1890s.¹⁷¹ The Presbyterian reform stressed the common priesthood of all faithful, pastors and elders drawn from the community which comprises of the governing body of the church.¹⁷² Every Christian should have the privilege, or rather, the duty and responsibility to study, learn and interpret the Bible.¹⁷³ Furthermore, most Reformed churches have adopted a Presbyterian or a congregational church government or governing structure. Presbyterian Church governance is by councils (known as courts) of elders who are or not ordained and convened in the lowest council/court known as session or consistory responsible for the discipline, nurtured and mission of the local congregation. Thus, local congregations are governed by “elders,” a term in the Greek word, *presbuteros*, from which “presbyter” is derived. In the New Testament, “presbuteros” means elder, and refers to the democratic custom of choosing leaders and advisors from among the wisest members of the church. The central governing body for groups of churches is the “presbytery,” which is made up of both ministers and elder representatives of local congregations .

It could, however, be stated emphatically that, the origins of the Presbyterian churches were in Calvinism.¹⁷⁴ Calvin forcefully taught that nothing else is God- “God is sovereign, no church, no investment portfolio, no handsome or beautiful spouse, no possession of any kind, no child is sovereign; God is sovereign. Everything is relative.”¹⁷⁵ Presbyterians are distinct from other denominations by the doctrine, governance structure and worship, often using a “Book of Order”¹⁷⁶ to regulate common practices and order. This is a collection

¹⁷¹ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* , 97

¹⁷² Guy Bedouelle, *The History of the Church*, (The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2003) 216

¹⁷³ Kirkpatrick and Hopper, Jr., *What unites Presbyterians*, 14

¹⁷⁴ Englund-Krieger, J.M. *The Presbyterian Mission Enterprise: From Heathen to Partner*. (Wipf and Stock Publishers,2015).

¹⁷⁵ Kirkpatrick and Hopper, Jr. *What unites Presbyterians*, 17.

¹⁷⁶ Kirkpatrick and Hopper, Jr. *What unites Presbyterians*,62.

of statements of Christian faith from the early church period (Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed) .

In summary, Presbyterians are a group of Protestants whose church is founded on the concept of democratic rule under the Word of God. The Presbyterian denomination is a form of Christianity democratically organized to embrace the faith common to all Christians. The overall church governance structure, especially in Ghana, is made up of four governing bodies.¹⁷⁷ These are the: i) Local Session or local governing body - ordained ministers (ministers of the Word) and elders, all elected by the congregation: ii) District Session - elders and ministers from congregations who oversee several churches within the district: iii) Presbytery - elders and ministers from districts who oversee several churches within the Presbytery; iv) General Assembly - the national governing body made up of equal numbers of laypeople and clergy chosen by the presbyteries.

3.3 Study Area

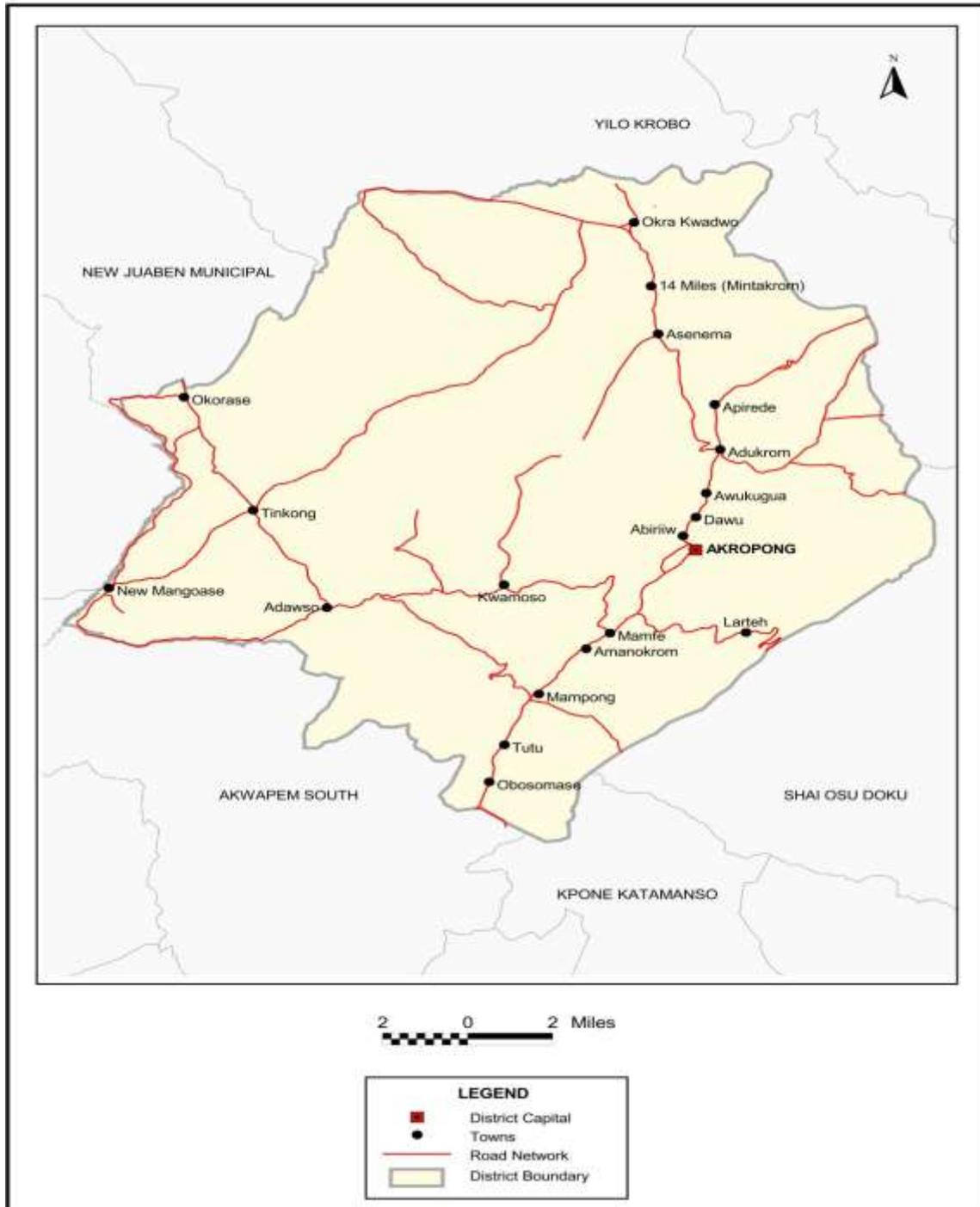
The area of this study is Akropong-Akuapem, in the Akuapem Traditional Area of the Akuapem North Municipality. The boundary of Akuapem is about 23km from the centre of Accra¹⁷⁸, the capital of Ghana. Akuapem covers two main political administrations: Akuapem North Municipality and Akuapem South District.¹⁷⁹ Akropong-Akuapem is the capital of the Akuapem North Municipality, in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It is bounded to the north and north-east by the Yilo-Krobo Municipality, to the north-west by the New Juaben Municipality, south-east by the Shai Osudoku District (in the Greater Accra Region), to the south by the Akuapem South District and to the south-west by Suhum Municipality. Figure 1 shows the location of the map of the Akuapem North District.

¹⁷⁷ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2016), 18-68.

¹⁷⁸ George Opare Kwabong, *Chieftaincy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, (Accra: Heritage Publications, 2017), 31.

¹⁷⁹ Kwabong, *Chieftaincy and Communal Conflict in Akuapem*, 31

DISTRICT MAP OF AKUAPEM NORTH



Source: Municipal Assembly, Akuapem North Municipality

Figure 1: District map of Akuapem North

3.3.1 Demographics

The Akuapem North Municipality has a total population of 136,483,¹⁸⁰ representing 5.2 per cent of Eastern Region population. More than half (53.1%) of the population are females. Distribution of the population by locality of residence indicates that the majority (63.9%) of the population in the Municipality live in rural areas.

Regarding age, more than one third (36.7%) of the Municipality's population is under age 15 years. The elderly population (persons aged 60 years and older) form a little over one-tenth (10.9) of the population. Overall, the majority (63.6%) of the population are under age 30 years. The similar age distribution is observed for the sexes, with the exception that there are more females than males in the elderly population (12.9% vs. 8.7%), indicating higher mortality in the elderly male population. The age structure of the population results in a high age dependency ratio.¹⁸¹

3.3.2 Culture

The entire Akuapem State has one paramount chief notably referred to as the Okuapehene with the seat of the paramount chief established and managed at Akropong, the municipal capital. In terms of traditional administration or governance, the Akuapem state has five (5) important and well-established divisions¹⁸² namely the Kronti division (Akropong), Adonten division (Aburi), Gyase division (Amanokrom), Nifa division (Adukrom) and Benkum division (Larteh), which have lived together and harmoniously. There are three languages that are mainly spoken in the Municipality. These are Akuapem Twi, Kyerepong and Guan. Akuapem Twi speaking people are the largest ethnic group in the Municipality, representing 51.6% of the population, followed by Kyerepong and Guan which constitute 42.3% while only 6.1% constitutes Ewes, Northerners, Krobos and other

¹⁸⁰ Ghana Statistical Service. *Population and housing Census*, (Accra: GSS, 2010)

¹⁸¹ Ghana Statistical Service. *Population and housing Census*, (Accra: GSS, 2010)

¹⁸² Kwapong, *Chieftancy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, 46.

ethnic groups.¹⁸³ The Akuapem Twi language is the most effective medium of communication and development information dissemination. There are two (2) major traditional festivals that are celebrated annually in the Municipality namely Odwira and Ohum. The Ohum festival is connected with the worship of the gods of the land and it is an important occasion for the fetish priest. Odwira Festival has certain things in common with the Ohum festival, both are for purification ceremonies, remembrance, as well as thanksgiving or harvest festivals but Odwira, is particularly concerned with the purification of the stools.¹⁸⁴ These festivals serve as important occasions and events for mobilization of human and non-human resources for community development and social transformation which also informs the plan preparation, implementation and development administration in the Akuapem North Municipality.

3.3.3 Religion

Christianity is the predominant religion in the Municipality. This can be attributed to the presence of many churches in the Municipality and also the missionaries who first settled in the Municipality. Christians constitute the majority (88.9%) of the population in the municipality, followed by Moslems (2.2 %) and adherents of traditional religion (1.9%).¹⁸⁵ Persons who indicated that they have no religious affiliation constitute about 6.0 per cent. Protestants constitute the highest percentage (41.1%) of the Christian population in the Municipality, followed by Pentecostal/Charismatic (33.5%). Catholics recorded the lowest proportion of Christians in the district (3.1%).¹⁸⁶

Among the Protestants in the Municipality, the Presbyterians are the majority. One major Presbyterian Church in the Municipality is the Akropong Christ Church which has existed

¹⁸³ Ghana Statistical Service, *Population and Housing Census*, (Accra: GSS, 2010)

¹⁸⁴ Kwamina-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*. (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1973), 11.

¹⁸⁵ Ghana Statistical Service, *Population and Housing Census*, (Accra: GSS, 2010)

¹⁸⁶ Ghana Statistical Service. *Population and housing Census*, (Accra: GSS, 2010)

beyond 180 years. The foundation of the PCG as a whole has roots more or less in the foundation of the Presbyterian Church at Akropong, the Akropong Christ Church. The Church is among the significant Presbyterian Churches in the history of Ghana. The mission of the Church is to uphold the centrality of the Word of God as the basis of its evangelism and teaching ministry, to become a unified and a united body corporate under a participatory democratic dispensation dedicated to uphold the strong moral-ethical principles of the Christian faith in partnership with worldwide body of Christ and to achieve a self-sustaining status through a holistic development of other human and material resources.

3.4 Presbyterianism

Continental Europe, including the United Brethren of the Moravian Church, made several attempts to establish the Protestant churches in the country but it was not until the second decade of the nineteenth century that a fresh start was made by the Swiss missionaries.¹⁸⁷ Taking advantage of the request of a chaplain made in 1826 by Major de Richelieu,¹⁸⁸ the Danish governor of the Christianborg Castle in Accra, the Basel Missionary Society in Switzerland offered four missionaries for service in Accra. After training and ordination in Denmark, the four missionaries, Johann Philip Henke, Gottlieb Holzwarth, Karl Salback and Johann Gottlob Schmidt,¹⁸⁹ landed at Osu, Accra on 18th December 1828 where the history of PCG dates back to. PCG is a product of three main missionary movements' namely the Basel Mission, the Moravian Church and the United Free Church of Scotland.¹⁹⁰ The evangelistic activities of these Missionaries were not carried out on a

¹⁸⁷ Buah F.K. *A History of Ghana*, Hong Kong: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1980), 135.

¹⁸⁸ Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 135.

¹⁸⁹ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Hymnary*, (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2014), vii.

¹⁹⁰ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution*, 161.

silver platter and all four died within a period of three years¹⁹¹ upon arrival in the country. In March 1832,¹⁹² another team of three missionaries were sent again by the Basel Mission, Andreas Riis, Peter Peterson Jaeger and Christian Friedrich Heinze but the unfortunate thing was that with the exception of Andreas Riss, the two died within three months.¹⁹³ It was established that the weather and other conditions were not favourable for what the missionaries' intended to do in the coastal regions of Ghana. Riss, therefore set out with George Lutterrodt, a mulatto in search of a better weather condition that may spare their life in line with their missionary journey in reaching out to the black people. The two were attracted by the Akuapem weather and so travelled through the Akuapem Ridge till they got to Abiriw. Whilst in Abiriw, it was found out that the people of Abiriw do not allow dogs to stay with people in the town and since Riss was with his dog they were forced to move out of Abiriw.¹⁹⁴ The explanation given was that their local god called Bosompra¹⁹⁵ could not allow them to stay in the town with his dogs and also because of the missionary bells he carried along. They finally got to Akropong on 25th January 1835 and were warmly received by the paramount chief, Nana Addo Dankwa I. They stayed in Akropong for five days and on 30th January 1835 returned to Osu to prepare for final settlement in Akropong.¹⁹⁶ Their preparation at Osu ended and on March 26, 1835, Riss together with his mulatto friend, two houseboys and a soldier returned to work in Akropong. The whole township received them and the chief and his elders arranged for him to stay temporarily in the house of Nana Kwao Kutruko,¹⁹⁷ one of the sub-chiefs in Akropong. Riss requested for a plot of land to build his residence and the local people

¹⁹¹ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Hymnary*, vii.

¹⁹² Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 135.

¹⁹³ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Hymnary*, vii.

¹⁹⁴ An interview on "Akropong Presbyteriansm" by Rev. Emmanuel Omenako, District Minister of Akropong on 10th July, 2018

¹⁹⁵ An interview on "Akropong Presbyteriansm" by Evangelist Dr. Abboah Offei, Leader of Grace Evangelistic Team, Akropong Akuapem on 20th July, 2018

¹⁹⁶ Celebrating Akropong Christ Church, 180th Anniversary Brochure page 19

¹⁹⁷ An interviewed on "Akropong Presbyteriansm" by Rev. Emmanuel Omenako, District Minister of Akropong on 10th July, 2018

really helped him. Upon completion, the people called him “*Osiadan*”¹⁹⁸ meaning a builder in the Akuapem language. In 1836, three other missionaries including the wife of Riss joined him in Akropong to help in the missionary work. The most interesting thing to note was that for five years, Riss and his team had not converted even a soul to Christ in Akropong. The Missionaries became discouraged and the mission work in Akropong became very difficult in 1839 since, by 1840, the missionaries had not won a soul for Christ despite the advancement in material gains.¹⁹⁹ Riss was hit with health problems and political disturbance broke up at Akropong. The political disturbances were the first of many that affected the town of Akropong and the state of Akuapem. The Missionary Andreas Riss, decided to visit his home country and in bidding farewell to the paramount chief and the people of Akropong, it is believed that the chief, Nana Addo Dankwa I, through his linguist said that “God created book for the Whiteman and fetish or juju for the Blackman, but if you could show us some Blackman who could read the Whiteman’s book, then we would surely follow you”.²⁰⁰ The words of the paramount chief stayed with Riss far back in Europe and upon deliberations for the way forward of the then Gold Coast Mission, he reiterated it to the Mission Committee for consideration for which they did. Under the leadership of Rev W. Hoffman, the new inspector for the Basel Mission, appointed John George Widmann, Herman Halleur and George Thompson to go to the Gold Coast. Widmann, has the credit for being the first to lay the foundation for the system of education of the present day PCG. He set himself the task of studying the Twi language and on July 14, 1844, he preached in the Twi language without an interpreter.²⁰¹ Riss and his wife went to the West Indies to engage some Black Christians to accompany

¹⁹⁸ Kwaminah-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, 114

¹⁹⁹ Kwaminah-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, 114.

²⁰⁰ Celebrating Akropong Christ Church, 180th Anniversary Brochure page 21.

²⁰¹ Kwaminah-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, 118.

them to the Gold Coast and twenty-four²⁰² members of the Moravian Missionaries got enlisted for the missionary work in the Gold Coast, mainly men, women and children. The settlement of the West Indian immigrants at Akropong laid the foundation for a Christian community in town and subsequently the successful establishment of the church. These led to the establishment of schools to educate their children and also the new convert who will help them in achieving their goals as missionaries.²⁰³ The schools were called the Salem schools.²⁰⁴ Having been reported by newly arrived missionaries for dealing in guns and gun-powder, and for running a mission plantation worked by slaves who were guaranteed their freedom when they accepted baptism, Andreas Riis was recalled home for good in 1845.²⁰⁵ This is what, Kwamena Poh, in his book, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State 1730 -1850* puts it:

Riis grew difficult to work with; the death of his child, the political unrest, the burden of leadership, coupled with his own and his wife's failing health, led him to become overbearing and intolerant He was criticised by his colleagues for his autocratic attitude both Africans and Europeans Persistent report from his fellow missionaries critical of his leadership finally determined the committee at the end of 1845 to recall him to Basel for discussions. By the time the letter reach Akropong, however, Riis had left of his own accord in a bitter frame of mind.... At home, he was adjudged by the committee to have disobeyed their expressed instructions not to use gun-powder and muskets as articles of barter and his services were dispensed with.²⁰⁶

Notwithstanding the faults of Andrews Riis, he is still described as the missionary pioneer of the first rank,²⁰⁷ without his faith and endurance the mission would not have taken its roots in the country.

In 1848, the Missionaries showed vision and foresight by establishing a theological seminary at Akropong to provide training for the preparation of teachers and ministers for the church. From Akropong, the work of evangelism spread to other areas of Akuapem

²⁰² Buah *A History of Ghana*, 135.

²⁰³ Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 135.

²⁰⁴ An interviewed on "Akropong Presbyteriansm" by Rev. Emmanuel Omenako, District Minister of Akropong on 10th July, 2018

²⁰⁵ Buah, *A History of Ghana*, 135.

²⁰⁶ Kwamina-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State 1730-1850*, 117.

²⁰⁷ Kwamina-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State 1730-1850*, 117.

and beyond.²⁰⁸ The Mission took a step to secure farmlands for the West Indian families who took to the planting of tropical fruits and other food crops including cocoyam which they had brought from the West Indies.

During the First World War, the Basel Missionaries were expelled from the country, being German nationality.²⁰⁹ In 1918, missionaries from Scotland arrived and the church which was known as the Basel Mission became known as the Scottish Mission.²¹⁰ In the 1920s, some of the German missionaries returned to the country. In 1926, the church became autonomous with its own synod²¹¹ at Abetifi Kwahu where the church was first known as the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast.²¹² In 1929, the church completely revised its Regulations, Practices and Procedure (R.P.P) to reflect the new polity which was a break from the framework set in Die Ordnung of the Basel Mission and by 1950 the church had completely attained independence. The name of the church was changed to PCG in March 1957 when Ghana attained independence. As the membership of the church increase, the church was organized into Presbyteries and five of such was established on 21st July, 1922 at the Synod at Kyebi.²¹³

At the moment, there are twenty-one (21) presbyteries²¹⁴ of PCG which comprise of two hundred and seventy-five (275) districts, two thousand, five hundred and seventy-three

²⁰⁸ An interviewed on “Akropong Presbyteriansm” by Mrs. Salomey Ansah, of Akropong on 10th July, 2018

²⁰⁹ Buah *A History of Ghana*, 136.

²¹⁰ Buah. *A History of Ghana*, 136.

²¹¹ Buah. *A History of Ghana*, 136.

²¹² *Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Constitution*, 163

²¹³ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Constitution*, 164. The first five Presbyteries of the church includes: Ga and Dangme, Akuapem and Anum, Agona and Kotoku, Akyem and Okwawu and Asante and Asante Akyem Presbyteries.

²¹⁴ The Twenty one (21) Presbyteries of PCG as at December, 2018 includes: Akuapem, Akyem Abuakwa, Asante, Asante Akyem, Asante South, Brong Ahafo, Central, Dangme-Tongu, Ga, Ga West, Kwahu, Northern, Sefwi, Sekyere, Upper, Volta, West Akyem, Western, Europe and North America/ Australia Presbyteries.

(2573) Congregations, one thousand three hundred and seventy- nine (1379) Preaching points and three (3) Mission Fields.²¹⁵

3.5 Conception of the doctrine of Trinity among Presbyterians

Theologically, Presbyterian theology emphasizes the sovereignty of God which was the basic theological conviction for John Calvin,²¹⁶the authority of the scriptures, the priesthood of all believers, the necessity of salvation by grace through faith in Christ just to mention but a few.

Presbyterians believe that the Trinity is who God is and that the Trinity is the one God who simultaneously expresses Himself to humanity in three distinct ways. According to James H. Smylie, in his book, *A brief History of the Presbyterians*, a Christian is one who understands the doctrine of his religion, and acquainted with the work of God's Spirit in effectual calling, professes repentance from dead works, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and subjection to him as a king and whose life and conversation corresponds to his profession.²¹⁷ Presbyterians in same manner believe that, though the word "Trinity" does not occur in the Bible, the essential affirmations of the doctrine of the Trinity are rooted in the Scriptures. Thus, to them, when certain issues arose which challenged the faith of God's people, the doctrine of the Trinity took shape as Christians turned to Scripture in order to affirm who God is.²¹⁸ Like all other Christians, Presbyterians also believe that the doctrine of the Trinity affirms the oneness of God. Presbyterians believe that the doctrine of the Trinity also affirms the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as distinct Persons who reveal themselves as God.

²¹⁵ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution*, 165

²¹⁶ Kirkpatrick and Hopper, Jr. *What Unities Presbyterians*, 15.

²¹⁷ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, (Geneva Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1996),69

²¹⁸ Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 70

Also, Presbyterians believe that the oneness of God means that God is not made up of collective parts and that God is indivisible. Consequently, while the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinguishable expressions of the one God, they are not each expressing only a fraction of God; rather, the wholeness of God is expressed in each distinction. Furthermore, Presbyterians believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot be reckoned as one and the same thing. They believe that the doctrine of the Trinity reaffirms the distinctiveness of the three. As a result, while it is believed that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God, Presbyterians do not believe that the three are each other. In relating the Trinity to the Presbyterian Church for instance United States of America, Clifton Kirkpatrick and William H. Hopper, Jr. in their book *what unites Presbyterians* sum it up as: Presbyterian theology, like all other Christian theology, begins with the triune God. The Trinity is the basis for understanding who God is. The three persons are one God. Who we see in Jesus Christ is God. What we see the Holy Spirit does is God. The God who is revealed in the Old Testament is God. All the work of God is one work in that it is carried out by the one God. But God works as three divine persons, united in the divine love.²¹⁹

To the Presbyterian, the doctrine of the Trinity is not a matter of intellectual curiosity or theological gymnastics. Rather, they are of the view that though mysterious, it is important to understand this doctrine since it confronts them with questions and answers which lie at the heart of their relationship with God.

3.6 Introduction to the Akuapem State

In the eighteenth century record of the European trading companies, the best description of the Akuapem State was the “Hill Country” and the people therein were referred to as the

²¹⁹ Kirkpatrick and Hopper, *What Unites Presbyterians*, 38-47

“Hill People”,²²⁰ due to its mountainous location. However, K.B. Dickson object to this description on the bases that Akuapem State is made up of both highlands and lowlands with the highest points and the lowest point above sea levels recorded as 500m (1642ft) and 500ft (152m) respectively.²²¹ Akuapem has three distinctive denotations; more significantly is the specific geographical area, the group of people or the language spoken.²²²

The Akuapem state has an emblem comprising of an elephant, an oil-palm tree, a halo around the sun and a traditional Akan stool. The elephant and the Palm tree were chosen to represent the State because of the vegetation of the place. Symbolically, both the elephant and the oil palm represent power, authority, durability and self-sufficiency.²²³ Agriculture was and is still one of the major important occupations of the Akuapem people because of the fertile soil and the favourable climate.

The inhabitants of Akuapem today may be divided into two main linguistic and ethnic groups. The first is the Guan speaking communities which are subdivided into Kyerepon Guan and the late Guan. The second is Twi speaking communities. Both traditions did not understand trade, they were planters, always glue to their plantations and their food; they did not understand war; we have not heard from anyone that the Akuapem kept on making war here and there. Kwamina-Poh affirms in his writings that, one may suspect that, the Akwamu, with their desire for slave trade with the Europeans’ on the coast, were ready to use any means of obtaining slaves from the hills; and that a greater part of the existing traditions of the Akuapems are versions of the Akyem royal houses traditions, inclined to

²²⁰ Kwamina-Poh M.A, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State 1730-1850*, 1

²²¹ Kwapong, *Chieftancy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, 33

²²² Kwapong, *Chieftancy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, 31.

²²³ Kwapong, *Chieftancy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, 33.

show how perverse the Guan and the Akwamu periods were in the hills before the imposition of its rule.²²⁴

The current Akuapem State is heterogeneous in nature comprising of a different group of people with different histories, cultures, traditions and languages or dialects making the place a very complex one as asserted by Kwapong.²²⁵ Kwamina Poh identifies three broad groups in the Akuapem State as follows: First, the Kyerepong-Guans, the Larteh-Guans and the third other Guans who speak Twi, the Akan who are made up of Akan of Kamena origin(from Gyakiti), Akwamu remnants and the Akyem origin.²²⁶ The Kyerepong –Guan communities include Abiriw, Dawu, Awukugua, Adukrom, Apirede, Abonse and Aseseso.²²⁷ The Larteh –Guans comprises the twin-towns of Larteh-Ahenase and Larteh-Kubease. The otherGuans who speak Twi are the people of Mamfe, Abotakye, Mampong, Tutu, and Obosomase. The Akans in Akuapem are those of the Akan –Kamena origin from Gyakiti, found in Kye in Akropong. The other Akans are mainly the Akwamu origin found in Aburi, Atwasin, Ahwerase, Berekuso, Agyementi, Nsakye, Kitase, Pokrom. The final major group of the Akans is that of the Akyem Abuakwa origin found mainly in Akropong and Amanorkrom.²²⁸

3.7 Akuapem Concept of God

The idea of God is no strange beliefs in Akuapem. It is believed that the concept of God was highly held among the Akuapems before the advent of Christianity and other known religions in the territory. Evidence in these believe of God can be seen in the numerous Akan names of God as well as the religious practices, rituals and sacrifices that were

²²⁴ Kwamina-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, 30.

²²⁵ Kwapong, *Chieftancy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, 42.

²²⁶ Kwamina-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*. 53-54

²²⁷ Kwapong, *Chieftancy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, 42.

²²⁸ Kwapong, *Chieftancy and Communal Conflicts in Akuapem*, 42.

carried out in the community. In the Akuapem language, God is referred to as Onyankopon (Nyankopon) or Onyame (Nyame). One of the ways that the Akuapems perceive God is through the several appellations that seek to convey traditional ideas about His nature, works and potency. One of such appellation is Ɔboadeɛ (Creator of all things) which also contains the notion of a potent God – since He must logically be potent (omnipotent) to be able to create all things.

God from the Akan perspective is seen as Ɔdomankoma which expresses the idea of the Final God. Onyankopon is seen in Akan thought as good and “identified with goodness itself. Hence, Onyankopon is not only a desirer of goodness but also a doer of the good. Goodness implies the value of something done”, and that “Onyankopon’s doing is good.²²⁹ Therefore, if it is said that “Onyankopon is good” or is “the Supreme Good,” it means that He is “the Akan God of Beneficence, practical content of moral life.²³⁰ The goodness of God must prompt individuals to worship him in order to benefit from his goodness.

The intended objective of worship is the showing of reverence or devotion to a supernatural being,” Onyankopon” who is seen to be powerful in all life endeavours. Worship is to serve where individuals devote themselves to their object of belief. It could also be seen as availing oneself and fellowshiping always in a religious service. Through worshipping God, Onyankopon is also perceived in personal terms. The personality of Onyankopon is, for instance, implicit in some of his appellations. Nana (Grand Ancestor), Abommubuwafrɛ (Consoler), Ɔboadeɛ (Creator), Nyaamanekose (One in whom you confide when in trouble).²³¹

²²⁹Danquah, J. B., *The Akan Doctrine of God: A fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion (2nd ed.)*. (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1968), 152

²³⁰Danquah, J. B. *The Akan Doctrine of God: A fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion (2nd ed.)*, 152.

²³¹Opoku, A. K., *West African Traditional Religion*. (Accra, Ghana: F. E. P. International, 1978), 15.

Onyankopon is also regarded as a spirit. Religion is fundamental to the individual and the community, as God and other supernatural entities are believed to play important roles in the life of both the individual and the community. For instance, the powers of the deities (abosom) are sought for individual and communal protection, and libation is not even offered without the mention of God. But God, being personal, is portrayed in libation as one who understands prayers and grants the requests of humans. Moreover, the Akan would sometimes say Nana Nyame boa me! (“God help me!”) when in need or difficulty. Africans believe in the Supreme Being which might have originated with peoples reflections in the universe. People realised that this vast and complex universe must have an origination. This originator they considered to be the Supreme Being or God.

In addition, the people believe in the Supreme Being stems from their realization of their own limitation and weaknesses. The man realized that he was limited in knowledge and power to control the world particularly death, calamity and forces of nature. This realisation might have caused them to speculate that there must be somebody or someone who was greater than both man and the universe to control them both. This being they regarded as God.

Furthermore, people’s observation of the forces of nature being the powers of the weather, storm, thunder and lightning, the phenomenon of day and night and the sky with its heavenly bodies like the sun, moon and stars, just to mention but a few might have caused man to conclude that there is a being behind all these. This being they referred to as the Supreme Being. The immortality of God is an attribute which is expressed in the following titles. Tetekwaframo (Akan) meaning, he who is there now as from ancient times; Others see him as the king who never dies, in him there is eternity; the one who remains and does not die – the everlasting one; a Spirit which no one can create but dwells

everywhere just to mention but a few. The Supreme Being is also regarded as a judge, the giver of morality, “Ohene a wodeasempee’pe” meaning, a King who judge cases truthful and accurately.

Merciful: “Nyame a wuho no yen bobo” meaning, the God who is merciful. Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent (all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere). The Akans have the following, “Otumfo”, meaning the powerful one.

Africans believed that God controls man’s destiny and that after death, man’s soul returns to God for judgement. Terms, proverbs and myths of Africans demonstrate these beliefs. I want to conclude with the Akuapem belief of the Supreme Being’s relationship with the lesser gods (divinities). In relationship with the divinities, the Supreme Being is the creator while the divinities are regarded as the Supreme Being’s agents on earth in various ways. The divinity serves as a channel as the worshippers approach the Supreme Being through prayers, libation, sacrifices and rituals, which are used to relate to the powers they believed in. To conclude, the Akuapems view God as supreme, all-powerful, all-knowing, loving, caring just to mention but a few. But there is a question that needs to be asked and answered to set the record straight for our discussion. Is the Supreme God that the Akuapems know before other religions came in the same as the God of the bible? To help answer the above question, the most prominent and influential African theologian John Mbiti, asserted to the fact that, God before foreign religion is the same as the God of the bible.

The supreme God is known but he is considered to be far removed from men and although the name Nyame is often used there seem to have been little or no indigenous worship of Him. Yet his name indicates his nature: Qdomankomathe boundless one, Borebore, the one who hews out and fashions; Omaomee, the one who satisfies; Amowia and

Toturobonsu, the one who gives sun and rain in abundance; Tweaduampon, he who supports. Above all names, there is Onyankopon, the only great Nyame. The great number of Twi proverbs show how a deep understanding of the Supreme God as one who ordains the fate and destiny of men and who is the source of all life.²³²

The Akuapen people see Supreme God in three persons as *Onyame Agya* God the father, *Onyame Oba* God the Son and *Onyame Honhon kronkron* God the Holy Spirit. It could, therefore, be said that the people believed in the doctrine of Trinity.

3.8 Brief History of Akropong Christ Church

The Akropong Christ Church is undoubtedly the most significant Presbyterian Church in the history of Ghana. It is believed that the Basel Missionaries started their work of evangelism from Christiansborg in Accra, but it was from Akropong that the gospel took root and spread to all parts of the country. It was through the persistence, determination and vision of the Missionaries that the foundations of the Akropong Christ Church were laid. As the church grew, the community was levied house by house by the then paramount chief, to get a place of worship for them. The first place of worship, a small wooden structure, was built in 1848 until a second one was built and completed on 23rd December, 1868. It was at the dedication of the chapel that it was named “Christ Church” and to this day, the church has been known by this name. It should also be put on record that the dedication service of a new church at Akropong took place on October 20, 1938, with the then Moderator, Rev. Charles Martinson, the officiating minister who was knocked down and the crowd walked on him as they rushed to enter the new chapel. The Moderator died on his way to seek medical attention at Larteh. The church has grown through thick and thin in coming this far in the midst of all challenges confronting the

²³² David Brokensha, *Akwapim Handbook*, (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation), 117.

church. As at 2017, the congregation had three thousand one hundred and twenty-four (3124) members. Of this, more than half, two thousand and twenty-eight (2028) representing 64.9% were females. In other words, there are nine hundred and thirty-two (932) more females in the church than males, one thousand and ninety-seven (1097) representing 35.1%.²³³

Table 1 further shows the distribution of membership across age.

Table 1: Membership across age at Akropong Christ Church

Age	Males	Females	Total
0-11	324	518	842
12-19	177	322	499
20-29	197	287	484
30-39	119	150	269
40+	279	751	1030
Total	1096	2028	3124

Source: Annual Report (2016), PCG, Akropong Christ Church

3.9 Brief History of Grace Congregation, Akropong- Akuapem

The Grace Congregation follows the patterns of the New Testament church where people were added to their membership daily from the first day of meeting on the 24th of March, 1996 with a numerical strength of thirty-three (33) including children.²³⁴ Geographically, Akropong town has enlarged to the extent that, it was difficult for most people to go to the mother church. In view of the above, the Evangelism and the Lay Training Committee (ELTC) of the Akropong Christ Church had recommended the formation of a church near

²³³ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Akropong Christ Church, *Annual Report*, 2017

²³⁴ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Brochure of Dedication of Chapel and Manse, Grace Congregation*, 17-18

the School for the Blind in Akropong. The two agents who were sent to plant the church were Mr. (now. Evang. Dr.) Ebenezer Abboah Offei and Mr. Samuel A. Asare.

One major factor that led to the growth of the Grace Congregation was their involvement in healing and deliverance services. Some individuals within the church were having spiritual problems which the church could not help solve. The new church was into miracles, sooner or later most people who visited became members of the congregation. The church was formed during the era when the Bible Study and Prayer Group members had lit small fires of revivals all over the country but none could gather to become a real bonfire. The activities of Scripture Union had gingered most members of the orthodox churches. The time was just right for the formation of this church which could combine Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical and Presbyterian styles of worship, singing, loud prayer, time for testimonies, a place to exercise spiritual gifts during church services for all classes of people for a model of worship. The church was fully inaugurated on the 1st of January, 2000 at 3 pm.²³⁵ Until PCG accepted a common greeting for all its members, it was everyday parlance for people to greet and respond “Grace..... Eye Adom”. When the time came for the church to be renamed, both the Session and congregation were unanimous in voting the name, Grace, hence Grace Congregation of PCG, Akropong-Akuapem.

One of the catalysts that have helped the church to grow is what has become popular as the Healing and Deliverance services organized by the Grace Evangelistic Team (GET) under the same roof. People from all walks of life seeking divine intervention in their situations through the Grace Church for their fellowship programmes known as “Restoration Hour”. The benefit Grace Congregation has derived from hosting the GET cannot be

²³⁵ Presbyterian Church of Ghana, *Grace Congregation, Dedication of Chapel and Manse*, 17,19

overemphasized.²³⁶ Because of the GET, Grace Church is one congregation that has many people having theological education at various levels up to the Master’s degree but almost all of them have chosen not to be ordained in order to carry out their ministry with the GET. The church can boast of backup of highly qualified theologians. Grace Congregation prides itself perhaps with the most innovative church in the Presbyterian fraternity.²³⁷ When the Grace Congregation introduces any programme before long, other Churches copied. Notably, on the list include Prayer Bazaar, Commanding the Month, Public Holiday retreat, Singspiration, Prayer-fest, etc. Members of the GET continues to render Chaplaincy ministry to chiefs, business executives, politicians home and abroad all to the glory of God.

Table 2 further shows the distribution of membership across age.

Table 2: Membership across age at Grace Congregation

Age	Males	Females	Total
0-11	132	176	308
12-19	50	90	140
20-29	44	77	121
30-39	40	65	105
40+	75	220	295
Total	341	628	969

Source: Annual Report, PCG, Grace Congregation, 2017

3.10 Conclusion

God and the idea of Trinity are no strange belief in our churches today. The supreme God is a commonly held belief among all people in the church today. It could be stated here and now that though classical Trinitarian belief is historical, biblical and theologically

²³⁶ An interview with Rev. K.B. Asante, Minister in Charge, Grace Congregation on May 20th, 2018

²³⁷ An interview with Rev. K.B. Asante, Minister in Charge, Grace Congregation on May 20th, 2018

true, its presence in the contemporary Ghanaian church is practically disregarded and absent. The church is therefore recommended to go back and emphasize Trinitarian theology in its theology and practice. It is against this background that the researcher wants to situate the doctrine of Trinity in the Akuapem Presbyterians and find the extent to which the members understand and live the doctrine in their days.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REALITY OF TRINITY AMONG AKUAPEM PRESBYTERIANS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis of the data gathered from the field notes and interviews with the clergy and lay members of the Presbyterian Christians in Akropong-Akuapem. The study explores Akuapem Presbyterians' understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and how this is expressed in their Christian life and relationship with the persons of the Trinity. The analysis involves the categorisation of the data into common themes and presentation of the results in sections based on the objectives of the study. The first section of the chapter explores the background characteristics of the respondents. The other sections assess the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity; investigates the Akuapem Presbyterians understanding of the Trinity, and how the doctrine of the Trinity influences their understanding of God and how they respond to this doctrine in their relationship with the persons of the Trinity.

4.2 Presentation of Findings and Discussions

Having interviewed the people of the two congregations within the Akropong District of PCG, that is Akropong Christ Church and Grace Congregation, the following were the findings as against the discussions on their understanding of the doctrine of Trinity.

4.2.1 Background Information

In all, fifteen (15) Akuapem Presbyterians participated in the study through in-depth interviews. This involved eight (8) from the Grace Congregation and seven (7) from the Christ Congregation. The major demographic variables considered include gender, age,

educational background, and indigenous status of the respondents. Table 1 shows the gender distribution across the two selected congregation.

Table 3: Gender of respondents

Gender	Grace Congregation	Christ Congregation	Total
Males	5	5	10
Females	3	2	5
Total	8	7	15

Source: Survey data (2018)

Of the ten (10) males that participated in the study, five (5) each was purposively selected from both Grace and Christ Congregations. Of the five (5) females, three (3) were from the Grace Congregation. Of the ten (10) males, two (2) are Reverend Ministers from Grace Congregation while one (1) of the females is a Catechist from the Christ Congregation. The diverse inclusion of the respondents was necessary to help explore whether the understanding of the Trinity differs across ordinary members of the church and the Ministers.

Table 4 shows the ages distribution of the respondents across the two congregations.

Table 4: Age (years) of respondents

Age	Grace Congregation	Christ Congregation	Total
19-29	3	2	5
30-40	1	0	1
41-49	3	1	4
50-59	0	0	0
60 and above	1	4	5
Total	8	7	15

Source: Survey data (2018)

Aggregating the results in Table 4 shows that nine (9) of the fifteen (15) respondents were aged above 40 years. Available data from the Grace congregation shows that 32.9 per cent of the congregation is aged at least 40 years. Relating the ages to the National Youth Policy of Ghana which defines youth as persons within the age bracket of 15 and 35 years, it implies that most of the respondents were matured and did not have youthful traits. The matured nature suggests that they are likely to have spent several years as Presbyterians, making them more credible to providing vital information for the study.

Table 5: Educational Background of respondents

Educational Background	Grace Congregation	Christ Congregation	Total
No formal	1	0	1
Basic	0	1	1
Secondary	0	1	1
Tertiary	7	5	12
Total	8	7	15

Source: Survey data (2018)

The educational backgrounds of the respondents were also considered. Of the fifteen (15) respondents, twelve (12) had tertiary educational backgrounds (at least a diploma), with one having no formal education, basic and secondary education respectively. Generally, the respondents were made up of persons with high educational backgrounds. This was as a result of the fact that most of the church members who willingly accepted to give a response to the interview resent their decision when they found out that it was on the doctrine of Trinity. To them, it was so complex and misleading and was of the view that the best response can come from the educated people especially those who are into the study of Theology. This was mainly the case in the Akropong Christ Church. However, the mixture of high and low educational backgrounds will help to understand how both perceive the doctrine of the Trinity using orthodox and local biblical teachings.

The ingenuity nature of the respondents was also considered with the results shown in Table 6

Table 6: Akuapem Indignity of Respondents

Gender	Grace Congregation	Christ Congregation	Total
Indigene	4	6	10
Non-indigene	4	1	5
Total	8	7	15

Source: Survey data (2018)

Of the fifteen (15), ten (10) are indigenes while five (5) are non-indigenes. However, for the seven (7) respondents from Christ Congregation, six (6) are indigenes. This could be explained by the fact that Christ Congregation Church is undoubtedly the most significant Presbyterian Church in the Akuapem area.

4.2.2 Presbyterian Membership

This section presents the Presbyterian members of the respondents. As part of this, the study examined the number of years the respondents have been Presbyterians, how they became Presbyterians, family attachment to Presbyterians and prior membership with any Presbyterian congregation. Table 5 shows the number of years for which the respondents have been Presbyterians.

Table 7: Number of years of being a Presbyterian

Years	Grace Congregation	Christ Congregation	Total
Less than 10	0	0	0
10-20	3	2	5
21-30	3	1	4
Above 30	2	4	6
Total	8	7	15

Source: Survey data (2018)

Aggregating the results shows that ten (10) out of the fifteen (15) respondents have been Presbyterians for more than 20 years. None has had less than 10 years' experience as a Presbyterian. Generally, the respondents have had sufficient existence and experience as Presbyterians. This makes them more credible in providing data that could enhance the reliability and validity of the findings of this study.

The background regarding how the respondents become Presbyterian was also looked at. Of the fifteen (15) respondents, twelve (12) were born into the church. In other words, they were baptised at infancy into the Presbyterian Church. The other three become Presbyterians through evangelism. One of such respondents who has been a Presbyterian for the past 30 years indicated:

“I was invited to the church by the Reverend Minister during one of their open-air crusades. Since then, I have continued to be a Presbyterian and even a Reverend Minister”.²³⁸

Another indicated:

“I was baptised into EP but got into PCG when I stayed with my Uncle who was a Presbyterian”²³⁹

It is evident that the respondents had some form of family orientation towards the Presbyterian Church and that their attachment to the church is based on family religiosity. Of the fifteen (15), ten (10) had between 5-10 family members that are Presbyterians while five (5) had less than five family members. This was expected since most of the respondents are indigenes and the fact that the Presbyterian Church was one of the first established churches in Akuapem especially Akropong.

Following the analysis of the background characteristics of the respondents, the next section considered the respondents understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.

²³⁸ Interview granted by a Reverend Minister on the 10th of June, 2018.

²³⁹ Interview granted by a Catechist on the 13th of June, 2018.

4.3 Understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The Trinity has been interpreted in many different ways by many different people.²⁴⁰ This section considered the conception of the doctrine of the Trinity from the perspective of the Presbyterians interviewed. This was done by exploring the respondents' understanding of the role of the Persons of the Trinity and the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. Following the thematic analysis, three major themes emerged from the interviews regarding the respondents' understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity:

- i. God represented in three persons.
- ii. God manifests himself in three other ways
- iii. One divine essence possessed by three individual beings

Table 8: Trinity Understood by Respondents As:

Trinity Understood As:	Number of Respondents	Percentage
God represented in Three Persons	10	66.7
God manifesting Himself in Three Other Ways	3	20
One Divine Essence possessed by Three Individual Beings	2	13.3

Source: Survey data (2018)

From the table, it could be deduced that an overwhelming majority of 66.7%, totalling about (ten) 10 out of the (fifteen) 15 mentioned specifically that the doctrine of Trinity is God represented in three persons. It was observed by the researcher that, some of the respondents were just struggling with the explanation of the Trinity as indicated by a respondent as:

The Trinity is not really found in the Bible. God manifests himself in Presbyterian Church from the Basel Missionaries times. God as a person manifests himself in 3 other ways. God is seen at one time as God, at another time as the Son and at the last time as the Holy Spirit.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 105

²⁴¹ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

Also, a male respondent has this to say on the doctrine of Trinity.

Trinity is about God is seen as triune or a divine essence possessed by three individual beings. The church believes in the Trinity and this comes about during baptism, reciting the apostle's creed during divine services etc.²⁴²

4.3.1 God Represented as Three persons

God being represented in three persons was the major understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity among the respondents (both Akropong Christ Church and Grace Congregation respondents). It was largely noted that respondents reckoned the doctrine as the threefold nature of God and that it relates to three in one deity. Thus, Trinity is God in three persons. One of the respondents with at least 30 years as a Presbyterian explained:

“The doctrine of the Trinity is a belief concerning the nature of God. How God is manifested among believers. It is the profession of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as single majesty of the same glory and of one splendour who establish no difference by unconventional separation but recognizing the persons under the Godhead”.²⁴³

The respondents express their Trinitarian faith by professing a belief in the oneness of God in whom there are three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three divine Persons are only one God because each of them equally possesses the fullness of the one and indivisible divine nature.

4.3.2 God Manifesting Himself in three Ways

Unlike God manifesting himself in three persons as shown earlier, some of the respondents understand the Trinity as God manifesting himself in three ways and not in three persons. In other words, it is clear that while some perceive the threefold nature of God as persons, others perceive them as ways. One of the respondents explained:

“The doctrine of Trinity is how one God exhibits Himself in three different forms and shapes”²⁴⁴

²⁴² A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

²⁴³ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

²⁴⁴ A female respondent from the Akropong Christ Church interviewed on 20th June, 2018.

Thus, others perceive the Trinity as God showing Himself in different shapes. Some of the respondents have taken it to mean one being living in three relationships, as a man may be at the same time a father, a son and a brother.²⁴⁵ However, as shown clearly from the literature, the Trinity is about the persons of God and not the shapes of God.

4.3.3 One Divine Essence Possessed as three individual beings

The other similar thematic understanding of the Trinity among the respondents was the oneness essence possessed by the three individual beings of God. In this case, understanding of the Trinity was related to the “Beingness” of God further reflecting the argument surrounding the interchangeable use of the Trinity as the ‘Persons’ and ‘Being’. This is consistent with Alister’s argument that the ambiguity of the term “person” has been noted by both Oneness and Trinitarian proponents as a source of conflict in understanding who God is.²⁴⁶

4.4 The Persons of the Trinity

Conclusively, in responding to what the persons of the Trinity are, all the respondents knew of the persons of the Trinity as:

- i. God the Father
- ii. God the Son
- iii. God the Holy Spirit

Thus, it is clear that the respondents believed that God exists as a unity of three distinct persons. An interesting observation was that all the respondents mentioned the persons in the same order of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. However, the

²⁴⁵ Henderlite, *A Call to Faith*, 106.

²⁴⁶ Alister, M. E. , *Understanding the Trinity*. (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1990),130.

relationship between the persons of the Trinity was also debatable among the respondents and that varied opinions exist regarding the relationship.

4.5 The Relationship between the Persons of the Trinity

There were also different positions among the respondents regarding the equal and identical nature of the Trinity. One of the respondents explained the difficulties in outlining the relationship between the persons of the Trinity.

“Sometimes I will be hesitant to draw a line between the persons of the Trinity. The God the Father gives a command. God the Son carries out the command, God the Holy Spirit is the power behind the carrying out of the command”²⁴⁷

Similarly, a respondent with over 30 years as a Presbyterian explained:

“The persons of the Trinity work hand in hand. They are always seen together. They are mutually exclusive. The persons are equal in magnitude and power”²⁴⁸

These above views support the argument that each person of the Trinity is fully divine in nature but each is not the totality of the other persons of the Trinity.

Another respondent with 10-20 years’ experience as Presbyterian explained:

“To our human mind, the relationship is indispensable divine counsel that operates together. One can’t operate without the other. When one gives a command, for example, when Christ gives a command, it is God who gives the command and same applies to the Holy Spirit. They are interrelated and can’t be separated. When one acts, the others are acting at the same time, when one speaks the others are speaking at the same time, that is, one voice represents the three at the same time”²⁴⁹

Another indicated:

“The roles and function of the persons of the Trinity are interrelated and hence you cannot single out what each person does. God the father is the creator of the universe and He purposes our salvation. The Son is the mouthpiece of the Father and also shares in creation. The Holy Spirit is the active force that is God’s power at work in Man”.²⁵⁰

The above suggests that while the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinguishable expressions of the one God, they are not three separate expressions of God. It is however

²⁴⁷ A Reverend Minister respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

²⁴⁸ A female respondent from the Akropong Christ Church interviewed on 3rd June, 2018

²⁴⁹ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 10th June, 2018

²⁵⁰ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

clear that the relationship of the Trinity presents the concept of subordination as argued by Miller.²⁵¹ In showing the distinctiveness of the Persons of the Trinity, a respondent explained:

“If the Son has not died, the Holy Spirit will not have come to Man”²⁵²

Another explained:

“The Holy Spirit is not a person but a force behind the power of God. One is higher than the other. If God is different from the Spirit, it means God is double. If Jesus had not died, the Holy Spirit will never have come to man. The father and the Son are the only two persons. The Godhead is 2 and not 3”²⁵³

Regarding the distinctiveness of the Persons of the Trinity, generally, the respondents acknowledged that the Persons of the Trinity overlap since they operate together. The issues of distinction among the Persons of the Trinity bring a problem and that distinction cannot be drawn because they need each other. One of the respondents explained:

“Distinction cannot be drawn and that in terms of functions/roles/work, they overlap. In the gospel of John, it is recorded that I and my father are one. It is very difficult and at times impossible to draw a line between the persons”.²⁵⁴

4.6 Roles and functions of the persons of the Trinity

The views of the respondents on the roles and functions of the Persons of the Trinity were also explored from the perspective of the respondents. The major themes regarding the specific roles of the Persons of the Trinity as emerged from the interviews are shown in the table below:

²⁵¹Miller, D. *Nurturing the Nations: Reclaiming the Dignity of Women in Building Healthy Cultures*, (Cape Town: Paternoster, 2012).

²⁵² A female respondent from the Akropong Christ Church interviewed on 4th June, 2018

²⁵³ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 12th June, 2018

²⁵⁴ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

Table 9: Roles and functions of the persons of the Trinity

Persons of the Trinity	Roles and functions
God the Father	Overall Head of the Trinity Fatherhood of God
God the Son	The only objective of worship Advocates for mankind Salvation of sinners
God the Holy Spirit	An exact image of the invisible God The Spirit of the Godhead Brings about regeneration Makes intercession for mankind Comforter and Teacher

Source: Survey data (2018)

The various roles as indicated above suggest that each person of the Trinity has a unique role to play defeating the “oneness” nature of the Persons of the Trinity as indicated by the respondent. In other words, though the members of the Trinity are equal in the divine being, there is a subordination of function. Table 6 suggests that each person of the Godhead has a different ministry, thus fulfilling all the needs of mankind.

It is clear from Table 6 that God the Father seems to be the head of the Trinity. One of the respondents explained:

“God the Father controls everything of His creation, and directs the entire affairs of creation”²⁵⁵

Different roles were outlined for God the Son in the Trinity. However, the majority of such roles according to the respondents is having access to God through the Son. A respondent explained:

“Equal in essence, substance. When we talk about the Son, it is God coming down in the human form. We did not see the Spirit because the Spirit operates as God manifesting himself through faith and God manifesting bodily as the Son”.²⁵⁶

From a localized perspective, one of the respondents explained

From Presbyterian Hymn Book (PHB 263)- Onyame Honhom kronkron of the 850 hymns of PCG, it could be concluded that: God is God Himself, The Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God .²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ A female respondent from the Akropong Christ Church interviewed on 10th June, 2018

²⁵⁶ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

²⁵⁷ A female respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

Despite the view that the persons of the Trinity are equal, others hold a different opinion and debunk the assertion that the Trinity cannot be equated. A respondent who stood parallel to the Arian position explained:

“They can’t be equated, because I think God the Father takes the headship. The Son is subordinate to the Father and the Holy Spirit to the Son” God the Father is the head and the Supreme Being of the Trinity. God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are there to help God the Father to accomplish the task set before the triune God. Everything that the Son does, the Holy Spirit does same under the dictates of God the Father”²⁵⁸

4.7 Arguments/ Debates/Misconceptions concerning the doctrine of Trinity

The varied positions surrounding the persons of the Trinity and how they relate have resulted in several arguments/debates/misconceptions surrounding the doctrine of Trinity.

The major debates according to the respondents interviewed include:

- i. Who created the one, God?
- ii. Is one person higher than the other?
- iii. Is the Trinity biblical?
- iv. Who created that one, God?
- v. How can God have a son without a wife?
- vi. Nothing like the Trinity exists in the bible.
- vii. How God in his wickedness can allow his only Son to be crucified and die.
- viii. How can one God be in three different persons?
- ix. How can God die since the Son died?

Some of the respondents were of the view that the persons of the Trinity were not of the same magnitude. God the Father was seen to be the greatest of all the Persons followed by God the Son and finally to God the Holy Spirit as indicated by one respondent.

“I see God the Father as the most powerful and the originator of the Trinity because Father means the first or the originator of something. Father means the one who transmits his nature to his “Children” and Father means one who is in authority. During the Old

²⁵⁸ A male respondent from Akropong Christ Church on 20th June, 2018.

Testament time, the Father was most prominent. During this era on earth, Jesus the Son was most prominent and currently in the church age God the Holy Spirit is most prominent. There are also passages in the Bible which indicate the inferiority of the Son to the Father as in John 14:28²⁵⁹

The above stand of the people calls for redefining of the relationship between the Father and the Son since there are other biblical texts which seems to support this doctrine of the superiority of the Father and the inferiority of the Son so to speak as espoused by Erickson.²⁶⁰

The points above imply that the Trinitarian nature of God is a concept that constantly confuses the respondents about Who God is. The differences in opinions regarding the Trinity could explain why some respondents' belief in God as three distinct divine beings or as one God revealed in different ways at different times. Though Presbyterians generally believe that the oneness of God means that God is not made up of collective parts, but believe that the doctrine of the Trinity reaffirms the distinctiveness of the three, this belief is not well understood. Thus there are still misconceptions about the Trinity suggesting a lack of proper theological teaching on the concept. It is also evident that the Trinity is not explicitly taught in the Christian scriptures, while the precise language in which it is expressed seemed not to be settled. There are therefore clear indications that understanding the Persons of the Trinity is beyond human imagination and that man is limited in explaining the sovereignty of God.

One of the respondents explained:

“Man is limited in explaining the sovereignty of God. The Holy Spirit is not a person but a force behind the power of God. One of the persons of the Trinity is higher than the other that is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in that order”²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ A male respondent from Grace Congregation interviewed on 20th June, 2018

²⁶⁰ Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 51.

²⁶¹ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

The above are consistent with Shedd's position that the doctrine is one of the most confusing and misunderstood doctrines since it lies outside the realm of natural reasoning or human logic.²⁶²

Regarding the biblical nature of the Trinity, concerns have been raised as to whether the Trinity is in the scriptures. As part of the concerns, one of the respondents stated:

“Nothing like the Trinity is in the Bible, that is, it is not scriptural. Understanding God as a Son and a Spirit, that is how God can be the Son and the Spirit at the same time. One should be seen to be higher than the other”²⁶³

The above argument could explain Flint and Rea's assertion that such thoughts have led to some objections of the biblical affirmation of the doctrine of Trinity by some theologians.²⁶⁴ Lewis also argued that the Trinity is a necessary and proper theological inference drawn out of biblical materials and that without the doctrine of the Trinity, the biblical material cannot make sense. This notwithstanding, God eternally existing in three persons can be seen in many places in the bible such as Genesis 1:26,²⁶⁵ where God refers to Himself by saying, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness

In conclusion, it can be deduced that there is a different understanding among the respondents regarding the roles and function of the Trinity. While others believed that the persons are equal, others think they are not and that one (God the Father) is the Godhead. Thus, God, the Father is supreme but they co-exist, they leave/work together. Generally, there are many misconceptions surrounding the doctrine and that the concept is not

²⁶²Shedd, W. G. T. , *A History of Christian Doctrine*. (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers,1889).

²⁶³ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

²⁶⁴Flint,T.P.& Rea, M., *The Trinity - Oxford handbook of Philosophical Theology*. (Oxford University Press, 2009)

²⁶⁵ Gen 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

straight forward. However, it is also clear that the Person of Christ seems to be the catalyst for the Trinitarian debate.²⁶⁶

4.8 Understanding of God through the Trinity

Following the understanding of the Trinity, this section considered the respondents understanding of God through the Trinity. This was done by exploring how God relates to the Holy Spirit, and to the Son. In responding to the ways in which God is to the respondents, almost all affirmed that God created them in His own image.

Table 10: Understanding of God through the Trinity

Persons of the Trinity	Relationship with the Trinity
God the Father	i. Creating all things for me
	ii. Daily provision of all things
	iii. Giving life and showing mercy
	iv. Providing all my needs
	v. Showing love to me as a sinner
God the Son	i. Always ready to help me
	ii. Promoting my interest and divine counsel
	iii. Showing humility to me
	iv. Interceding on our behalf
	v. Mediate between God and man
God the Holy Spirit	i. Makes intercession to God on my behalf
	ii. Making known your needs to God
	iii. Helping me to know what is not in accordance with his desires
	iv. Strengthens us

Source: Survey data (2018)

The study further explored the attributes of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) from the perspective of the respondents. The major results are shown in Table 11

²⁶⁶Shedd, W. G. T., *A History of Christian Doctrine*. (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers. 1889).

Table 11: Attributes of God and the Trinity

Persons of the Trinity	Attributes
God the Father	i. Prince of Peace
	ii. Omnipotent/All-powerful
	iii. Omniscient/ All-knowing
	iv. Almighty
	v. Omnipresent
	vi. Eternal
	vii. Unchanging
God the Son	i. Counsellor
	ii. Teacher
	iii. Mediator
	iv. Generous
	v. Everlasting
	vi. Powerful
	vii. Healer
God the Holy Spirit	i. Intercessor
	ii. Teacher
	iii. Helper
	iv. Advocate
	v. Creator
	vi. Knows all things
	vii. All-powerful

Source: Survey data (2018)

It is clear that the respondents could not give unique attributes of the Trinity, making them equal though distinctive. It could, therefore, be stated that the attributes of the persons of the Trinity do interpenetrate each other and supply their life to one another, but all three are involved in all of the works of God, that is the concept of perichoresis²⁶⁷ as stated by Erickson.

4.9 Humanity and Divinity of the Son

This section ends by exploring the views of the respondents on the extent to which Jesus (the Son), is both divine and human. The major themes emerging regarding divinity include miracles and, conception and birth. Some of the miracles that respondents mentioned during the interview included turning water to wine, making

²⁶⁷ Erickson , *Making Sense of the Trinity*, 64.

the storm still, walking on water, authority over Satan and demons, authority over sickness and infirmities just to mention but a few.

The major themes emerging regarding Jesus humanity was on physical limitation. These include He wept, suffered, grew tired, ate, born, slept, was hungry, experienced natural growth in wisdom and stature, felt sorrow and was angry.

4.10 The Trinity in Akuapem Presbyterian Practices/Activities

Following the understanding of the Trinity and how the respondents relate with the Trinity, this section focuses on how the Presbyterian teaching promotes the respondents' understanding of the lessons of the Trinity, as well as the specific ways the Presbyterian teaching enhances or confuses the understanding of the Trinity. In responding to how the Presbyterian teaching promotes the respondents' understanding of the Persons of the Trinity, the following emerged:

Order of service/ Liturgy: Every service of the PCG is started with a statement of the Trinity as....."We begin today's service in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen". At the end of all such services, the benediction/grace is shared in the name of the triune God. A respondent in the native language made mention of the fact that any time he goes to church he waits till the benediction or grace is shared at the end of the service.

"If I leave the church before the benediction is shared it is as if I am incomplete and I have not committed myself sufficiently to the God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit who together will make me succeed in life."²⁶⁸

The hymns: Generally, the 850 Hymns of the PCG portray several understanding of the Trinity. Typical hymns of this nature include PHB 36- PHB 43 and several others. One of the respondents explained:

²⁶⁸ A female respondent from Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

“My best hymn is PHB 263-Onyame Honhom Kronkron of the 850 hymns of PCG. From this hymn, it could be concluded that: the Holy Spirit is God, the Son is God and God is God himself”²⁶⁹

Furthermore, PHB 39²⁷⁰ by Reginald Heber

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! Unto everlasting days our song shall rise to Thee; Holy, Holy, Holy, Merciful and Mighty! God in Three Persons blessed Trinity!

It was also noted that though some of the hymns are specific on the Trinity, all the 850 hymns of the Presbyterian Church indirectly mention the Trinity.

Catechism: This relates to the belief patterns of the Presbyterian. The Catechism contains Presbyterian doctrine and practices. It is used as Christian education material for the church. It highlights the teachings that one needs to go through at each stage of life. For instance, confirmation classes, presbyters’ manual just to mention but a few are the means through which one could be educated.

Baptism/Confirmation: The main ceremonies that identify one as a Presbyterian is baptism and confirmation. Within the Presbyterian setting, individuals from infancy are baptized in the name of the Triune God to be accepted as members of the congregation. It is believed that not all such individuals understand this step of identity to the church and so when such individuals become fully grown, attaining the ages of eighteen and beyond, they are confirmed to be fully accepted into the congregation.

It was noted from the interviews that during both baptism/confirmation, the individuals are taken through all the processes in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It was clear from the interviews that the period of confirmation that the individual learns more about the Trinity.

²⁶⁹ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana, English Hymnary*, 151

²⁷⁰ *Presbyterian Church of Ghana, English Hymnary*, 22

Declarations of the Apostles' Creed: This teaches the Presbyterian about the lordship of the three persons of the Trinity. It is also evident that the congregations stand and confess/affirm their faith in the words of the Apostles creed after a sermon is delivered. The use of the Apostle Creed is not surprising since it was used by the early church fathers from the second century. Although the Creed does not explicitly mention the Trinity, it is structured around this most fundamental of Christian doctrines.

4.11 Living and Practicing the Trinity

An Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas makes a proclamation that:

“From the moment a human being becomes a member of the church, he/she takes on God’s way of being. That way of being in the way of relationship: with the world, with others, with God. Church, then, is an event of communion, and it is as a communion of persons that the church is an image of God. Since God’s being is relational, the being of the church is the relation. Since God’s being is persons in communion, so the church’s being is a person in communion”.²⁷¹

Christians, therefore, must be able to relate well with their world, others and with God which defines how a Christian lives his/her life. Regarding how the Presbyterian live and practice the Trinity, the study noted that this is done through the following:

- i. **Prayer life:** Trinity is lived through the prayer life of the individual. Presbyterians used to enjoy their silent prayers with the in-depth knowledge of the persons of the Trinity. The awareness of the Trinity especially that of the Holy Spirit has opened up individuals to all forms and patterns of prayer in the life of the Presbyterian. Presbyterians give equal emphasis to all forms of prayer ranging from silent prayer to the aggressive ones used in the church today .
- ii. **Communion:** Most Churches has a practice called communion, also known as the Lord’s Supper or the Eucharist. PCG celebrate this sacrament on the first

²⁷¹ Hunt, *Trinity*, 45

Sunday of every month. During this ceremony, bread is used to symbolise the body of Jesus and wine as a symbol for His blood. One of the respondents explained:

“The Presbyterian beliefs that there is a connection between our nearness to Jesus, believing in Him, and being fulfilled by Him and this is seen at the Lord’s Table”²⁷²

The Church has it as a tradition that, before communion services are carried out, individuals are asked to prepare themselves for the celebration. This is known as “**Speaking**” where the individual sees to it that he or she is in the right standing as far as much prepared to dine with the Trinitarian nature of God.

- i. **Living in harmony with fellow man.** This was related to the fact that the three persons of the Trinity teach the Presbyterian how to live in harmony with other persons. Human beings are taught that they need each other to survive for the success of their reasons why they are kept on earth. The Presbyterians are reminded that as part of their core values in their purpose statement, they are asked to be united and support themselves for the good of each other. Akuapem Presbyterians, therefore, are positioned to be at supporting each other for a common cause.
- ii. **Bible studies:** This is done weekly during church services to help members appreciate and understand the ambiguities of the Trinity. During the time of a former moderator, the Very Rev. Emmanuel Martey, the bible study material prepared for the church was on the Holy Spirit which by extension discusses the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. Since 2010; his first year in office, an annual theme on the Holy Spirit has followed one another: The themes included: Empowered by the Holy Spirit. (2010); The Holy Spirit and the believer (2011); The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church today (2012);

²⁷² A female respondent interviewed on 20th June, 2018

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit (2013); Be filled with the Holy Spirit (2013); The Anointing of the Holy Spirit (2015) and When the Holy Spirit Moves (2016).

Rev. Prof. Martey, a past Moderator of PCG, asserts,

“Indeed when the Holy Spirit moves, Churches are addressed to wake up and proclaim the Sovereignty and Supremacy of Jesus Christ. When the Spirit moves, miracles do happen and believers give testimonies”²⁷³.

Despite the controversies surrounding the doctrine, the respondents have taken themselves to be committed to Trinity and the persons of the Trinity seem to be implied both by practice and by central claims in the Christian scriptures.

- iii. **Deliverance Services:** It was also noted that in recent times, deliverance has largely gained the attention of the church, and that deliverance services are carried out by applying the three persons of the Trinity. Thus the powers of the three persons are invoked during deliverance and anointing services. There has been the emergence of Prayer centres in most of the Presbyterian Churches and within the research area, one of the renowned as far as the church is concerned is the Grace Evangelistic Team, with Evangelist Dr. Abboah Offei as the leader and founder. The operations of Grace Evangelistic Team, therefore, motivated the PCG in its decision to establish prayer centres where the gifts of healing by its members could be utilized to the advantage of church members in general and to enhance the PCG’s ministry and expansion efforts. The occurrence of the healing and deliverances services in the church today could also be attributed to the growing awareness of the roles and functions of the persons of the Trinity.
- iv. **Visitation:** This according to the respondents depicts togetherness. The two churches understudied have developed a way of visiting themselves in the

²⁷³ Interaction with Prof Emmanuel Martey on the person of the Holy Spirit, on 20th April, 2016, during Grace Congregation Chapel dedication.

community to emulate the examples of Jesus Christ and for the community to learn from their examples.

The study also examined the specific ways, if any, in which the Presbyterian teaching confuses the respondents' understanding of the Trinity. This was largely related to the accurate translation of the texts in the bible. One of the respondents explained:

“Situation where a preacher brings in a doctrine which they may not understand, the original versions of the gospel are not translated well. For example, when you sin against the Holy Spirit, you cannot be forgiven”²⁷⁴

It was also clear from all the respondents that the teaching of the Trinity has not changed in the Presbyterian Church over the years. However, people seemed to be better informed about the Holy Spirit in the church than before.

4.12 Conclusion

The engagement of the doctrine of Trinity in the Akuapem Presbyterians perspective indicates that the doctrine is not about logic, language or mathematics which has straight forward answers. The doctrine is about the mystery God who has revealed himself in the Son and the Holy Spirit. Through the interview, it came out that the doctrine of Trinity among the Akuapem Presbyterians is the foundational doctrine for Christian theology, doxology and practice and that all that they do are centred on the doctrine. The researcher's engagement with the people has brought to bear some of the challenges the respondents are facing such an important doctrine. Christian scholarship ought to help strengthen the religious base of the Presbyterian Christians in Akuapem and the concluding part of the research will go a long way to help in understanding the doctrine of Trinity in the locality.

²⁷⁴ A male respondent from the Grace Congregation interviewed on 15th June, 2018

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This study was conducted on the doctrine of Trinity among Presbyterians in Akuapem. The study basically investigated how the doctrine of the Trinity is lived and practised among Presbyterians in Akuapem, where Christianity started in the country. The study examined the peoples understanding of the doctrine and the arguments surrounding it and finally how the doctrine has influenced the Akuapem Presbyterian understanding of God and how they respond to this doctrine in their relationship with the persons of the Trinity.

The study was organized into five chapters. This chapter presents a summary of the major findings from the study, the conclusions and recommendations as well as directions for further research. Thus, the chapter focuses on the implications of the findings from the study for policy formulation and further research. In all, fifteen (15) Presbyterians participated in the study through in-depth interviews.

5.2 Summary

The idea that the doctrine of Trinity seems to be controversial in most of the Presbyterian churches caught the attention of the researcher to engage time and resources in order to gain knowledge that will be beneficial to the individual as well as the body of Christ and specifically Akuapem Presbyterians. The study was grounded in Trinitarian theology which is the doctrine of Trinity. Relevant theological literature, prominent scholarly work, home and abroad, as well as relevant biblical text from the Old and New Testaments of Scripture, was used to expatiate the meaning of the doctrine of Trinity in order to put the study within the right academic perspective.

In Chapter Two, the doctrine of Trinity was engaged into detail. To start with, was what the doctrine of Trinity entails. The roots or the genesis which is seen as the origin of the doctrine of Trinity was considered. The theological argument of the study which centred on the creeds: Apostles Creed, Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed of which the Presbyterian faith was built upon were:

- i) There is exactly one God, the Father Almighty.
- ii) Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are not identical.
- iii) Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are consubstantial.

The above gave way for the conception of the doctrine of the Trinity which was built on biblical truth such as “There is one God, God exists in three distinct persons and each of those persons is fully God.” Another important feature of chapter Two understood the doctrine of the Trinity since it must be seen as a practical doctrine with radical consequences for the Christian life. The biblical roots of the doctrine and some of its Trinitarian arguments were well-thought-out. In addition, others like Immanuel Kant, Gabriel Setiloane, Presbyter Arius, just to mention but a few also put forth arguments in one way or the other in connection to the doctrine of the Trinity. One of the major components worth considering was the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. The Trinity provides the intellectual and moral foundation for the equal dignity of men and women. They also provide the pattern for healthy, God-honoring relationships. The Trinity also helps Christians to make sense of their salvation in Christ. The chapter concludes on theological relevance of the doctrine and also African theological understanding of the Trinitarian doctrine.

In Chapter Three, the church PCG was interrogated as in the historical background of Presbyterianism. Data for this was gathered largely through literature, historical data, interviews and some form of observation on the part of the researcher. The Presbyterian

system of governance or leadership was looked at as the Local, District, Presbytery and the General Assembly Level or courts. The history of the first PCG, the Akropong Christ Church and the Grace Congregation, Akropong- Akuapem was considered. The last to be considered under the chapter was how the Akuapems perceive God in line with the Trinity, the topic under consideration.

Chapter Four of the study dealt with the Akuapem Presbyterians understanding of the doctrine of Trinity in the life of the individuals, community and the church as a whole. It examined the extent to which the doctrine has brought about a transformation in the life of the individual in PCG especially those in Akuapem.

Data on the chapter was mainly from a primary source specifically interviews with the ordained and lay members of the two selected churches in Akuapem. Other sources included historical records on PCG in general, with the main emphasis on Akropong Christ Church and Grace Congregation, all in Akropong.

Out of the thematic analysis, three major themes emerged from the interviews regarding the understanding of the doctrine. The first understanding was seen as God represented in three persons. The second was that God himself in three other ways and the third was one divine essence possessed by three individual beings. The doctrine, therefore, is a belief concerning the nature of God. It is the profession of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as a single majesty of the same glory and it comes up as how God manifests himself among believers. Due to the overlapping roles of the persons of the Trinity, distinctiveness of the Persons brings about a problem leading to various arguments or debates and misconceptions surrounding the doctrine.

The concept of the Trinitarian nature of God, therefore, confuses most individuals suggesting a lack of proper theological teaching and understanding of the concept which

could better be dealt with by understanding of God through the Trinity and also considering the attributes of God and the Trinity. Having accepted the concept of the doctrine of Trinity, PCG, and for that matter, the Akuapem Presbyterians have taken steps to ensure its proper integration into the life of the individual and the church.

The Presbyterian teachings help its members to live and practised the Trinity which comes up in their way of life. To a very large extent, the understanding of the doctrine has brought about a lot of transformation in the PCG. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between some Presbyterian churches especially on the grounds of Pentecostalism and Charismatic.

The chapter concluded that the doctrine has brought spiritual renewal contributing to building capacity of persons with their various gifting in Ministry with the church. The understanding and practising of the doctrine have brought about individuals getting themselves into strange phenomena like deliverance and prayer centres ideologies in the church today.

With references to the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, all the respondents knew of the persons of the Trinity as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God is represented in three persons was the major understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity among the respondents. While some perceive the threefold nature of God as persons, others perceive them as ways. Others also perceive the Trinity as God showing Himself in different shapes. Understanding of the Trinity as the oneness essence possess by the three individual beings of God was also common among the respondents. Though the persons of the Trinity are equal in the divine being, the respondents' belief that there is a subordination of function and that *God* the father seems to be the head of the Trinity.

Notwithstanding the controversies surrounding the persons of the Trinity being identical in essence, rather than similar in essence, the Trinity is a creed for Presbyterians in which the equality of the three persons of the Trinity is explicitly stated. Despite the misconception surrounding the Trinity, the doctrine has promoted the respondents' understanding of who God is and that God the Father created them in His own image. The respondents believed that God the Father provides their daily needs and the gift of life, the God the Son intercedes on their behalf while God the Holy Spirit makes known their needs to God the Father.

5.3 Conclusions

The doctrine of the Trinity enables Christians to speak of God in the most appropriate way and to comprehend and describe His being. However, though the Presbyterians of Akuapem have a basic understanding of the Persons of the Trinity, they hold different positions regarding the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. In other words, there is a difficulty for clarity of terms and expressions on the doctrine of the Trinity. Generally, the Trinity is not well understood among the Presbyterians and that it is not explicitly well taught in the Christian scriptures, and the precise language in which it is expressed seemed not to be settled or cleared.

The study concluded that God exists as a unity of three distinct persons (The Father, Son and Holy Spirit). However, the relationship between the persons of the Trinity was debatable and that varied opinions exist regarding the relationship. We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity; we distinguish among the persons, but we do not divide the substance. For the Father is a distinct person; the Son is a distinct person, and the Holy Spirit is a distinct person. Still, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have one divinity, equal glory, and coeternal majesty. What the Father is, the Son is, and the

Holy Spirit is. The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, and the Holy Spirit is uncreated. The Father has immensity, the Son has immensity and the Holy Spirit has immensity. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal and the Holy Spirit is eternal.

While the Trinity presents a logical problem to philosophers, it also presents the “threeness-oneness problem to theologians largely due to the term “persona” by both Oneness and Trinitarian proponents. The study also concluded that each person of the Trinity has a unique role to play defeating the “oneness” nature of the Persons of the Trinity. Therefore, the Trinity is still largely incomprehensible to the mind of the ordinary man. Thus understanding the Persons of the Trinity is beyond human imagination and that man is limited in explaining the sovereignty of God. The Presbyterian Church promotes the understanding of the Persons of the Trinity in diverse ways. These include the order of service or liturgy, hymns, catechism, baptism/confirmation, declarations or the Apostles creed just to mention but a few. However much can be done, in bringing about the best understanding for the people of Akuapem.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the major findings from the study, the following recommendations are made for policy formulation and further research in PCG:

5.4.1 Interaction between Theology and Philosophy

One of the controversies surrounding the Trinity is the technical and philosophical language of the Trinity. Therefore, it is essential that theologians and philosophers in the PCG continuously interact to express the most accurate and logical way of presenting the doctrine to the church. The interaction is essential to clear out the philosophical debate surrounding the doctrine of Trinity and also promote the biblical root of the doctrine.

5.4.2 Training of Trinitarian Theologians

Promoting the understanding of the Trinity requires the use of professional and trained Trinitarian theologians. Therefore, theological seminaries and schools especially the ones owned by the church should offer capacity building programmes for Ministers of the Gospel on Trinitarian doctrine. The training programmes should include:

- i. The balance of divinity and humanity of the Trinity
- ii. The interactions/relationship between the persons of the Trinity
- iii. Proper interpretation of the scripture

The absence of the word Trinity in the bible makes its biblical teachings difficult. Therefore, capacity building programmes should promote the teaching that God has revealed himself in the structure as triune, and has been affirmed as triune throughout the Christian tradition.

5.4.3 Development of a Trinitarian handbook

Currently, the understanding of the Trinity regarding the relationships between the Persons of the Trinity is limited among the Presbyterians of Akuapem of the Akropong Christ Church and Grace Congregation. Therefore, the General Assembly Council (GAC) of PCG should facilitate the development of a Trinitarian handbook, written in both local and the English language to update the knowledge of the congregant on the Trinity. Such educational materials should seek to serve all the generational groups²⁷⁵ of the church including the Children Service, Junior Youth, Young Peoples Guild, Young Adult Fellowship and the Men and Women Fellowships of PCG.

²⁷⁵ Generational Groups in PCG: Children Service under 12 years, Junior Youth 12-18years, Young Peoples Guild 19-30, Young Adult Fellowship 30-40, Men/ Women Fellowship Above 40years.

5.4.4 Trinity Sunday on the Almanac

The first Sunday after Pentecost is earmarked as Trinity Sunday on the churches almanac and it is a step in the right direction getting over the challenges that the doctrine presents to the church. The observation is that most preachers on the said date don't speak on Trinity, and they have their way since the same almanac gives a different theme on such days. For instance, in the year 2017, the theme on Trinity Sunday was Grace, Love and Fellowship and in the year 2018, the theme was experiencing the Glory of God in your life. The preachers, therefore, speak on the attached themes and most keep silent on Trinity. It is upon this that the researcher recommends that GAC of PCG should enforce that agents of the church see to it that the day in question should be solely used to talk on the doctrine of Trinity and tackles some of its challenges encountered in the church settings.

5.4.5 Annual themes of the Church

Another recommendation to the GAC or the Moderator of PCG is that, just as the former Moderator, the Very Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey concentrated on his thematic address during his tenure of office on the Holy Spirit, a person of the Trinity, there is the urgent need now for the church to focus more on the Trinity as an annual theme and by so doing the membership will come to appreciate the good values of the doctrine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abboah Offei, Ebenezer. Interview, 20 July 2018, Akropong Akuapem.
- Ansah Salomey, Interview, 10 July 2018, Akropong-Akuapem.
- Asante, M K B. Interview, 20 May 2018, Akropong Akuapem
- Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, ed. Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series 1887; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.
- Ayers, Lewis. *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, vol. II/1: *The Doctrine of God: The Knowledge of God, The Reality of God*, eds. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975.
- Bergmann S., *God in Context, A survey of Contextual Theology*, London: Routledge, 2003.
- Bevans, Stephens. *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Blaikie, Norman, *Designing Social Research*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- Boff, Leonardo. *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000.
-, *Trinity and Society*. London: Burns and Oates, 1988.
- Bolaji, Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission*. Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- Bratcher D., *Ecumenical Christian Creed*. New York: The Voice Institute, 2014.
- Brokensha, David. *Akwapim Handbook*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation,
- Bruce J. Nicholls. *Theological Education and Evangelization*”, in Douglas, *let the earth hear*.
- Buah F.K. *A History of Ghana*. Hong Kong: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1980.
- Catalogue of Publications, *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Glasgow: Bell and Bain Ltd, 2001.
- Clifton Kirkpatrick and William H. Hopper, Jr., *What Unites Presbyterians*. Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1997.

- Creswell J.W., *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluation Qualitative and Quantitative Research* (2nd ed.), New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2005.
- Crouch, M., *The Logic of Small Samples in Interview-Based Quality Research*. Social Science Information, 45 (4), 2006.
- Danquah, J. B. *The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion*. (2nd ed.). London: Frank Cass, 1968.
- Denzin and Lincoln. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. USA: Sage Publications, 2011
- DeYoung, K. L., *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in the 16th Century Catechism*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010.
- Drew, J.C., Hardman L.M., & Hosp L.J., *Designing and Conducting Research in Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Making Sense of the Trinity*. USA: Baker Academy, 2000.
- Flint, T. P. & Rea, M. *The Trinity: Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Forell, George W. *The Protestant Faith*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960.
- Fox, P. *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001.
- Ghana Statistical Service. *Population and Housing Census*. Accra: GSS, 2010
- Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo. *The Trinity Among the Nations: The Doctrine of God in the Majority World*. Cumbria: Langham Partnership, 2015.
- Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa. "Against Sabellius." *In Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. IX, edited by P. Schaff. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1891.
- Grobler, H.B., The Role of God in the Father/Son Relationship during identity formation- A Gestalt theoretical perspective. *Koers*, 75(2).
- Guy Bedouelle, *The History of the Church*, The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2003
- Gyekye, Kwame. *African Cultural Values: An introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing, 1996.
- Heick, O.W. *A History of Christian Thought*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1995.
- Hinderliter, Rachel. *A Call to Faith*. Virginia: John Knox Press, 1955.

- Hesselgrave, David. *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communications*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1991.
- Hunt, Anne. *Trinity*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. 2005.
- Iheanacho Maureen. *Theophilus Opoku – Indigenous Pastor and Missionary Theologian 1842 – 1913*, Accra: Sub- Saharan Publishers, 2014.
- James Henry Owino Kombo, *Theological Models of the doctrine of the Trinity*, Langham Global Library, 2016.
- Jowers D.W., *The Reproach of Modalism: A difficulty for Karl Barth’s Doctrine of The Trinity*. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 56(2): 2003.
- Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines*, London: Adam and Charles Black Ltd, 1958
- Kirkpatrick Clifton and Hopper William H. Jr., *What unites Presbyterians*, Louisvillie, Kentuncky: Geneva Press, 1997.
- Kombo, James O. “*The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought: An assessment of African Inculturation Theology from a Trinitarian Perspective*” PhD Thesis, University of Stellenbosch. 2000.
- Krieger, Englund, J.M. *The Presbyterian Mission Enterprise: From Heathen to Partner*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015.
- Kwamina – Poh M. A. *Government and Politics in Akuapem State, 1730-1850*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1973.
- Kwesi, Dickson A., *Theology in Africa*, Darton: Longman & Todd Ltd, 1984.
- LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life*. New York: Harper Collins, 1991.
- Macquarrie, John. *Christain Theology*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994.
- Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father, God the Son*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1996.
- Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy, 2nd edition*. Heinemann, 1969.
- McCreight, Greene. *When I say God, I mean Father, Son and Holy Spirit: On Ecumenical Baptism Formular” in Pro- Ecclesia Vol. VI, NO.3., 1997.*
- McGrath Alister E, *Historical Theology, An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*. Blackwell Publishing, 1998.
-, *Understanding the Trinity*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1990.
-, *Reformation Thought*. Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

-, *Understanding the Trinity*. Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1987.
- McKim K.D. *What Do Presbyterians Believe: What does “Presbyterians” mean? Who are Presbyterians and What do they believe?* 2006.
- Metzger, Paul Louis. *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology*, New York: T & T Clark., 2005
- Miller, S. *The Unity and Importance of Creed and Confessions in Doctrinal Integrity: On the Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions and Adherence to our Doctrinal Standards*, edited by S. Miller. Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1989.
- Omenako, Emmanuel, Interview, 10 July 2018, Akropong-Akuapem
- Opare, Kwapong George. *Chieftancy and Communal Conflict in Akuapem*. Accra: Heritage Publication, 2017.
- Opoku, A. K. *West African Traditional Religion*. Accra: F. E. P. International, 1978.
- Owino, K., Henry, J. *Theological Models of the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Carlisle Cumbria: Langham Global Library, 2016.
- Penner M., *The Doctrine of the Trinity at Nicaea and Chalcedon*. 2003.
- Presbyterian Church, *Book of Confession, study edition, Part 1 of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*, Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996.
- Presbyterian Church of Ghana Constitution, Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2016.
-, Hymnary, Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2014.
-, Grace Congregation Akropong, “Brochure for Dedication of -, Grace Congregation, Akropong, Chapel and Manse.” April 2014.
-, Grace Congregation, Akropong-Akuapem, “20th Anniversary Celebration Brochure,” March 2016.
-, Akropong Christ Church, “180th Anniversary Celebration Brochure,” 2015.
-, Preach the Word, Sermon Outline. 2018.
- Quash, Ben and Michael Ward. *Heresies and How to Avoid Them*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2007.
- Ryken, Philip and Michael Lefebvre. *Our Triune God*. Wheaton Illinois: Crossway, 2011.
- Schaff, P. *The Creeds of the Christendom*. New York: Harper Brothers.1877.
- Schineller, P., *A Handbook on Inculturation*. New York: Paulist, 1990.

- Setiloane, G, M, “*MODIMO : God Among the Sotho-Tswana*” in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. September 1973, no 4,65
- Shedd, W. G, T. *A History of Christian Doctrine*. Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1889.
- Sigurd Bergmann. *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology*. Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003.
- Smylie, James H. *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*. Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996.
- Stephens B, Bevans, SVD. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Ware, B.A. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles and Relevance*. Wheaton: Crossway Books. 2005
- Zizer, Victor. Interview, 10 June 2018, Akropong-Akuapem.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AMONG PRESBYTERIANS IN AKUAPEM

Dear Sir/Madam

I am Emmanuel Acheampong, an MPhil (Master of Philosophy) candidate in the department of the Study of Religion at the University of Ghana. I am conducting research on the above thesis topic.

As part of the academic requirement, you have been selected as one of the Presbyterians to volunteer information for the completion of the study to the best of your ability.

You are however assured that information provided to complete this study will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and be used purely for the academic exercise.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender: a. Male b. Female
2. Age:
a. 19-29 b. 30-40 c. 41-49 d. 50-59
e. Above 60
3. Education a. No formal education b. Basic c. Secondary d.
Tertiary
4. Indigenous Status? a. An indigene b. A non-indigene
5. Years of being a Presbyterian
a. Less than 10 years b. 10-20 c. 21-30 d. Above 30 years
6. How did you become a Presbyterian?

7. How many members of your family (if any) are Presbyterians?
8. Were you a member of any of the Presbyterian denomination prior to joining this Congregation?
9. What specific role (if any) do you play in this congregation?
10. Date of Interview

SECTION B: UNDERSTANDING OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

11. What is the doctrine of Trinity?
12. Mention the Persons of the Trinity?
13. What are the roles/functions of the Persons of the Trinity?
14. What is the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity?
15. How distinct are the three Persons of the Trinity?
16. How equal are the Persons of the Trinity?
17. What are some of the arguments/ debates /misconceptions surrounding the doctrine of Trinity?

SECTION C: UNDERSTANDING OF GOD THROUGH THE TRINITY

18. In which ways is God the Father to you?
19. In which ways is God the Son to you?
20. In which ways is God the Holy Spirit to you?
21. What are the attributes of God the Father?
22. What are the attributes of God the Son?
23. What are the attributes of God the Holy Spirit?
24. To what extent is Jesus both divine and human?

SECTION D: PRESBYTERIANS AND THE TRINITY.

25. In what ways does the Presbyterian teaching promote your understanding of the Persons of the Trinity?
26. In what specific ways does the Presbyterian teaching confuse your understanding of the doctrine of Trinity?
27. How do Presbyterians live and practice the Trinity?
28. Which practices of the church do you much appreciate and how does it relate to the Trinity?
29. Has the teaching about the Trinity changed in the Presbyterian Church over the years? If Yes, in what specific ways?

Appendix B

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Source: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/apostles-creed>

Appendix C

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
Through him, all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made human.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried.
The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,
and with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
and to live in the world to come. Amen.

Source : <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/nicene-creed>

Appendix D

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic faith.

Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally.

Now, this is the catholic faith:

That we worship one God in Trinity and the Trinity in unity,
neither blending their persons
nor dividing their essence.

For the person of the Father is a distinct person,
the person of the Son is another,
and that of the Holy Spirit still another.
But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one,
their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.

What quality the Father has, the Son has, and the Holy Spirit has.
The Father is uncreated,
the Son is uncreated,
the Holy Spirit is uncreated.

The Father is immeasurable,
the Son is immeasurable,
the Holy Spirit is immeasurable.

The Father is eternal,
the Son is eternal,
the Holy Spirit is eternal.

And yet there are not three eternal beings;
there is but one eternal being.
So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings;
there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being.

Similarly, the Father is almighty,
the Son is almighty,
the Holy Spirit is almighty.
Yet there are not three almighty beings;
there is but one almighty being.

Thus the Father is God,
the Son is God,
the Holy Spirit is God.
Yet there are not three gods;
there is but one God.

Thus the Father is Lord,
the Son is Lord,
the Holy Spirit is Lord.
Yet there are not three lords;
there is but one Lord.

Just as Christian truth compels us
to confess each person individually
as both God and Lord,
so catholic religion forbids us
to say that there are three gods or lords.

The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten from anyone.
The Son was neither made nor created;
he was begotten from the Father alone.
The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor begotten;
he proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Accordingly, there is one Father, not three fathers;
there is one Son, not three sons;
there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.

Nothing in this trinity is before or after,
nothing is greater or smaller;
in their entirety the three persons
are coeternal and coequal with each other.

So in everything, as was said earlier,
we must worship their trinity in their unity
and their unity in their trinity.

Anyone then who desires to be saved
should think thus about the trinity.

But it is necessary for eternal salvation
that one also believe in the incarnation
of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully.

Now, this is the true faith:

That we believe and confess
that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son,
is both God and human, equally.

He is God from the essence of the Father,
begotten before time;
and he is human from the essence of his mother,
born in time;
completely God, completely human,
with a rational soul and human flesh;
equal to the Father as regards divinity,
less than the Father as regards humanity.

Although he is God and human,
yet Christ is not two, but one.
He is one, however,
not by his divinity being turned into flesh,
but by God's taking humanity to himself.
He is one,
certainly not by the blending of his essence,
but by the unity of his person.

For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh,
so too the one Christ is both God and human.

He suffered for our salvation;
he descended to hell;
he arose from the dead;
he ascended to heaven;
he is seated at the Father's right hand;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
At his coming, all people will arise bodily
and give an accounting of their own deeds.
Those who have done good will enter eternal life,
and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire.

This is the catholic faith:
one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and faithfully.

Source: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/creeds/athanasian-creed>