



"I Receive":

**A Pastoral-Theological Re-conceptualisation of Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel, Toward
Alleviation of Poverty in South Africa**

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of the requirement for the degree

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DECLARATION

I, **Sibusisiwe Nomfundo Pearl Biyela** declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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This academic journey has been birthed from a culmination of a life lived in, and through Jesus Christ. With that said, I make reference to the below,

“Mina ngingumvini, nina ningamagatsha; ohlala kimi, nami kuye, lowo uthela izithelo eziningi; ngokuba ngaphandle kwami ningenze lutho.” (NgokukaJohane 15:5)¹

Indeed, without Jesus, I can do nothing. This is and will always be my first acknowledgement.

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In fine, I’d like to utter the following words,

“It is for Jesus that we live, and it is to Him that we shall give an account.”

~ Dr S.D. Gumbi

¹ This is a IsiZulu translation of the scripture in John 15 verse 5.

ABSTRACT

This research critically examines how a liberative pastoral theology can effectively address the enduring impacts of colonisation and systemic oppression by rethinking the Prosperity Gospel within the South African context. While focusing on South Africa, the study situates this analysis within the broader historical and contemporary socio-political landscapes of Africa. The study investigates how proponents of the Prosperity Gospel approach poverty through theological concepts and evaluates the real-world impact of these efforts on the lived experiences of the poor. By engaging critically with theological, social, and biblical perspectives, it seeks to determine whether the Prosperity Gospel's approach to poverty empowers individuals or merely distracts from the structural and systemic causes of inequality. This theological reconstruction aligns with decolonial and liberationist approaches, aiming to confront the lingering legacies of colonialism and apartheid that continue to shape poverty dynamics in the region. Methodologically, the research employs pastoral cycle model, which incorporates the four tasks of practical theology, descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic. This model provides a structured approach for analysing the relationship between theology, sociological factors, and systemic change, in line with practical theology's pastoral goals. Additionally, a Pneumatological hermeneutic is used as a guiding theoretical lens, emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit in theological reflection and action. This approach is relevant for a Christian expression that highlights the guidance of the Holy Spirit in both practice and interpretation. Ultimately, this study argues that pastoral theology, in addressing poverty, must go beyond welfare initiatives and the mere restoration of hope to engage in a comprehensive, rehumanising process. It seeks to construct a restorative preaching and practice aimed at liberation by advocating for a theology that prioritises human dignity, re-humanisation, and liberation, as reflected in scripture. By addressing the structural aspects of poverty and oppression through a decolonial lens, it aims to move beyond the individualistic focus of the Prosperity Gospel, promoting collective liberation and social justice. The study emphasises the need for a theologically informed and contextually relevant pastoral response to poverty in South Africa. It calls for transformative engagement that integrates biblical, theological, and decolonial perspectives to confront the dehumanising effects of systemic oppression and poverty. This contribution to pastoral theology offers a renewed vision of preaching and doing that aligns with the pursuit of justice, equity, and humanisation.

Key Words: Pastoral Theology, Prosperity Gospel, Poverty, Decolonisation, Pentecostalism

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

This study sought to understand how the Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel can be reconceptualised to alleviate poverty in South Africa. The qualitative research explored South Africa's state of poverty and how it can be addressed within a Pastoral Theological context. The study attempts to extend understanding of various poverty perspectives without providing a conclusive definition. It further seeks to critically analyse Prosperity Gospel's poverty-addressing endeavours by considering the relationship or impact that the Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel has on the poverty situation in South Africa. Moreover, various views of Prosperity Gospel and its theology are presented by looking at its theological, social and biblical contribution to addressing poverty. This desktop study highlights the relationship between the attempts by prosperity gospel proponents to address poverty through the theology they present and the practical impact such theology has on fundamental issues of poverty on the ground. As a foundation, this chapter's purpose is to provide the background of the research problem, motivation of the study, delimitation and problem statement, and significance of the study while setting out the study's structure and terminology to be utilised.

1.2 Background to the Research Problem

The study background considers three major factors: the religious challenge of compromised faith in the community due to poverty, the role of Prosperity Gospel in challenging dominant forces such as social stratification and the role of religion in mitigating socio-economic challenges that result in or from Poverty through Prosperity Gospel. Therefore, poverty is identified as a religious problem that needs a response from the Christian Church and all faith-based communities (Buffel, 2018). Firstly, when observing the challenges created by poverty that compromise the faith in the community, we are apprised of the consistent crime, killings and lawlessness, which facilitates further interest to engage in a theological exploration of Prosperity Gospel in South Africa and its relationship with poverty. Secondly, the role of Prosperity Gospel in challenging dominant forces such as social stratification draws from religious values of equality. This rationale expands to the socio-cultural and socio-political aspects facilitating ongoing poverty, which remains a challenge for people in the community, embedding functional and structural limitations perpetuating poverty for many vulnerable groups. Lastly, in view of the role of religion in mitigating socio-economic

difficulties that result in Poverty through Prosperity Gospel, the same has been represented through a reflection on an effort by the Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel to challenge existing norms and values that limit people's perceptions and mind-set about their poverty experience.

The Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel has been subject to several controversies in recent years. This controversy has resulted from those within and outside the structures perpetuating its theology and resultant actions. It could also be said that many remain confused as to what it is and how it relates to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ministers within Prosperity Gospel have been seen to be enriched at the expense of their congregants, who have, in many cases, remained lingering in instances of extreme poverty, particularly in Africa. To this end, the study will primarily focus on South Africa, though the backdrop of the study will consider Africa and its historical and contemporary socio-political and economic position. There has been a need to unpack the approach for this study concerning categorising poverty. This categorisation is not to be viewed as exhaustive but rather as an aid in the discourse pertinent to the study. I have identified the concept of poverty as two-fold. On the one hand, it is the Poverty Reality, which is having-not, lack, and dispossession. Naicker (2005, p. 3) identified poverty as having a primary state, which is the lack of economic resources to obtain what one should consider the necessities of all human beings: water, food, shelter, clothes, medical care and education. This primary state, referred to by Naicker (2005), defines the concept of a Poverty Reality. It can be summarily referred to as the state of being indigent. We have seen many relief initiatives by the government and religious and political organisations, amongst others, to combat the visible suffering of impoverished persons. Such poverty can be evidenced in reality and thus referred to as a Poverty Reality (or the physically notable reality of poverty).

On the other hand, it is the poverty of the mind, the mental state of being downtrodden, the absence of mental liberation and perhaps the belief and thought that a poverty reality is fitting. It results from colonisation of the mind, which Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986, p. 384) describes as a process that "corrodes the human-centredness of its victims to lose qualities of courage, kindness, faith in themselves, mercy, hatred of evil, integrity and self-confidence". This is a conditioning of what is referred to as the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor, "the mind", by Steve Biko and black consciousness thought. Poverty of the mind refers to a state of mind, whilst Poverty Reality is a state of being. It can also be identified that there is possibly of the link between the sources of

Poverty Reality and Poverty of the Mind because "coloniality can be seen to affect various systems such as knowledge, power and being", a realisation which could, in essence, influence all forms of Poverty (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 490). For this study and to avoid overindulgence, however, I will refer to the concepts of Poverty Reality and Poverty of the Mind, respectively.

Alluding to the underlying nature of poverty is critical in understanding the key research question. The study aims to mainly answer how a liberative pastoral theology can address the effects of colonisation and oppression by reconceptualising the prosperity gospel in South Africa. The topic of the study takes a blanket approach by addressing "poverty", yet the key question seeks to be more precise in alluding to the "effects of colonisation and oppression" because of the unveiled explorative analysis of poverty within this study. By speaking of poverty, the study synonymously speaks of colonisation and oppression. By reference to "aiming to address or alleviate poverty", the study essentially seeks to address and alleviate the effects of colonisation and oppression, presenting either Poverty Reality or Poverty of the Mind. The key research question is broader than a Poverty Reality, which presents the need to provide further background on the other fragments of the key question and what the study seeks to address.

Zulu (2019, p. 1) describes subscribing to Prosperity Gospel as an "increasingly defining feature of evangelical Christianity in South Africa". According to Zulu (2019), this belief holds that financial success and physical health are always the will of God. Moreover, this belief maintains that those with strong faith, positive thoughts and words plus significant donations to the Church will receive an increase in material wealth in return. In his more recent work titled "The 'prosperity gospel' excuses poverty and its true causes in Africa", Zulu (2022, p. 2) particularly states, "The prosperity gospel promises power to those who feel helpless and submerged in the storms of socio-economic crisis. However, it is ultimately a hollow call because it masks the true nature of poverty, and so leads societies away from tackling it." This statement marks the core trigger for this research at this current juncture. Zulu (2022) emphasises two main elements in the statement mentioned above, which should be kept in mind in the further grasp of this research endeavour. Firstly, he states that Prosperity Gospel does not directly address Poverty in South Africa, despite its adjudicated aims to eradicate it through faith. Secondly, he unveils a potential reason for this phenomenon by stating that Prosperity Gospel is a hollow call because it masks the *true* nature of poverty. We are left with the task to unmask this "true nature of Poverty" and consider whether

Prosperity Gospel's attempts address it (Zulu, 2022, p. 2). There is thus an evident need for Prosperity Gospel to be reconceptualised by considering a Liberative Pastoral-Theological approach in aims toward addressing poverty in the South African context.

It has been conspicuous in recent years that the Pentecostal ministry has been met with public scepticism and calls for regulation in South Africa, which has resulted in the establishment of the commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) to investigate these religious practices (Biyela, 2022; Kgatle, 2017; Banda, 2019; Mapitsa et al. 2022). In 2017, the CRL Rights Commission, in its report titled "The Commercialisation of Religion and the Abuse of People's Belief Systems", recommended that better regulatory frameworks be implemented for and by religious communities in South Africa to curb further abuses. In South Africa, the Prosperity Gospel can be categorised as a commercialisation of religion that needs such regulation. In line with the recommendations of the CRL Rights Commission, such regulations are to come from initiatives from the Church itself without imposition from various arms of government (CRL Rights Commission, 2017, p. 8). In regulating ourselves as the Church in this context, there need be a better understanding of Prosperity Gospel and its theology, the sociological reflection of South Africa as far as poverty is concerned and the Pastoral role that can be, and possibly, should be undertaken.

1.2 Motivation of Study

The motivation for this research is further located in encounters with Pentecostalism in its various forms in South Africa. At the tender age of five (5), I accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour over my life while attending a conference of the Assemblies of God in Thaba Nchu, South Africa. Assemblies of God, according to Anderson (2005), is recorded as one of the largest Pentecostal groups in South Africa. As a result, over the years, one has encountered exposure to Classic and Charismatic expressions of Pentecostal churches and ministries and, thus, have been exposed to the practice and preaching of Prosperity Gospel therein. Over and above this, I have witnessed the effects of poverty within the disadvantaged communities of KwaZulu-Natal, where I was born and raised. These lived and witnessed experiences planted a longing to see a pastoral theology that is tangible to our society through authentic preaching and doing, which is restorative. This is to be realised by the potential to construct a Liberative Pastoral Theology for the impoverished and downtrodden of South Africa.

Poverty and religion are amongst the most persistent social and cultural dilemmas. They are intimately related and have a long and eventful past (Schweiger, 2019). For example, there is a long heritage of poverty inspired by religion through the perpetuation of notions of humbleness and an inelaborate livelihoods as those more holy are religiously acceptable; however, donating to people experiencing poverty is also frequently considered a religious obligation. I have seen that religion and religious affiliation impact people's socio-economic levels. The need to prove the role religion and faith play in people's everyday lives in conquering poverty and their perspectives within theological discourse also drives the study. The study's motivation is also centred on understanding the role of social and religious perspectives, such as the Prosperity Gospel, in fighting poverty and engaging with the poor.

1.3 Significance of Study

The study contributes to the broader field of practical theology as it seeks a further understanding of Pentecostalism in South Africa and the emerging neo-Pentecostal gospel of prosperity through a record of those contributing to shaping that theology. The study takes an interdisciplinary approach to poverty, unveiling underlying sociological issues relating to colonisation and oppression. Significant systematic theological contributions have addressed colonisation and oppression; however, limited studies are done under the sub-discipline of pastoral theology. Furthermore, a research gap has been identified in that significantly low levels of data critique Prosperity Gospel through a Decolonial theoretical framework. The question of a liberating pastoral theory and practice within Pentecostalism and the broader Christian body considers the conditions of poverty in society through the eyes of contextual realities underpinning South Africa. The study is important because it draws together the dynamics of poverty and religion by relating literature on pastoral intervention and a Decolonial perspective on poverty. This desktop study shares recent relevant data in a Pastoral-Theological Re-conceptualisation of the Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel toward addressing alleviation of poverty in South Africa. The focus is on South Africa as it continues to face various socio-economic challenges, which has triggered the interest of many religious leaders to intervene, not only through acts of kindness but also through systemic considerations.

It is paramount to outline that this study has three main research areas: Pastoral Theology, Prosperity Gospel and Poverty in South Africa. These individually extensive areas of study are not

broadly in question here, but their interlink provides the platform to answer how a liberating Pastoral theology addresses the effects of colonisation and oppression by re-conceptualising the prosperity gospel in South Africa, which is the identified gap.

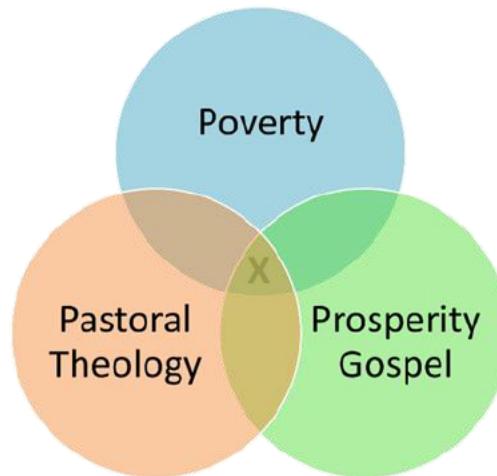


Figure 1: Depiction of Research Gap (Marked "X")

1.4 Delimitation and Problem Statement

This study aims to first lay the foundation by addressing what poverty is and what it can be, however not comprehensively, by infusing definitions of Poverty Reality and Poverty of the Mind, and their conjugate nature, to existing contributions to this discussion. Secondly, the study will assess the causes and effects of poverty, so defined, in South Africa by considering Africa and its historical and contemporary socio-political position as the contextual reality faced by Africa broadly and in South Africa particularly. An undertaking of the theological exploration of Prosperity Gospel in South Africa and its relationship with poverty will be done. At the core of the study is a liberating pastoral theology, which considers the practical theology discipline as an umbrella of pastoral theology concerned with theory and practice. This explores how the Church can effectively respond to poverty in the country through liberative preaching and doing.

1.5 Key Research Question:

How can a liberative Pastoral theology address the effects of colonisation and oppression by re-conceptualising the prosperity gospel in South Africa?

1.5.1 Research Sub-Questions:

1. What is poverty's history and current state in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa?
2. How does Prosperity Gospel limit dismantling oppression through decolonisation to address the state of Poverty in South Africa?
3. How can we construct a liberating Pastoral theology that addresses Poverty in South Africa?

1.6 Aims and Objectives:

1. To establish the history and current state of poverty in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa,
2. To examine and analyse the biblical and theological arguments on how Prosperity Gospel limits the process of dismantling oppression through decolonisation in order to address the state of Poverty in South Africa and
3. To construct a liberative Pastoral theology that addresses Poverty in South Africa.

1.7 Theoretical framework for the study

This study pursues to reveal the foundations of Prosperity Gospel, not limited to those found within Pentecostalism but primarily focused on those practiced within Pentecostal movements. It aims to operate within the parameters of Pastoral Theology within the discipline of Practical Theology (Ministerial Studies). Though seeking to consider economic, legal and other dynamics related to poverty and prosperity gospel, it does not seek to provide an economical or legal solution to the status quo. Alternatively, it aims to consider preaching and doing (Theory and Practice) within South African Pentecostalism in mind of the oppressive context in which South Africa operates. The identified theories to be applied to this study are a Pneumatological hermeneutics relevant in studies within Pentecostal traditions and, secondarily, a Decolonial theory relevant to unmask poverty and construct a liberative pastoral response. A thorough consideration of the approach to be taken regarding the theoretical framework will be considered more fully in chapter three of this study.

1.8 Structure of the Project

Having alluded to the above, the outline of the chapters shall be as follows,

Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodological Clarification

This chapter offers a general introduction to the study, explaining the background of the research problem, the significance of the study, and the methods, research design, and theories that will be implemented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter offers a systematic literature review of recent and critical debates in Prosperity Gospel, Pneumatology and ministry of the Holy Spirit, Charismatic Pentecostalism in Africa and South Particularly on the one hand. On the other hand, the review will reveal the colonial history in Africa and the interrelations that have occurred with poverty in its various forms.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter offers a thorough outline of the theoretical framework and the method and theory to be used to identify and extract data. The chapter seeks to provide clarity on the approach that will be taken in interpreting and critiquing the data.

Chapter 4: Re-conceptualisation of Poverty in South Africa

This chapter will establish the history and current state of poverty in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa. It reveals the various approaches to understanding poverty in South Africa and encompasses my broad categorisation of poverty reality and poverty of the mind, but it is not limited to such.

Chapter 5: Theological, Biblical and Social Rationales for and Against Prosperity Gospel in South Africa

This chapter will draw from the theological, biblical and social rationales for and against regulation of Pentecostal churches as seen in the writing, reflections and works distinguished by various theologians and Christian leaders through research, sermons and other resources available to the public.

Chapter 6: Impact of Liberative Pastoral Theology

This chapter aims to discuss and analyse how a liberative Pastoral theology can address the effects of colonisation and oppression by re-conceptualising prosperity gospel in South Africa and what such liberative pastoral theology may look like in the context at hand.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter will make some concluding remarks about what I encountered and experienced and hope to explore further in the future with respect to the content of the research undertaken.

1.9 Terminology

1.9.1 Believer:

For this research, this will mean someone who believes in the Religion of Christianity unless otherwise specified.

1.9.2 Body of Christ:

The concept of the Church as the Body of Christ, as articulated in 1 Corinthians 12:27, transcends the physical structures of individual church buildings where Christians customarily gather. Rather, it denotes the collective assembly of believers, who, in their spiritual unity, constitute the ecclesial embodiment of Christ. For further exploration, see also 'the Church'.

1.9.3 Born Again:

'To be born again is to have the Holy Spirit transform our hearts from indifference and hostility toward God to a love of God and a desire for righteousness and holiness. The only way one can come to God and experience what it means to be "born again" is through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ; read John 14:6. The Bible clearly teaches in Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:5, and Romans 10:13 that salvation is a gift; it cannot be earned in any way' (Billy Graham: 2004).

1.9.4 Call / Calling :

"To me the call is that divine urge, that compelling impulse that passion within that makes it impossible to resist. There is something within that is calling, ever calling. I am restless. I am a hunter's dog on the leash, straining to escape. It is that irresistible must" (Neely, 1995, p. 108).

1.9.5 The Church:

This refers to all who are Christian, notwithstanding denominations or church differences.

1.9.6 Commercialisation:

The commercialisation of religion or the gospel is defined by Gitonga (2011) in Resane (2017:2, cf. Masenya & Masenya 2018) as:

[P]resentation of the Biblical message either as a commodity for sale for material gain or as an object of investment for personal aggrandisement. The former refers to selling spiritual benefits, such as spiritual healing and offering prayers for special needs. The latter refers to the donation of money or item(s) to the Church with an expectation that God will repay much more in return. (p. 320)

1.9.7 Faith:

Lockyer (2017) posits that the most precise biblical articulation of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1, which declares, "Now faith is the conviction of things not seen, the assurance of things hoped for." This statement elucidates that faith inherently involves a profound sense of confidence and trust. Within the biblical context, this trust is fundamentally directed toward God and the veracity of His promises, underscoring the relational and anticipatory dimensions of faith as a theological construct.

1.9.8 Godhead:

Though this may be defined differently in respect of different religions, herein, this is a reference to God the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, who make up the Godhead. Otherwise known as the Trinity in three persons.

1.9.9 God's Move:

For this research, I refer to this as the manifestation in the physical, of the workings of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of God. In essence, I am referring to the tangible presence of God through His Spirit.

1.9.10 imago Dei:

Image of God - This can be described in two ways: firstly, it is God's own self-actualisation through humankind, and secondly, it is his care for humankind.

1.9.11 Pentecostalism:

“Generally, Pentecostalism is used to express Pentecostal doctrine and practice as it was initially understood from the beginning of that movement until the birth of the Charismatic Movement in the 1960s” (Gerrad, 2009, p. 231). Accordingly,

This movement, which is traced to an experience reported by Pentecostals to have occurred at Azusa Street in 1906, places a strong emphasis on glossolalia – speaking in tongues as evidence of the receipt of the Holy Spirit and holiness—of holy lifestyle by its adherents. In addition, Pentecostalism teaches “healing, exorcism, Holy Spirit empowerment, protection from the influences of the malefic spirits operating within any area, curses and blessings, divine direction through dreams and many other similar phenomena. (Gerrad, 2009, p. 234)

1.9.12 Poverty of the Mind:

For this research, it is the mental state of being downtrodden, the absence of mental liberation and perhaps the conditioned belief and thought that a poverty reality is fitting.

1.9.13 Poverty Reality:

This research refers to the reality of poverty, having-not, lack, and dispossession, as well as material/ economic.

1.9.14 Soul Winning:

This refers to the great commission encompassed in Matthew 28: 19-20;

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." (New King James Version [NKJV], 1982, Matthew 28:19-20)

This can colloquially referred to as the act of going to all nations in order to preaching the gospel and giving persons the opportunity to consider accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, repenting from their sins and walking a life of Christianity or, better yet, a life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

1.9.15 Vessel / God's Vessel:

For this research, I refer to this as the person God uses to manifest miracles, signs, wonders, sermons and other good works. This person has been filled by the Holy Spirit and empowered by Him to do.

1.9.16 Void ab initio:

This legal term is used to mean something without legal effect from inception. I used the same to mean, more precisely, the idea of being invalid from the very beginning.

1.10 Conclusion

The first chapter provides an introduction to the study. It commenced with a background of the research problem, the motivation for the study, and its significance. Once this was done, the problem statement and relevant delimitations were laid out. Such incorporated a clear outline of the key research questions and the secondary research questions to clarify the aims and objectives of the study. The chapter further revealed the Pneumatological Hermeneutics and Decolonial Theory as the Theoretical Frameworks employed in the study. The chapter concludes by outlining the structure of the study, which comprises seven (7) chapters in entirety, and lastly, the chapter defines the terminology to be used. The following chapter will be the literature review, which surveys literature in a thematic approach to provide an outlook of the various voices within certain themes relevant to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to capture an overview of the literature relevant to this study. In this literature review, such literature was categorised according to identified thematic areas. Three thematic areas were identified, the first being 'Poverty', which is previously alluded to as Poverty Reality and Poverty of the Mind yet not limited to. Secondly is 'Pastoral Theology', which considers the possibility of a liberative approach to Pastoral Theology. Lastly is the 'Prosperity Gospel', which seeks to analyse the South African Prosperity Gospel with a particular focus on the Pentecostal approach. The chapter provides perspective concerning the aforementioned thematic areas.

2.2. Literature on Poverty

One of the key objectives of this study is to establish the historical and current state of poverty in postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa. By considering this, the present section seeks to do an overview of the literature about poverty. Understanding that poverty is a broad thematic area, the sub-themes will entail an analysis of the reality of poverty in Africa and the related statistical considerations. Furthermore, it will attempt to conceptualise and theorise poverty from a social sciences perspective. This gives rise to the need to consider poverty from a post-apartheid perspective. Lastly, the section will survey the literature that theologises poverty with consideration of theology and development.

2.2.1. A reality of Poverty in Africa and Statistical considerations

The current Poverty Reality of Africa and South Africa shows alarming statistics. According to Saleh (2022, p. 1), “roughly a third of Africa's population was in extreme poverty” in 2022. Kathleen Beegle (2016), World Bank Development Research Group researcher and co-author of the Poverty in Rising Africa (Africa Poverty Report) is recorded to have highlighted that despite the data showing the share of Africa's population to be living in extreme poverty has declined, there still exists major challenges regarding poverty, especially on the backdrop of the region's rapid population growth. Notwithstanding the overall decline in poverty, poverty's existence and persistent incidence within Africa cannot be completely ruled out (Addae-Korankye, 2014). Sanders (2015) considers one of the challenges recorded by the referred Africa Poverty Report as

the need for more data to assess the reality of poverty in Africa (Beegle et al., 2016). Although these statistics give an idea of probable poverty levels, they fail to record lived experiences and realities that data cannot vividly portray, somehow trivialising the actual phenomenon on the ground (Sanders, 2015). As a multidimensional phenomenon (Ruiz, 2015) (see also Ames et al., 2001), poverty proves challenging to measure accurately (Ruiz, 2015). When looking only at South Africa statistics published by Statista Research Department on April 26, 2023, revealed that as of 2022, around 18.2 million people in South Africa lived in extreme poverty (StatisticsSA, 2022). Even with these realities, it is known that about 23.5% of all households in South Africa depend on grants as their primary source of income (BusinessTech, 2023).

Most people in Sub-Saharan Africa are victims of human-made poverty with the reality of a disastrous economic environment (Quenum, 2021). Quenum (2021) further states that the reality of poverty is that of having no access to means such as clean water, adequate housing, medical care facilities, and employment, surviving mainly through a mendicant lifestyle. The causes of poverty in Africa are said to be poor governance and the resultant corruption, poor land utilisation and land tenure system, unending political conflicts and inevitable civil wars, poor infrastructure, diseases and poor health facilities, the policies of World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies inter alia (Addae-Korankye, 2014). Poverty could also result from the general exclusion of people from social life (ABD Institute, 2003). In conversing with the latter, Addae-Korankye (2014) elaborates that what was meant by this is that exclusion reflected discrimination, which is a process that prevents such people from participating fully in material exchange or interaction. Thomas (2007) identifies poverty as an exertion of its victims with economic violence, stating that this has a similar effect as physical violence. This raises the question of the underlying factors of poverty in Africa by considering the perspectives of poverty, particularly in a post-apartheid territory.

2.2.2. Conceptualising Perspectives of Poverty in Post-Apartheid Territory

Poverty is more than insufficient money (Government of New Brunswick, n.d.). In considering a global perspective, according to Myers (2011) in his work, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, it is seen to be detrimental to rely on what he refers to as a ‘narrow Eurocentric economic understanding of poverty’ further alluding that poverty can be experienced as social poverty, spiritual poverty, physical poverty and poverty of self.

The concept of forms of poverty reveals that poverty is not just relative but can also be of an absolute state (Sen, 1983; Triegaardt, 2006, p. 2; Sachs, 2005, p. 20). Moreover, poverty is fundamentally characterised by an inability to procure minimum capabilities, and such failure to achieve specific capabilities he identifies as absolute due to its independent existence. However, the capabilities are not fixed, according to Sen (1983) but are characterised by flexibility and evolving over time, and in various communities or societies. When Sen (1983) refers to the 'Absolute', he underscores that in true meaning, there is a measured boundary below which individuals are unable to effectively function within societal constructs. On a similar trail as with Sen (1983), Englama and Bamidele (1997) convinced that relative and absolute poverty terms refer to an instance whereby a person cannot fend or provide sufficiently for his or her necessities or fundamental human requirements. These include access to health, education, possible water and sanitation (Addae-Korankye, 2014).

In unpacking a philosophical analysis of poverty, Judith Butler (2004), an American philosopher, repositions a distributive paradigm, in particular concepts of shared vulnerability, mourning and fragility of life. In these conceptualisations, poverty is reframed as a condition that extends beyond material and economic deprivation to encompass psychic, symbolic and existential dimensions. This posits that poverty extends far beyond the mere denial of fundamental necessities or resources and transcends the infringement of socio-economic rights. More profoundly, it affronts our shared moral essence as human beings by relegating those burdened by poverty to an existence that is marginalised, diminished, and effectively excluded from the sphere of recognised humanity (Butler, 2004). Fanon (1963) alluded to an underdeveloped world as inhuman in its poverty. According to Costello and Hodson, (2014); Khazaal and Almiron (2021) uncover a fundamental cause of racism and dehumanisation by highlighting the human-nonhuman divide.

Joel Modiri (2015), a scholar of jurisprudence, engages with what might be termed a "politicized conception of poverty," particularly emphasising the ways in which poverty has been systematically produced through the institutional entrenchment of anti-Black racism. Drawing on Iris Marion Young's (1990) theorisation of oppression, Modiri examines how racialised poverty manifests as a disabling mechanism, perpetuating expansive and entrenched inequities in the allocation of opportunities and economic resources. These inequities extend beyond material deprivation to encompass epistemic, cultural, and social dimensions of power, as well as the

division of labour, autonomy, decision-making processes, and individual agency. From this perspective, poverty is framed as a deliberate and structural form of oppression, rather than as an incidental or unintended consequence of social systems.

Modiri (2015) argues that poverty is the result of a deliberate and systematic design within a social order that channels benefits and opportunities along entrenched hierarchies of power. Young (1990) elaborates a pluralistic framework for understanding oppression, encapsulated in five dimensions: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Among these, powerlessness emerges as the foundational axis, underpinning and amplifying the other dimensions. Powerlessness is characterised by a condition of "voicelessness, invisibility, and social immobility," effectively dehumanising those who are subjected to it. This dehumanisation aligns with the colonial project, which sought to render certain populations less than human or unhuman as a means of domination and control.

As Young writes:

The powerless are not those who do not have authority or power but are those over whom power is exercised without them exercising it themselves. The powerless are positioned so that they must take orders and rarely have the right to give them. (Young, 1990, p. 56)

In relating Young's perspective on powerlessness, Rodney (1973, p. 37), in an earlier publication, looks at dynamics underpinning an underdeveloped Africa. He proposes that the core reasons for the economic backwardness of various African countries are actually found outside Africa. What is found within Africa is the aftermath, symptom or resultant reality of underdevelopment and the secondary factors that make for poverty. He points to an error made by looking into the underdeveloped country in order to find answers to the reality of poverty and refers to it as prejudicial thinking. The proper interpretation may be sought, according to Rodney (1973), by understanding the relationship between Africa and certain developed countries, in doing so, a recognition that such a relationship is of exploitation.

Similarly, Fanon (1961) refers to under-developed countries as in a condition whereby the leader stands for moral power, in whose shelter the thin and poverty-stricken bourgeoisie of the young nation decides to get rich, which contrasts with his lamenting that in well-developed countries, the bourgeois dictatorship is the result of the economic power of the bourgeoisie. Sithole (2021) looks

more deeply by seeing how this exploitation can be seen concerning dehumanisation and relates this to Mbembe's (2001) analysis of the objectification of enslaved people and how the master deems belonging to a human because of the dehumanised state of such human who he, the master, stripped of the status of human. By being non-human, they are "othered" or are deemed a mere thing worthy of being owned by a human, the master (Mbembe, 2001, p. 191). According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2010), the situation in Africa was worse than simply stifling change because, in many cases, it led to economic reorganisation, which made the potential for economic growth worse after independence than before colonisation.

One of the most far-reaching effects of Apartheid was the role it played in generating extreme poverty in South Africa (Keswell, 2004). In assessing what she refers to as "the winners and losers in the transition from apartheid", Francis (2006, p. 5) states that the causes of rural poverty in South Africa stem from historically generated power inequalities. The dispossession by past conquest and subsequent settlement by newcomers with superior resources remains the basis of poverty (Moodley and Adam, 2009). On the other hand, Armstrong et al. (n.d.) seem to suggest that in the South African context, an essential requirement to escaping poverty is obtaining a job in the formal sector of the economy, which would mean there needs to be an acceleration in economic growth and fundamental reform of the South African education system for persons to be able to be employed. According to them, this is a suggested approach to lasting progress in the battle against poverty. They do not address the underlying causes of joblessness in the capitalistic cycle, which Modiri (2015) unveils. Walter (1974) cautions against this approach adopted by Armstrong et al. (n.d.) in mentioning how capitalist powers and exploitation manifest. Ilcan and Lacey (2011) reveal the concept of social welfare approach as one that shifted harm and risk from individual citizens, groups, and firms to society (see also O'Malley, 2004; Urry, 2000). According to Haddad (2001), a post-apartheid socio-economic policy framework, was introduced by the then new African National Congress government, namely the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) as well as a macro-economic strategy named the growth, employment and redistribution (GEAR) in 1995 and 1996 respectively. Bonnin (1997) highlighted that these economic frameworks, which focus on economic growth and employment opportunities, do not entirely address the context of poverty, which results from particular crises such as political violence. There are many state-driven initiatives to try to curb poverty, and Kgatle (2017) looks at

them together with measures by the Church. It is crucial to consider, therefore, a theological perspective of poverty, which also considers, though limitedly, theology and development.

2.2.3. Theological Perspective of Poverty

In looking at a local theological perspective, Naicker (2005), in his work on the Theology of Poverty, identified poverty as having a primary state, which is the lack of economic resources to obtain what one should consider the necessities of all human beings, water; food; shelter, clothes, medical care and education. This primary state, referred to by Naicker (2005), succinctly defines the concept of a Poverty Reality. In moving away from an only economical understanding of poverty, regional scholar Jean-Marie Hyacinthe Quenum (2021) opines that African Christian theology has addressed the problems of postcolonial societies by retrieving traditions of hope and solidarity and inserting them afresh within the cultural context of the African Churches. He identifies the first challenge of the Church in Africa within the context of postcolonial statehood as that of mass socio-economic poverty with its concomitant ills such as ignorance, disease, and malnutrition.

In articulating what influences his theological perspective on poverty, Naidoo (2005, p. 3) refers to Isaiah Chapter 61, verse 1, where Prophet Isaiah alludes to the reasons for the anointing to preach the good news to the poor by emphasising the following,

We are to bind up the broken-hearted in providing and caring for those in despair and hopelessness. Moreover, we are to proclaim freedom for the captives. This freedom is directly referring to the year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25:10, where we learn of the laws that God put in place to free people who had fallen into economic difficulty and, as a result, ended up in slavery in their attempt to survive. The celebration of the Jubilee marked a time of replenishment and restoration that God instituted, ensuring that the rich would not get richer and the poor would not get poorer. (Naidoo, 2005, p. 3)

These accounts of the year of Jubilee and the Good News reveal the nature of God, which is justice and equality. Any act that corrodes his creation, which seeks to have all humans as human, by such creation being rendered as unqualifiable to be human or viewed as non-human due to another self-proclaimed superior, is an act worthy of championing against. In constructing a theology of poverty, Shank (1990) proposes three fundamental biblical concepts which unite "preaching "and

the "poor", namely unity in God's love, Grace and Salvation. Cone (2011) reveals the relationship between love and justice in the Gospel of Martin Luther King, while Shank (1990) portrays a similar perspective. Cone's (2011) understanding of Niebuhr's Gospel was that which locates love not as a sign of non-violence in the face of oppression as Martin Luther King would have persuaded, but rather as a motive and justice as the instrument. Niebuhr placed justice at the centre of Christian social ethics over and above love. Shank (1990), Martin Luther King and Niebuhr locate love in liberation theology through distinct approaches.

It would be insufficient not to conjure up the biblical position of what poverty can be defined as in light of the various perspectives the Bible addresses regarding the poor. Scheffler (2013, p. 2), a South African Theologian, before outlining what he deduced from the scriptures, further alluded that the same is not an exhaustive list but merely a keyhole perspective on poverty in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the word 'and' is referred to seventy-five times, appearing twenty-one times in the New Testament. Though it possesses the same bare root, therefore meaning distinctly the same thing, the translation of same would be 'poor' and 'humble' generally. The former is material, and the latter holds a spiritual connotation. Scholars generally agree that these terms have the same bare root and are indistinct in meaning.

Further, Scheffler (2013) presents that "ebjon", a Hebrew term, appears sixty-one times in the Old Testament. Its original meaning is "beggars"; however, in later times, it was used to describe the "socially weak", "miserable", or "poor" person. The term ptochos refers to poverty in its most literal sense and indicates those extremely poor and destitute, to the point of begging, thus implying a continuous state (Louw & Nida 1988, p. 564).

Drawing again from global scholars, White and Tiongco (1997) observe four stages involved in the process of theology and development, which is noteworthy in addressing poverty. These stages are:

- (1) the need to encounter people with low incomes;
- (2) understanding why they are poor;
- (3) through reflection, making a critical judgement whether or not our interpretation corresponds with reality; and
- lastly, (4) planning and implementing the strategies to bring about the required changes. Thus, Gutierrez adds, eradicating poverty is not a generous

relief action, but a demand that we go and construct a new social order. (White and Tiongco, 1997)

On the other hand, local researcher Kgalta (2018) argues that the process of the decolonisation of the mind is an attempt to help black people reach self-empowerment and self-emancipation from external as well as internal enslavement and the control of their colonisers. It is a missiological discourse calling upon the Church to get involved in human liberation projects (Kgalta, 2018). Cone (1975) states that a theological analysis of the Gospel, which is fundamentally not premised on "God's liberation of the poor and oppressed is ipso facto unchristian". On the other hand, Burges (1996, p. 139), reflecting on the then move from legislated apartheid, rhetorically asks, "If God is ipso facto on the side of the poor and oppressed and thus seeks to liberate them, why does he allow such historical injustice in the first place?". Even though there is suffering, inequality and poverty, it's not because God has somehow "dropped the ball" ruling the universe. Everything is meant to happen because God makes/allows things to happen (God Makes Sense, n.d.). The latter source further states that scripturally, Paul says that God does this so that people might reach out to Him and get to know Him despite their state of being rich or poor.²

2.3. Pastoral Theology

It has been the norm to find the interchangeable use of Pastoral and Practical theology as if to refer to the same concept. This section surveys the literature on Pastoral Theology as a sub-discipline of Practical Theology and considers the potentially liberating approach to Pastoral Theology. One approaches this by considering pastoral theology as an arm of practical theology. On the other hand, I seek answers by conversing with literature on whether a liberative pastoral theology is possible.

2.3.1. Pastoral Theology as an arm of Practical Theology

In looking at Practical Theology/Pastoral theology, it is notable to note that Miller-McLemore comprehensively describes Practical Theology as referring to four distinct enterprises with different audiences or objectives by stating that;

² Acts 17 verse 27

Practical Theology is (1) an activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in everyday life, (2) a method or way of analysing theology in practice used by religious leaders and by teachers and students across the theological curriculum, (3) a curricular area in theological education focused on ministerial practice and sub specialities, and (4) an academic discipline pursued by a smaller subset of scholars to support and sustain these first three enterprises. (Miller-McLemore, 2020, p. 112)

She notes that each aspect of Practical Theology points to different locations, from daily life to the library, fieldwork to classroom, congregation and community, academic guild, and global context.

Taking into further consideration is the approach taken by Woodward and Pattison (eds) (2000), which sees the interchangeable usage of Practical Theology and Pastoral Theology. There needs to be more clarity regarding where Pastoral Theology is placed, as various regions use the terms or the disciplines differently.

Gupton (n.d.) defines Pastoral theology as a kind of practical theology but with a narrower focus on the role to be played by Christian leaders. As pastoral theology, it reflects theologically on "pastoring" or "shepherding" the flock. According to him, authors often use the terms practical and pastoral theology interchangeably, and they have enough common ground to merit this. In this research, the distinction is paramount to outline the preaching and doing of Christian leaders, mainly and not merely broadly, applied theology. According to McMinn (2007, p. 31) and in line with the current research approach, pastoral theologians today should take heed and maintain the essential contributions of historical, systematic, and biblical theology.

According to Swinton and Mowat (2006), Pastoral theology is about the faithful performances of the Gospel in human encounters with God. At its core, though, Pastoral theology primarily tries, through church-related pastoral care practices, to connect the grace and salvation of God in meaningful and relevant ways with the existential realities humans face daily – including anxiety, grief, despair, hopelessness, etc. (Van der Watt. 2018, p. 756).

Augustine (in McNeill 1951, p. 100) suggested a list of pastoral duties:

Disturbers are to be rebuked, the low-spirited to be encouraged, the infirm to be supported, objectors confuted, the treacherous guarded against, the unskilled taught, the lazy aroused,

the contentious restrained, the haughty repressed, litigants pacified, the poor relieved, the oppressed liberated, the good approved, the evil borne with, and all are to be loved.

Luther's pastoral care likewise concerned itself with the care and protection of those who were victims of the “uncaring practices of their society” (Gerkin 1997, p. 42). According to Muller (1991, p. 1), socio-cultural and socio-political structures are not of peripheral importance to theology but of central importance. He further coined the term 'eco-hermeneutical' pastoral care to address the need for the pastoral task to be described as two-fold, being 'Ecosystemic' on the one hand and 'hermeneutical' on the other. The latter emphasises understanding, and the former refers to the broadest possible system or network of systems. This is to say that, over and above understanding, there needs to be the facilitation of holistic growth (in terms of the ecosystem) for one or an entire people (community).

Ballano (2020, p. 2), states that although it deals with “practical life, pastoral theology largely remains theological, prescriptive, and micro in approach rather than descriptive and structural in dealing with people's social and spiritual problems”. Ballano's (2020) reference to the social sparks the interdisciplinary approach at hand, which he states is Sociology, and it needs to be considered when considering pastoral theology tasks. He states that Sociology's influence on priestly pastoral work in the Church remains marginal. With this lack of sociological perspectives, Ballano (2020) refers to Furniss' (1992) imagery of the forest and the tree regarding pastoral care. Furniss (1992), in the referred imagery, lamented that clerics often lose sight of the "forest," that is, the structural aspects of their pastoral care, because of their preoccupation with the "trees" or with individuals and their problems, which means that often there is no regard as to the socio-conditions of the individual being pastored which are critical in proper pastoral care.

Hegstad (2013) aptly contended that focusing on the visible Church rather than the invisible Church significantly impacts how ecclesiology is approached. He explained that this emphasis reduces the divide between a theological understanding of the Church and insights from other academic fields. When theology centres on the visible Church, this same Church becomes accessible for study through historical and social science perspectives. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how the Church's theological interpretation connects with and incorporates findings from these other disciplines. Secondly, if the concrete and empirical Church becomes the object of ecclesiology, theology cannot simply see the Church as a doctrinal topic. Theology must take into

account what the Church is. Ecclesiology is not only about the Church from a theoretical point of view but a doctrine of the Church as we experience it.

"Pastoral theology must embody a renewed vision of what it means to be human..." (Graham, 2009, p. 14). Part of the renaissance of pastoral theology as a discipline has been the rediscovery of the corporate aspect of human life and the need to ground pastoral care within a sense of social justice, as well as of individual well-being (Selby, 1983). Thus, a fundamental principle of pastoral theology must be that pastoral care should entail social analysis and critique to discern where the Church's pastoral priorities might lie (Graham, 2009).

2.3.2. Is a Liberative Pastoral Theology Possible?

A liberative pastoral care is inspired by the prophetic and apocalyptic ministry of Jesus and a call for conversion founded in an understanding of God's transformation of the present through the work of the Spirit, which Graham (2009) describes as a 'creative and disturbing activity of the Spirit'. In considering what is Liberative pastoralism, Graham submits that it's the process of humanity being called into radical obedience to the Divine promise for the future rather than required to preserve the existing order of structure and stasis.

Pastoral theology, in many ways, engages postcolonial theory from the standpoint of empire (Rivera-Pagán, 2007). The pastoral agency, understood as the prerogative of all God's people, is directed towards establishing God's reign of justice and freedom from oppression (Graham, 2009). Lartey (2013, p. xviii) imagines healing to be possible not only when colonial residue is reworked, as Kang suggests, but also when new practices, methods, and materials are created post-colonialism. Lartey posits that post-colonialising pastoral care aims to cultivate communal spaces in which all people can be safe, nurtured, and empowered to grow (Lartey, 2013, p. 121; McGarrah Sharp, 2016). This seems to be in line with Villa-Vicencio's submission that a liberative theological response of a church which is on the side of oppressive regimes is "hope and promise" (Vellem, 2010, p. 552), which is tantamount to Jean-Marie Hyacinthe Quenum (2021) views on hope and solidarity in response to postcolonial statehood. According to Cone (1970), 'the biblical God is the God who is involved in the historical process for human liberation', and for one to know him means also to know what he did in historical events as such is related to the process of liberating the oppressed. In other words, "to know God is to encounter him in the historical liberation process as

experienced in the community of the oppressed” (Cone,1970, p. 52 quoted in Kobe, 2018, p. 289). Frostin's (2007) analysis of liberation theologies locates five interrelated emphases: the choice of interlocutors, how one perceives God, social analysis, the election of theological tools, and the relationship between theory and praxis. In the South African context, the Church's opposition to apartheid was a battle for justice, of which such part of the Church articulated a liberation theology, as opposed to a conservative theology seeking to maintain the oppressive state (Tshaka and Makofane 2010, p. 536).

2.4. Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel in South Africa

Though Prosperity Gospel is not a uniquely Pentecostal phenomenon, it has gained considerable prominence and emerged within the modern expressions of Pentecostalism. It would be a mammoth task to attempt to not focus the study of prosperity gospel to one category of expression. For this reason, the imminent section will encompass a survey of literature that provides a background of the emerging forms of Pentecostalism, particularly in South Africa, and their expression of the Prosperity Gospel. Emanating from the latter, a delve into the theology behind Prosperity Gospel is to be made through a literature review about the same. Lastly, the measures are taken within South Africa to address the phenomenon and the resulting controversy.

2.4.1. Pentecostalism and the Emerging Prosperity Gospel

There are several ways in which Pentecostalism can be classified, defined, or discussed, and as Maria Frahm-Arp (2018, p. 2) suggested, such should be considered when addressing the definition of Pentecostalism. One approach is the one which is a historiographical approach suggested by Hollenweger (1997) and Wagner (1999) when they proposed that Pentecostalism falls under broad historical categories like Classical Pentecostals, the Charismatic renewal movement, Pentecostal or "Pentecostal-like" independent churches, and Fourth Wave Pentecostalism. While largely categorised under the same umbrella of Pentecostals, Classic Pentecostals differ somewhat from Neo-Pentecostal movements, otherwise referred to as Charismatic Movements (Fanning, 2009, p. 8). The differences may cause the emergence of another means to classify Pentecostals according to Martin (1990; 2002) and Coleman (2000) which identifies perceived characteristics and phenomena. Alternatively, Kärkkäinen (2010) and Cartledge (2010) point to another categorisation, which may be done according to theological

themes, doctrines, and ideas. Maphumulo (2019) considers a Three-wave approach to the origins of the Newer Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in South Africa, namely, First-wave, the early Pentecostals, the Charismatic Movement, and the third wave, the newer Pentecostal-Charismatics. Frahm-Arp (2018) follows a broadly constructionist viewpoint and argues that Pentecostal churches vary greatly and have few clear boundaries. Bergunder (2010, p. 52) alludes that "...the most serious problem lies in that a broad understanding of Pentecostalism refers neither to an everyday dogmatic basis nor a common institutional framework". Perhaps Anderson's (2010, p. 13) reference to Pentecostalism as a structure which resembles a family, wherein despite aspects of it being different from each other, there are commonalities and similarities due to them being in a family or relative relationship with each other (Frahm-Arp, 2018).

Anderson (2005), in *New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa*, offers a lengthy developmental analysis that looks at the core features of Pentecostalism as they relate to various historical events in the contentions of post-apartheid South Africa. It is noted that the South African apartheid system, with its racism and enforced segregation within early South African Pentecostalism, drove many Africans into rejecting European forms of Christianity and resulted in the mushrooming of African independent churches. History records the "development of Pentecostalism through the African Faith Mission, Assemblies of God through Nicholas Bhengu (1909 – 1985), and the more recent Grace Bible Church of Musa Sono" (Anderson 2005, pp 67-69).

2.4.2. Prosperity Gospel and its Theology

Prosperity Gospel can be defined as the teaching that believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the 'sowing of seeds' through the faithful payments of tithes and offerings (Heuser, 2016) (see also Lausanne Theology Working Group, 2010). According to regional scholars Ehioghae and Olanrewaju (2015, p. 70), the roots of the modern expression of prosperity gospel may be traced to the emergence of Pentecostalism, which bestrides the religious landscape like a colossus. It may, however, be surprising that even though the prosperity gospel is now, on the whole, identified with Pentecostalism, it has not always been the case. The historical antecedents of Pentecostalism may be traced to the Holiness movement and the Wesleyan doctrines of sanctification in 1906 (Ibid).

A regional scholar, Soboyejo (2016, p. 1), scaringly states that ‘Prosperity Gospel has developed “Prosperity Theology” that berths “Cultic theology”’. He marries his arguments with another regional theologian, Kasera's (2012, p. 6), whose analysis categorises Prosperity Theology into three main groups based on their views. These views are:

1) Fierce proponents: with the view that the will of God for all Christians is to flourish in all areas of life. According to this group, prosperity preaching means having a holistic approach to man's needs, including material well-being. A reference to this is deduced from David Oyedepo's book, which argues that "possessing your possession" is part of God's covenant and believers ought to prosper. Oyedepo claims that the death of Christ seals this covenant, which all who believe in the message of the Gospel will, along with the salvation of their souls, obtain all good things in this world, including wealth, health and total success.

2) Fierce opponents: In this group is Hank Hanegraaff, who believes that prosperity theology poses one of the greatest contemporary threats to orthodox Christianity from within. Through it, cultic theology is being increasingly accepted as true Christianity. Robison said that prosperity theology appeals to the Western materialistic mindset.

3) The Middle View: This group acknowledges some of the positive things in prosperity theology and says it is a wake-up call to the evangelical churches, especially on the issues of faith. However, they disagree with prosperity theology but refuse to condemn it outright by being cautious in their conclusions. Prosperity Preaching is a gospel of wealth (financial wellness and opulence). (Soboyejo, 2016, pp. 3-4)

At a global level, some of the leading contributors to the theology of Prosperity Gospel have been John Maxwell, Jan Crouch, Benni Hinn and Joel Osteen (See Bowler, 2013; Ehioghae & Olanrewaju, 2015), and such will be revealed further in the body of this study. The source of their understanding of prosperity is founded in the concept of "abundant life" encapsulated in the scripture, John 10:10 and is considered the cornerstone of Pentecostal theology in Sub-Saharan Africa (Prosèn, 2020, p. 307; Barron, 2022, p. 89). Mbamalu (2015) challenges the Neo-Pentecostal interpretation of 2 Corinthians 8 verse 9 that prosperity is part of the atonement by affirming the traditional view that the scope of the atonement of Christ does not imply financial

abundance. A local journalist and researcher, Zulu (2022, p. 2), stated, “The prosperity gospel promises power to those who feel helpless and submerged in the storms of socio-economic crisis. Nevertheless, it is ultimately a hollow call because it masks the true nature of poverty and so leads societies away from tackling it”. In his argument, he outlines that the prosperity gospel does not address Africa's colonial history.

Research scholars have produced notable work regarding Pentecostalism and the resultant prosperity gospel in Africa and South Africa (Anderson, 1987; Gbote and Kgatla, 2014; Niemandt, 2017; Mashau and Kgatle, 2019). Kgatle and Mashau (2019) produce works that analyse postcolonial Africa and the advent of the prosperity Gospel. They proposed that African Christianity must develop an alternative spirituality of liberation that taps into the African philosophy of life called 'Ubuntu'. They alluded that Prosperity Gospel feeds into the culture of greed in the Church and society, tapping into the capitalist economic global system.

Nigerian scholar Nwankwo (2001) describes the Prosperity Message emphasis in Christianity by outlining that the central tenet of the Prosperity Gospel is that God has met all the needs of human beings in the suffering and death of Jesus. Therefore, every Christian should share in Jesus' victory over sin, death, sickness and poverty. Further, as part of the central tenet of Prosperity Gospel, it is the will of God for people to prosper or succeed in every area of life. Prosperity's scope would include health, wealth, and wholeness (Ibid). Barron (2022) mentions that Nwankwo's (2001) perspective is beneficial to explore extensively in considering the following;

- First is the focus on the resurrection and not on the cross; on the fruits of the suffering and death of Jesus rather than on Jesus' call for all to take up their cross and follow him.
- Second, material poverty is included in what Jesus redeemed humanity from. This means that a life of prosperity and comfort is the vocation and destiny of Christians, thanks to Jesus's event. This life of blessedness starts here on earth and reaches consummation in the afterlife. What is needed to activate the divine blessing is faith. This has to be combined with the religious practice of tithing, which, according to a particular interpretation of Malachi 3:10–12, is needed so that God opens the floodgates of heaven and rains down blessings. The blessings mentioned in the pericope of Malachi include protection against pestilence and an increase in the fruitfulness of the land and the vine. This is translated into

contemporary values such as Conspectus, Volume 33 April 2022 -92-as cars, fat bank account, employment, fertility, visa to emigrate, and protection from witchcraft.

(Barron, 2022)

2.5 Globalisation, religion and poverty in Africa

Religion is interested in social phenomena that affect people. Furthermore, poverty in Africa has emerged in infinite history and continues to require lasting solutions. Although the concept of “globalisation” is quite broad, we focus on two crucial aspects: (1) international trade in goods and (2) capital flows--including foreign investment, portfolio flows, and aid. Of course, this definition is not all-encompassing: economic aspects of globalisation have also affected information flows, migration, and trade in services. Studies have yet to be tested for direct linkages between the two. Winters et al. (2004) write in their insightful and comprehensive Journal of Economic Literature (JEL) survey that “there are no direct studies of the poverty effects of trade and trade liberalisation. The few studies which do examine the links between globalisation and poverty typically use computable general equilibrium models to disentangle the complex linkages between trade reform and poverty. However, such research provides an important contribution to understanding the channels through which globalisation or future reforms could affect people.

Poverty is a creature with many heads and several tails, as is religion. The different heads would refer to the different forms poverty and religion can assume in society (Beyers, 2014). There are many expressions of poverty as well as of religion. The tails dragging behind would refer to the consequences, influences and the effects of religion or poverty on society. Some effects of religion on poverty might be positive, whilst some might be negative (Beyers, 2014). In the case of poverty, it might be challenging to identify any positive effects on human existence. According to Sedmak (2019), religion and other elements of human existence, such as politics, culture, and ethics, cannot always be separated. It may be part of a lived religion to become an indispensable element of ethics, culture, and politics. This could be called “the blurred boundaries effect” (Sedmak, 2019). The boundaries between religious and other aspects of public life can get blurred, as the studies referring to the caste system demonstrate. Due to this effect, the answer to where ethics ends and religion begins is unclear and needs to be clarified. Religions have an array of traits, including soteriological, ethical, institutional, and ritual dimensions; all these dimensions contribute to the

normative force of religions. These norms guide not only the sphere of "the sacred" but also aspects of everyday life since religions understand themselves to be more than "an additional segment of human existence" they claim to be foundational. This is why the normative impact of religion on a person's life may express itself in restrictions on mobility and personal transaction radius (i.e., determining with whom can have which kind of interaction when and where). Religions influence entrepreneurial activities and can work as tools for framing business activities as religious acts.

According to Anderson (2005, pp. 67-69), Neo-Pentecostalism takes shape as 'the globalisation of Charismatic Christianity'. I believe this concept of globalisation of Charismatic Christianity has influenced the controversial Prosperity Gospel phenomenon. Heuser (2016, pp. 2-4; see also Hunt, 2000, pp. 331-332) draws attention to the impact of globalisation on the Pentecostal movement and the resultant de-localisation from the North to the global South (due to the globalisation of Pentecostalism). Anderson (2005, p. 88) implores an investigation of the negative effect on beliefs, values and practices in this sector albeit advocating for the importance of the role of Pentecostalism in this pluralistic world. According to Haynes and Ben-Porat (2010, p. 126), globalisation is a "sometimes dramatic growth and intensification of various networks and flows that transcend national boundaries". On the other hand, Gbotoe (2013, p. 56) mentions the following factors that contributed to the proliferation of the prosperity gospel in Africa: poverty, consumerism, utilitarianism, and globalisation. The economic and political transformations engendered by globalisation are frequently correlated with a prolonged process of secularisation, characterised by the intensification of market dynamics and shifts in demographic structures. These changes possess the potential to substantially disrupt established configurations and interactions among religion, the state, and society (Haynes and Ben-Porat, 2010, p. 126). Grosfoguel (2011) indicated the close relationship between colonisation and globalisation. Ideas developed by Grosfoguel (2011) and others have shown the epistemological connection between coloniality and globalisation, especially the success of the modern/colonial world system in dominating the world (and the idea that the Eurocentric [Western European] way of thinking is universally applicable (Quijano 2000, p. 544). Christie, (2010) identifies secularisation as the public decline of religiosity. Togarashi (2015, p. 59) argues that "secularisation involves people's concern for proximate (this worldly) issues rather than ultimate (post-mortem) issues". With this understanding of secularisation alludes that Pentecostalism is a form of 'religious' secularisation and discusses the beliefs and practices of charismatic Pentecostal churches that confirm this claim (Ibid). He problematises the view that

Pentecostal proliferation and public presence show the social force of religion, in this case, Christianity, and, therefore, the absence of secularisation in such societies as Africa.

Majawa (2020) makes a more theological contribution on how Charismatic Pentecostalism in Africa must be discerned, guided and manifested in genuine deliverance, healing, liberating and transforming the weakening Christian faith and social contexts. Majawa (2020) alludes that pneumatological wisdom and experiences are having tremendous transformative impact on the Church and society in Africa. From Majawa's (2020) Christian Pentecostal analysis, which appreciates the African traditional spirit world, it is evident that Africa has profound spirituality to contribute to the Charismatic Renewal Movement and the international Pentecostal experience. Thus, the new Pentecostal manifestation in Africa must be taken seriously by the churches at all levels of evangelisation and governments at all levels of transforming society.

2.5. Conclusion

The chapter was on the literature review. This was done through focusing on selected themes and sub-themes. As the literature depicts, poverty can be defined, conceived, and addressed in various multidisciplinary ways. There are vast global, regional, and local contributions regarding poverty, particularly in addressing the reality of poverty as defined. Further, there has been extensive research regarding poverty in Africa, as reflected in the literature above. Such work records have been done based on the literal and economic viewpoint of poverty. Through the sociological and legal research outlined within the chapter, I have been exposed to the works on poverty beyond the poverty reality so defined. This revealed research looks at poverty as an oppressive or oppressed state resulting from colonisation and apartheid in the case of South Africa, and potentially a Poverty of the mind, so defined.

Furthermore, there are works on Prosperity Gospel and poverty in the context of Africa, but limited work has been done in South Africa. Local Researchers (Gbote and Kgatla, 2014; Niemandt, 2017; Mashau and Kgatle, 2019) have looked at Prosperity Gospel in Postcolonial Africa, having identified its irrelevance to the socio-economic conditions found in South Africa. Their approach saw poverty in a way which unmasks its literal definition. There is thus substantial research on Poverty in Africa and Prosperity Gospel, respectively. Still, more needs to be done to integrate such research in the South African context, where the literature has expanded the definition of

poverty in ways alluded to. Zulu (2022) and others have controverted Prosperity Gospel by saying that it is a hollow call that fails to address the deep issues of poverty underlying Africa and South Africa particularly. More academic throughput must be addressed to integrate these themes as their link provides the platform to answer how a liberative Pastoral theology addresses the effects of colonisation and oppression by re-conceptualising the prosperity gospel in South Africa. This, therefore, is identifiable as a research gap that needs further consideration. As the literature survey has been undertaken, the following chapter will outline the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In outlining the research design and methodology, a qualitative research methodology was developed in respect of the current endeavour through the application of Osmer's (2008) Pastoral Cycle model in answering, "How can a liberative Pastoral theology address the effects of colonisation and oppression by re-conceptualising prosperity gospel in South Africa?". An interpretive paradigm is unpacked as a research design to be imported into the research. The chapter alludes to the data analysis techniques implored as contextual, thematic and discourse analysis.

3.2 Theories for the study:

The study topic takes a semi-interdisciplinary approach. This incorporates integrating theories relevant to the research of theology and sociology. This research studied the sub-discipline of pastoral theology, which falls within practical theology, wherein there will be decolonial social sciences interpretation elements. I have thus identified the Pneumatological Hermeneutics Theory as the primary tool to theorise this research, together with Decolonial Theory as a secondary means in the theoretical framework process.

3.2.1 A Theory of Pneumatological Hermeneutics

Pneumatology is the branch of Christian theology concerned with the person and nature of the Holy Spirit, otherwise referred to as the Spirit of God (Habets, 2016). Generally, hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation, wherein such interpretation involves reasoning of such understanding. It describes two elements: diverse methodologies for interpreting texts, objects, and concepts developed over time and a theory of knowledge (Dyer, 2010). The interpretive act was regarded by traditional hermeneutics as an act of trying to source the holistic meaning of the text or seeking closure in understanding (Dyer, 2010). Gadamer (1980) argues that the correct stance is one of a disrupted fore-conception of completeness, where the necessary presupposition that the interpreter must assume to be confronted by different ideas tests one's prejudices and avoids naïve interpretation. Observation is done through an interpretive lens and is considered the key object of observation. In this research, the Pneumatological hermeneutic is not only the interpretive tool

used to consider text but also the actual occurrences in churches and society. It is an interpretation of the text, which can be legal texts, biblical texts, or theological texts, and further to this step, it is an interpretation of societal occurrences.

A Pentecostal or Pneumatological approach to interpretation considers theological reflections distinctly, with such variation and seeing the theological aspects as guided by the Spirit of God (Gadamer, 2004). Therefore, the central conclusion drawn by this theory is based on the belief that the Holy Spirit “inspires the scriptures, guides tradition, indwells and guides the community, facilitates experience, and shapes philosophy” (Stone, 2015). As a Pentecostal Christian, I have not only been taught the Pneumatological type of interpretation but have also personally experienced it. Such an approach will be used to consider academic, biblical, and other texts and socio-positions and occurrences.

Gadamer (2004) suggests, in line with Mambrol (2017), that hermeneutics is affected by the polarity of “familiarity and strangeness”. Mambrol (2017) further states that the play between the two, the crossing between belonging and alienation, is where hermeneutics find expression. The traditional hermeneutic approach whereby the past authorial position needed to be reproduced, crossing the vast gulf of time, is replaced by a notion of interpretive production, achieved through temporal distance, and the falling away of the cares and concerns of 'the present' about the object in question. "Because scripture is spiritual, and because it must be spiritually appraised, it can only be understood with the contemporary help of the Spirit. The ever-present and immanent Spirit bridges the temporal gap between inspiration (in the past) and interpretation (in the present)" (Yong, 2017).

Lake (1994, p. 41) writes that a victorious Christian life rests on three essential elements, namely, the knowledge of the teachings of Christ, whose words in the New Testament are the final authority, a willingness to do all the will of God as declared by Jesus, and a recognition of the Spirit as revealer, guide, interpreter, teacher and empowerer to understand Scriptures.

It is often overlooked that the Pentecost is an occurrence worth noting for all those who believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is not a concept that is unique to the Pentecostal Church, movements and/or denomination. Therefore, because this study is limited to Pentecostal expressions, the pneumatological hermeneutics is considered from a Pentecostal perspective. For this reason,

reference and reliance are sought from a combination of sources who refer to the Pentecostal Hermeneutic, a more limited approach, and those referring to the Pneumatological Hermeneutic, a broader approach.

With this said Pneumatological hermeneutics can be further explained as Pentecostal hermeneutics. Gee (1932, p. 8) looks at the Pentecostal encounter with the Bible and its resultant deepening respect for the witness of the Scriptures and especially the apostolic witnesses concerning Jesus contained in it. Gräbe (1997, p. 19), given Pentecostal Hermeneutics, offers a denial that all passages should be read and interpreted literally as though the truths contained in the passage are transferred in a mechanistic or automatic way and that scripture is read and interpreted within the pneumatic continuity of the faith community through all ages. These constructs a definition of a community defined by Rance (2009, p. 9) as being "Spirit-driven, Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered to accomplish God's purposes for and through the community, a community that is to be Spirit-governed, Spirit-supported and Spirit-propagated (Nel, 2015, p. 4). A Pneumatological hermeneutics therefore centres the role of God through his Spirit at work in people to understand and interpret not only the scriptures but society and conditions generally.

In his book, *The Two Horizons*, Thistleton (1980) contends that the Holy Spirit's work is not constrained by hermeneutical methods. Rather, he proposes that the Holy Spirit operates within human understanding, highlighting that the Spirit and hermeneutical principles are complementary and work in harmony. It is therefore noted that mindful of Hermeneutics methods, "it is not Spirit versus hermeneutical principles, but both working together" (Ibid). A key component of the Prosperity Gospel movement's theological framework, especially in charismatic congregations, is pneumatology, or the study of the Holy Spirit. The knowledge and application of the Holy Spirit's role in believers' lives, particularly in connection to financial wealth, health, and success, is at the heart of the relationship between pneumatology and the Prosperity Gospel. The Holy Spirit is frequently seen in the Prosperity Gospel as a heavenly enabler who gives believers the ability to prosper, heal, and succeed materially. Charismatic Christians place a strong focus on how the Spirit bestows the gifts of the Spirit, such as healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. These abilities are regarded as indicators of spiritual life and, frequently, as a means of achieving personal success.

In the Prosperity Gospel, pneumatology frequently teaches that when combined with the enablement of the Holy Spirit, faith can produce material blessings. It is thought that the Holy

Spirit helps people comprehend God's plan for their lives, which frequently involves healing and financial blessings. This theology views prophetic utterances or speaking in tongues as evidence of spiritual alignment and a way to achieve prosperity. The Prosperity Gospel's main platform, charismatic churches, frequently preach that the Holy Spirit aids Christians in escaping poverty. People can overcome financial constraints by exercising faith and accepting the power of the Holy Spirit. This doctrine frequently emphasises positive confessions, declarations, and "seed faith" giving money in the hope of obtaining more as means of gaining access to the rewards.

In the framework of the Prosperity Gospel, prosperity and good health are frequently interpreted as manifestations of God's favour and blessing. The Holy Spirit serves as both a tool of achieving material success and a guide to spiritual salvation in this setting. Therefore, a lack of faith or a spiritual deficit may be the cause of poverty, illness, or failure. At the same time, having a solid relationship with the Holy Spirit leads to success. In order to combat poverty, charismatic churches which are at the heart of the Prosperity Gospel movement rely on the Holy Spirit for a number of reasons. Congregants who believe in the Holy Spirit's transforming power have hope that their circumstances, even poverty, can be changed. It is believed that the Holy Spirit is a strong force that can result in both financial and personal breakthroughs. The notion that God desires for His people to thrive and that the Holy Spirit assists them in realizing this potential is frequently linked to this empowerment.

The spiritual and material worlds are intertwined, according to charismatic theology. The result of the Holy Spirit's spiritual transformation of the believer is anticipated to be material blessings like more wealth, successful business ventures, and better health. Charismatic churches urge believers to view poverty as something that can be overcome spiritually, primarily via a closer relationship with the Holy Spirit, by emphasising the function of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic leaders frequently highlight how a believer's faith is essential to their ability to receive the Holy Spirit's blessings. According to this perspective, poverty may not have structural or societal roots, but rather is a personal struggle that can be surmounted with the active practice of faith, which is fostered by the Holy Spirit. One of the main benefits is that this ideology gives people especially those living in poverty the confidence that they can improve their financial circumstances. Hope and a sense of action are given to their lives by the belief that the Holy Spirit is actively assisting them in escaping

poverty. For those going through a tough time, this might give them spiritual and emotional fortitude.

In order to promote optimism and faith, prosperity gospel doctrines frequently exhort followers to talk positively about their situations. This optimistic perspective can increase self-worth, spur action, and foster a change-friendly mind-set. Strong communities are frequently offered by charismatic churches to their members, which can serve as a source of emotional and social support. In this situation, the work of the Holy Spirit in people's lives can promote a feeling of community, support for overcoming poverty, and encouragement from one another. The Prosperity Gospel is frequently criticised for raising irrational expectations of success and prosperity. It frequently lays the onus of financial success on a person's faith, making some people think that poverty is only the result of a lack of faith or spiritual dedication.

Charismatic churches that emphasize the Prosperity Gospel have the tendency to take advantage of those who are vulnerable, especially the poor, by enticing them to donate money (sometimes in substantial amounts) in exchange for financial benefits. People who make sacrifices to satisfy the requirements of the Church's teachings may experience financial hardship as a result of this practice, which is known as "seed faith" giving. This strategy may ignore or minimise the significance of tackling more extensive institutional, political, and economic causes that contribute to poverty by emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in overcoming it. A theology that individualises poverty and does not actively address social justice concerns or promote structural change may arise from this.

An improper connection between material wealth and spiritual growth may result from the Prosperity Gospel's emphasis on prosperity as an indication of God's favour. If wealth is not attained, people may start to confuse having money with being closer to God, which can be detrimental to their spiritual well-being and cause disillusionment. The idea that the Holy Spirit is a major force behind both material and spiritual success lies at the heart of the connection between pneumatology and the success Gospel. Charismatic churches use this link to inspire people to assert that they have overcome poverty and that the Holy Spirit is the key to overcoming financial difficulties. Although this strategy gives some people optimism and empowerment, it also has serious disadvantages, such as exploitation, excessive expectations, and a disregard for larger

social issues. A well-rounded theological approach would address the structural reasons of financial hardship while taking into account the spiritual and pragmatic aspects of tackling poverty.

3.2.2 Decolonial Theory

Critically examining the colonial history of research with Indigenous peoples, Smith (2012) argues that deconstructing contemporary knowledge and recreating new knowledge is a process of decolonisation, but that deconstruction alone is not sufficient. She (2012, p. 3) articulates that deconstruction is part of a much larger intent in a decolonising framework. Taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things often known intuitively do not help people improve their current conditions.

The decolonial theory takes into consideration the systemic nature in which oppression affects the lives of formerly colonised people and how that effect continues until the present. This theory has been applied in this research to theorise poverty in the context of Africa and South Africa in particular. Society is often looked at through a literal lens. The context of decoloniality, particularly in the African context, has been presented as a tool of analysis worth considering in unmasking the literal. The Decolonial Theory will be used as a lens to look at social positioning in South Africa in determining the extent to which Prosperity Gospel can be reconceptualised in addressing poverty, and such poverty being that which results from the coloniality of knowledge, power and being. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 485) defines decoloniality as an epistemological and political movement used to advance a necessary liberatory language of the future of Africa. Therefore, the decolonial theories focus on dismantling long-standing power patterns that emerged due to colonialism. Therefore, applying a theory to decolonise is to undo coloniality as a system of control and management of knowledge by "universals" of Western modernity, Eurocentrism and global capitalism (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). This system holds a rationale that deems Eurocentric knowledge and practices neutral, universal and apolitical, thus erasing (other) knowledge systems and practices. This leads to the significance of an emphasis on colonial semiosis, as it looks at the conflicts engendered by coloniality at the level of social-semiotic interactions. In the sixteenth century, the conflict of writing systems related to religion, education, and conversion was a fundamental aspect of coloniality (Gruzinsky, 1988; 1990; Mignolo, 1995). Mignolo (2012) states that colonial semiosis attempted, although perhaps not entirely successful, to dispel the notion of "culture". He explains it by saying the reason why culture is dispelled is

that culture is precisely a keyword of colonial discourses used to classify globally, particularly since the second wave of colonial expansion, according to systems interested in language, food, dress, religion, etc. and categorisation based on skin colour, geographical locations. According to Mignolo (2012), “Culture became, from the eighteenth century until 1950 approximately, a word between 'nature' and ‘civilisation’”. This understanding of coloniality and the inherent colonial semiosis clarifies the hold which Africans have on the said "universal" standards of living, therefore rejecting the idea that culture has become the other end of capital and financial interests and thus a poverty reality is inevitable. How much more would Poverty of the Mind find expression in the lives of people who have rejected cultural norms such as Ubuntu, amongst other ways of life and coexistence in Africa?

The persistent entanglement of coloniality with the resistance to decoloniality underscores the structural configuration of modernity, which continues to reproduce the very objectives that colonialism sought to advance. Central to this perpetuation is the construction of narratives surrounding poverty, which this study seeks to interrogate, as well as its inherently oppressive character. Consequently, colonial modernity encapsulates the processes of global modernisation as seen through the prism of domination and dispossession inflicted upon colonially subjugated populations (Arora and Stirling, 2023). Modernity operates on the implicit assumption that precolonial societies, including those of Africa and other colonised regions, lacked value or sophistication. It reflects a colonial and racialised epistemological stance, presupposing that liberation, in its various forms, is unattainable except through or within the confines of modernity. Furthermore, modernity and modernisation have been constructed through a Eurocentric lens, rendering modernity synonymous with the Westernisation of the world. Implicit in this assumption is the belief that colonised societies were incapable of achieving progress, development, or transformation independently of Western domination and expropriation.

Mignolo (2011, p. 46) affirms Seroto's (2018) assessment and describes coloniality as that which "emanates" from the "rhetoric of modernity" without necessarily being explicit. Mignolo (2011, p. 46) further frames decoloniality as, in essence, a demythologising of modernity and white European epistemologies, ways of being and systems and structures of power and society. More clearly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) articulates a critical lamentation regarding the insidious dynamics of modernity, which, through its "underside," entrenches the systemic marginalisation of Black

individuals. This perpetuation not only reaffirms but further solidifies the hegemonic notion that Blackness, when juxtaposed against the construct of Whiteness, is rendered devoid of social agency, significance, or inherent purpose. Consequently, any semblance of development or progress within Black communities is systematically disentangled from their own efforts, thereby denying them agency and attributing advancement exclusively to external forces. This 'underside', colonially laminated to decolonial thought, reveals modernity to have unfolded as a phenomenon that colonised time, space and being. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 490), decolonial thought, therefore, identifies the need to transcend over "narrow conceptions" of what it truly means to be colonised and the need to constantly "push towards liberation from coloniality as a complex matrix of knowledge, power and being".

Coloniality is a multifaceted phenomenon that is to be studied. Seroto (2018) explored the coloniality of being, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of power, which is generally presented in this manner consistently across the workings of scholars like Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), Mignolo (2021), María Lugones (2010) and Akhona Nkenkana (2015). Coloniality of being, which is particularly relevant in this study, refers to the notion of colonial difference, specifically those about zones of being and non-being (David, 2022, p. 45). Elliot (2022, p. 41) articulates the concept of colonial difference as the ontological bifurcation that Eurocentric paradigms construct to delineate the coloniser from the colonised. This differentiation is underpinned by a denial of ontological density, a process that engenders dehumanisation by categorising certain individuals and groups as intrinsically less valuable due to their relegation to the realm of the non-human (Quintero et al., 2019, p. 7). Central to comprehending the coloniality of being is the construct of race, which serves as a mechanism to adjudicate humanity and non-humanity within the colonial matrix of power (Seroto, 2018, pp. 5–6). Within this framework, those who deviate from the archetype of the white European are systematically classified as non-human, rendering them susceptible to exploitation under the broader logics of coloniality and its ontological dimensions.

This exploitation resulted in dispossession and, ultimately, poverty. Dube and Molise (2018) submit that this lens allows for an argument that, despite South Africa gaining political independence from white minority rule in 1994, the struggle has not ended, especially against

coloniality, which is represented by the aftermath of colonial systems that continue to manifest itself in modern-day South Africa. According to their submission,

...the Church should continue the struggle towards total emancipation and a better life for all. In this regard, the Church should challenge colonial systems that have remained in place long after apartheid, or colonial rulership, has been 'displaced'. (Dube and Molise, 2018; see also Muchie and Gumede 2017, p. 177; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, p. 13).

Decoloniality is not a singular theoretical school of thought despite it being grounded in the early workings of Enrique Dussel and Anibal Quijano. However, instead, it is a family of diverse positions that align in the view that coloniality is the fundamental problem of the modern age (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, p. 13). The theory, therefore, considers liberating approaches which shall be considered from a theological perspective in this study. Sandra Harding (2017) adds that Liberation theologies, in their varying forms, often reflect the Decolonial thinking, and praxis suggested by Ward (2017). Sandra Harding (2017, p. 624) highlights that Latin American Decolonial Studies and some branches of Feminist Studies name Liberation theology as a key influence for the "Decolonial turn".

The Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel in South Africa can be examined and rethought using decolonial theory as a useful paradigm, particularly when it comes to reducing poverty. The thesis criticises how colonialism continues to influence modern social, economic, and religious structures. You can investigate how colonial histories and power structures have influenced the prosperity gospel's theological foundations and practical effects in South Africa by applying decolonial theory. The Prosperity Gospel's origins in colonialism would be critically examined by the decolonial philosophy. The advent of Western Christian economic patterns and doctrines during colonialism had enduring effects on South Africa, as it does in many postcolonial contexts. Frequently perceived as a byproduct of Western, capitalist Christianity, the Prosperity Gospel has the potential to strengthen capitalist beliefs that stem from colonial exploitation. Rather than opposing economic inequality, a decolonial viewpoint would criticize how Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel might maintain it in a postcolonial setting.

Analysing how past injustices like forced labour, land dispossession, and racially segregated economic systems continue to impact South Africa's poverty predicament could be aided by the

decolonial theory. It would question whether the Prosperity Gospel, which emphasises personal achievement and riches, is a viable way to confront systemic injustices and collective societal trauma stemming from colonialism. Rethinking and reclaiming indigenous knowledge, customs, and worldviews are frequently emphasised by decolonial thought. In the context of a theological re-conceptualisation of the Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel, decolonial theory may support a strategy that incorporates community-oriented thinking and indigenous African spiritualities. This could result in a rethinking of prosperity that goes beyond financial gain to encompass ecological, social, and spiritual well-being, which could more comprehensively combat poverty.

The individualistic and consumer-focused message that is frequently included in Prosperity Gospel teachings could be criticized by decolonial theory. The rethinking may entail reorienting the emphasis from individual financial achievement to the prosperity and well-being of the community. This would be in line with African customs that place more value on relationships and community wealth than on the solitary, individualistic amassing of money. Criticising capitalist systems, which frequently still take advantage of marginalised groups in postcolonial states, is one of the main pillars of decolonial thought. Though it can overlook the systemic roots of poverty and inequality, the Prosperity Gospel is typically associated with capitalist ideologies that advocate money accumulation as an indication of divine favour.

A decolonial perspective on the Prosperity Gospel would question how Christian teachings are shaped by capitalist ideals (such as the pursuit of material gain and competition) in ways that can unintentionally prolong poverty. Alternative perspectives on wealth distribution and economic development may also be offered by decolonial theory. A decolonised theological framework might support systemic transformation in South Africa, where unemployment and poverty rates are still high, through social justice, community solidarity, and moral business practices that put people before profits.

The Decolonial theory has assisted in placing the Prosperity Gospel in the context of South Africa, where social and economic institutions are still impacted by the legacy of apartheid. It might draw attention to how the Prosperity Gospel's rhetoric of "success" speaks to the post-apartheid yearning for personal freedom and upward mobility, but it might also question how it might overlook or

perpetuate the more fundamental structural problems of inequality, class, and race that still impact the vast majority of people. By validating their worth and dignity, a pastoral-theological rethinking based on decolonial philosophy could empower local communities without turning them into consumers of Western financial products or ideas. This would be consistent with liberation theology, which emphasises the value of community action and grassroots movements in resolving structural injustices.

3.3 Research Methodology

This research has taken a desktop approach. The theological exploration of Prosperity Gospel in South Africa and its relationship with poverty presents interest in exploring this relationship. However, the strategy is sufficient when the information is available. Desk research, frequently perceived as primarily involving the scrutiny of published reports and statistical datasets, both of which constitute indispensable sources of information, extends to the systematic acquisition and evaluation of secondary data that can be obtained independently of direct fieldwork. As articulated by Bray, Walsh, Hoffmann, Henry, Eady, Collier, Pettit, Navarro, and Corbet (2015), this methodological approach underscores the utilisation of pre-existing data repositories to facilitate analytical insights without necessitating empirical data collection processes.

All relevant information and sources that do not require fieldwork, field surveys, etc., are included in this study. Researchers can easily access and utilise secondary data previously gathered from main sources (Roth, Gray, Shockley, and Weng, 2015). The referred data is data which has already been gathered. The data may be gathered by a researcher(s) for a specific purpose and then made available to other researchers. It is also possible that the data was and collected for non-research purposes and general use, such as during the national census (Roth, Gray, Shockley, and Weng, 2015). Newspaper articles, books, and journals that have been published provide the secondary data utilised in this research.

3.3.1 Thematic Methodological Strategies

Poverty is among the significant problems that religious groups, communities, and governments face globally. These readings contain content that relates elements of poverty using the theological lens. This also involves readings on history and inequality in South Africa. The Analysis in Chapter 3 focused on the data presentation relating to poverty perceptions and challenges. Publications such as statistical reports, journal articles, research papers, media articles, and books will be used.

Prosperity Gospel Globally, with a particular focus on South African perspectives, was captured through articles and theological publications by way of books, journals and other academic and media articles. In capturing the various approaches of the Prosperity Gospel, much reliance was upon the content published directly by the Prosperity Gospel proponents, opponents, or middle viewers, which was published on their social media pages and/or videos of their sermons, interviews, though not sourced from them through interviews conducted by the researcher, these can be categorised as primary sources as they are directly from the researched subjects. The analysis captured in Chapter 5 will primarily cover the theological, biblical and social perspectives on the Gospel and the theology of prosperity, which will be sourced through the abovementioned methods. These methods and sources are important because they are directly and indirectly from the subject's perpetrators.

3.3.2 Qualitative method

This research employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods are useful in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnic background, and religion, whose role in the research may not be immediately apparent. Furthermore, they can provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a research issue. According to Maxwell (2008), qualitative research also includes information about the "human" side of an issue: the behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative research serves as a critical complement to quantitative methodologies, facilitating the nuanced analysis and interpretation of quantitative data while addressing the intricate realities underlying specific contexts (Tenny, Brannan, & Brannan, 2017). Although the findings derived from qualitative data often have applicability to individuals sharing characteristics with the study population, the primary objective of qualitative inquiry is not necessarily the generation of generalisable insights across diverse populations or geographic regions. Instead, it seeks to cultivate a profound and sophisticated understanding of particular social phenomena or contextual dynamics. This divergence underscores a fundamental epistemological distinction between qualitative research and conventional scientific inquiry (Maxwell, 2008). The qualitative method helped with descriptive analysis and ensured successful interpersonal interaction.

A qualitative approach towards the research in question has been undertaken. One will make use of non-numerical data mainly sourced from primary and secondary instruments in order to

understand social realities and to provide a detailed description and account of what the data reflects, so as to construct new meaning where necessary. This is a desktop study; therefore, the research incorporates several data sets of knowledge registers. I have looked at the formal and popular statements and submissions made by members and leaders of the Pentecostal charismatic community in South Africa regarding Prosperity Gospel, including ecclesial submissions, published media reports and sermons. I have drawn on scholarly writing related to Poverty in Africa, Prosperity Gospel, the report of the CRL Rights Commission, and liberative Pastoral elements of preaching and doing. Similarly, data will also be collected from online sources and audio/visual recordings already in the public domain. The aim is to accurately capture some of the sermons from prosperity gospel preachers.

3.3.3 Osmer's Pastoral Cycle Model

According to Hawks (1989), Practical Theology is the critical study of contemporary activities and experiences of Christians and the Church about God's will and purpose for them. The study may also involve concepts, ideas, beliefs, convictions, attitudes, and worldviews, as these affect experiences and behaviour. The purpose is to understand, predict, and revise practice to enhance Christians and the Church (Hawks, 1989). This fully captures the method to be used in this research.

In conceiving whether a liberative pastoral theology can address poverty in South Africa, I employed the pastoral cycle model introduced by Osmer (2008, p. 4) as a tool that looks at practical theology's four tasks. These four tasks are as follows: Firstly, which is Descriptive-empirical, asking the question, "What is going on?". Such an enquiry into a better understanding of particular episodes, situations, or contexts involves gathering information, analysing the social experiences of the indigent, and the impact of Prosperity Gospel presently to achieve the same. Secondly, it is Interpretive, unpacking why this is going on and entering into a dialogue with the social sciences to interpret and explain why specific actions and patterns are taking place. This is a process of interweaving the three main themes of this study, namely, poverty, prosperity, Gospel and pastoral theology, to interpret their potential and interlink in South Africa. Thirdly, a Normative task looks at what should be happening and raises normative questions from the perspectives of theology, ethics and other fields. Lastly, it is a pragmatic task to determine how we might respond forming an action plan and undertaking specific responses to shape the episode, situation, or context in

desirable directions.³ The pastoral cycle model seems appropriate in dealing with various practices within the Church as they relate and compare with the sociological and theological content I intend to interrogate.

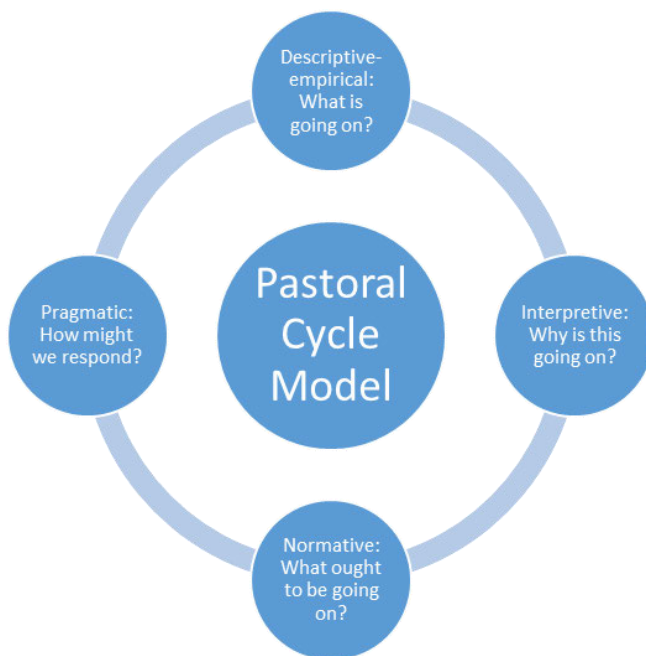


Figure 2: Pastoral Cycle Model

3.3.4 Interpretivist Paradigm

The study is underpinned by an interpretive paradigm based on its focus on exploring the undertaking of the theological exploration of Prosperity Gospel in South Africa and its relationship with poverty. Interpreting the facts of each member has been the researcher's job. The interpretive paradigm was used in this investigation. This focus is on more individualised research methods where the researcher approaches the subject with an open mind, understanding that every person has a unique perspective. The process of giving meaning to or drawing conclusions about organisational events is called interpretation. When researchers place them in actors' cognitions

³ Osmer, R.R., 2008, *Practical theology: An introduction*, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids.

rather than in social interactions, they behave differently (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). When using sense making methodologies, interpretive researchers frequently emphasise individual cognitions and concentrate on schemes, mental models, or cognitive frames as the basis of meaning inferences. Comparing behaviours and experiences to internalised scripts or frames of reference leads to understanding (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). Thus, interpretive researchers using cognitive techniques combine social reality with participants' ideas (Putnam and Banghart, 2017).

For many communication researchers, the source of meanings and interpretations is language, symbols, and texts (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). An interpretive approach stresses how actors turn social occurrences into texts, narratives, and language that become important to organisational actions. It emphasises the role of naming and labelling in establishing social contexts and centres on the links between symbols in forming patterns and meanings (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). Interpretations are thus derived from behaviours and exchanges via words, symbols, and writings. The interpretative approach differs from other paradigms in all three social science assumptions. Interpretive researchers in ontology are partial to a social constructivist stance that views reality as constructed by agents who give meaning to events, usually through interactions (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). According to Putnam and Banghart (2017), ontological assumptions about reality are often presented in dualistic terms, such as subjective vs objective. A subjectivist position is often depicted as rejecting any notion of an actual structure or the existence of an external world outside of individual cognitions. At the same time, an objective stance refers to views of reality as externally measurable and existing prior to human interactions. However, this dualistic view of reality has been criticised considerably (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). For Deetz (1996), deciding what type of research is objective or subjective is an exercise in knowledge generation. He contends that the persistence of object-subject dualism offers a variety of issues in understanding paradigms and their interrelationships, especially since all kinds of knowledge are intersubjective constructs of research communities (Ibid).

Consequently, epistemology and axiology may offer more nuanced frameworks for distinguishing the interpretive paradigm from alternative paradigmatic approaches. Epistemology, concerned with the nature and justification of knowledge, encompasses scholarly consensus regarding the processes of knowledge acquisition, including the origins of conceptual frameworks, the

formulation of research questions, and the methodologies employed in empirical investigation (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). Within the interpretive paradigm, conceptual constructs emerge through collaborative engagement with organisational participants and are subsequently integrated into the research process as context-specific problems arising from localised conditions. As a result, both conceptual development and the articulation of research questions are intrinsically grounded in situated, emergent practices, yielding contextually embedded, practical knowledge (Ibid). This approach contrasts sharply with the deductive application of pre-established concepts and theoretical frameworks derived from broader academic discourses.

The relationship between action and meanings, however, is a recursive one. Retrospectively, meanings reflect on and shape future interactions (Putnam and Banghart, 2017). Thus, collective or co-created understandings function reflexively to enable or constrain actions. Interpretive researchers who focus on a communicative view of sense making often aim to capture this recursive relationship and bridge both interpretive research's cognitive and interactional threads. Consequently, interpretivism engenders a relativistic ontological framework wherein a singular phenomenon is understood to encompass a multiplicity of interpretations, as opposed to a definitive, objective truth that can be unequivocally delineated through the empirical process of measurement (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). The heterogeneous experiential realities of individuals may afford divergent conceptualisations regarding the influence of nomenclature and the culturally entrenched benefits inherent in naming conventions, all the while preserving the recognition of the purposive functions these practices historically fulfilled, without relegating or disavowing their sociocultural significance.

3.3.5. Data Analysis

This study utilised two research analysis tools: Content analysis and Thematic Analysis. Further elaboration of these tools has been encompassed in the following sections.

3.3.5.1 Content analysis

Content analysis constitutes a methodological instrument in scholarly research, employed to systematically discern and interpret specific lexemes or conceptual frameworks embedded within textual corpora. By quantifying and examining the frequency, connotations, and interrelations of these linguistic and thematic elements, researchers extrapolate insights regarding the communicative intents, underlying ideologies, and contextual nuances of the texts. This analytical

approach further facilitates a nuanced understanding of the interplay between the authorial voice, audience reception, and the socio-cultural and temporal milieus encapsulating the discourse (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015). The potential use of content analysis in this research has been very beneficial. The ability of the content analysis to accommodate secondary data indicates the relationship between the methods used, so this created synergy in the research project, with all the methods perfecting the qualitative approach (Neuendorf and Kumar, 2015).

Texts can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, conversations, newspaper stories and articles, historical paperwork, advertising, theatre, informal discussion, or any occurrence of communicative language. Texts in a single study may also symbolise a variety of distinctive types of events, such as Palmquist's 1990 study of two structure classes, in which he examined student and teacher interviews, writing journals, classroom debate and lectures, and out-of-class interaction sheets (Neuendorf and Kumar, 2015). Nevertheless, to conduct a content analysis on any such text, the text is coded, or broken down, into achievable categories on a variety of levels word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme and then examined using one of the content analysis' basic methods: conceptual Analysis or relational Analysis.

The process of condensing raw data into categories or themes based on reliable inference and interpretation is known as qualitative content analysis. This procedure uses inductive reasoning, in which the researcher carefully examines and continuously compares the data to extract themes and categories. Nevertheless, deductive reasoning is considered in qualitative content analysis (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017). Generating concepts or variables from theory or earlier studies is also beneficial for qualitative research, particularly when starting the data analysis (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2017). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) examined three qualitative content analysis methods according to how much inductive reasoning was used. The first method is traditional qualitative content analysis, which uses the raw data to directly and inductively construct coding categories. This is the method for developing grounded theories. The second strategy is directed content analysis, where a theory or pertinent research findings are the foundation for the first categorisation. The researchers then immerse themselves in the data during data analysis, allowing themes to develop. This method's typical goal is to strengthen or validate a theory or conceptual framework.

i. Qualitative Content Analysis Procedure

The initial phases of data collection are frequently when the qualitative content analysis process starts. This early participation in the analysis phase will facilitate your transitions between concept development and data collection, and it might also help me focus my later data collection efforts on sources that will best answer the research questions (Cho and Lee, 2014). Qualitative content analysis involves a set of systematic and transparent procedures for processing data. Some steps overlap with the traditional quantitative content analysis procedures (Cho and Lee, 2014), while others are unique to this method. Depending on the goals of your study, your content analysis may be more flexible or more standardised. However, generally, it can be divided into the following steps, beginning with preparing the data.

3.3.5.2 Thematic analysis

In this study, thematic analysis is employed. Kiger and Varpio (2020) define thematic analysis as a qualitative data analysis method that entails searching across the gathering of data to locate, analyse, and report on recurring trends (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis is a method for describing facts, but it also incorporates interpretation in the selection of codes and the development of themes (Saumya, Rajneesh, Spriha, Aman and Shubham, 2017). A "goal-free" evaluation fits very nicely with inductive research, which develops theories from the facts, according to Saumya et al. (2017). Thematic analysis users get fundamental abilities for carrying out additional qualitative analyses (Ibid). Thematic analysis was employed to build a conceptual model of their findings via a sequence of stages that included model construction, interpretation, coding, theming, keyword and quotation selection, and coding (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell and Ranfagni, 2023). This study employs a six-step thematic analysis methodology, grounded in the researchers' approach to constructing a conceptual framework that encapsulates their findings. The process involves a systematic examination of phenomena, the iterative collection of data, the generation of ideas for coding and thematic categorisation, and the formulation of preliminary assertions, which are then refined into a cohesive theoretical model. The operationalisation of the thematic analysis procedure is exemplified throughout the research trajectory (Naeem et al., 2023). The publication underscores the merits of deploying diverse methodological approaches at each phase of the analysis.

Step 1 - Transcription, Familiarisation: The thematic analysis process commences with transcription and a comprehensive familiarisation with the data (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, & Ranfagni, 2023). This phase entails an in-depth engagement with the material, allowing researchers to identify recurring themes and significant excerpts. Subsequently, pertinent quotations are selected, ensuring they reflect the diverse viewpoints and emerging trends that are aligned with the study's objectives.

Step 2 - Selection of Keywords: In the second phase, all collected data—whether derived from focus groups, interviews, or visual media—must undergo meticulous scrutiny (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, & Ranfagni, 2023). Researchers identify recurrent motifs, terminologies, or visual elements, which are subsequently categorised as keywords. These keywords are extracted directly from participants' lived experiences and perspectives, thus providing a grounded representation of the data (Ibid).

Step 3 - Coding: The third phase entails the coding process, wherein brief descriptors or "codes" are ascribed to segments of data that encapsulate the principal ideas, meanings, or subjects inherent within the material. This stage facilitates the identification of elements pertinent to the study's core objectives while also serving to distil complex textual data into a theoretically structured format (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, & Ranfagni, 2023). In this context, keywords serve as pivotal tools, forming the analytical foundation upon which the raw data is transformed into comprehensible, interpretable components.

Step 4 - Theme Development: The fourth phase concerns the development of themes, wherein codes are systematically grouped to uncover patterns and interrelationships that elucidate the study's focal questions. This process requires an exhaustive analysis of the codes and categories, leading to the formation of a more abstract, interpretive representation of the data (Terry et al., 2017). These themes are not merely recurring patterns but rather represent conceptualisations that elucidate significant insights that are intrinsically linked to the research questions and the data itself (Ibid).

Step 5 - Conceptualisation: In the fifth phase, conceptualisation emerges as the process by which themes, codes, and keywords are interpreted and defined. This step involves refining the identified social patterns into coherent, definable concepts that substantiate the study's findings. Researchers

utilise tools such as conceptual models or diagrams to facilitate the comprehension of the interrelations among these concepts (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). The quality of these concepts is assessed based on criteria such as clarity, precision, reliability, applicability, and their contribution to both theoretical discourse and practical implications (Ibid).

Step 6 - Development of Conceptual Model: The final stage of the thematic analysis methodology entails the creation of a conceptual model, which serves as a distinctive representation of the data. This phase is often informed by pre-existing theoretical frameworks, resulting in a model that highlights the contributions of the study to the body of knowledge while directly addressing the research questions (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). This model encapsulates the study's key findings, effectively synthesising the conclusions drawn from the empirical data, and represents the culmination of the research process.

3.3.6 Sampling

3.3.6.1 Intra-textual purposive sampling

Sampling is an essential component of every research project. The sampling method's steadiness gives direction and makes purpose easier. In previous years, political organisations have gathered opinions about possible candidates by gathering data from the entire population. Collecting census data remains a widely used method for gathering public opinion for political purposes (Maddison, Tarlow and Minka, 2014).

For most researchers, however, collecting data from an entire population is almost impossible because of the population's number of people, places, or things (Ibid). Taking a census study is to describe sampling as a method of data collection. Participant observation, lab testing, and content analysis can all benefit from adaptations of sampling theory. A sample is a percentage or subset of the population, which is a bigger group. According to this definition, a good sample is a miniature version, just smaller than the population of which it is a part. Although this definition of a sample seems self-explanatory, it raises important questions regarding how our study sample relates to the larger population (Ibid). Occasionally, the phrase "population" refers to the number of people living in a particular geographic area, such as a town, region, or nation, according to our standard definition. However, very often, in the study of contemporary religion, such populations do not necessarily map neatly onto a geographical area.

3.6 Criteria of Exclusion and Inclusion

A criterion which includes readings that do not have prosperity gospel practices is identified as the exclusion criteria. It further encompasses the usage of a substantially large amount of old documentation that date more than 15 years ago. The use of the exclusion criteria was evident in the usage of documents on poverty from outside South Africa, except when developing the background incorporating poverty in Africa. The inclusion criteria encompassed South African Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. It also focused on recent and relevant sources that deal with the main themes.

3.7 Considerations on Ethical Implications

Moral principles that concern human conduct are regarded as ethics. Ethics means that researchers must have an ethical responsibility to protect participants' human rights during research, which is necessary for legal and moral reasons. The University RIG system undertakes an ethical research study process, exploring the conceptions behind poverty. Ethical issues are as follows:

3.7.1 Confidentiality

It is the ethical protection for those who are studied by holding research data in confidence or keeping them secret from the public. This information obtained was already in the public domain; thus, there was and remains no need to uphold levels of confidentiality in this respect.

3.7.2 Dependability

In considering the dependability of data reference is to the stability of the data over a period of time and a consideration of the conditions of the study. It is akin to reliability in quantitative research, but understanding the stability of conditions depends on the nature of the study. The consistency of the study also determines same.

3.7.3 Transferability

This considers whether the findings of this research have the ability to be transferable to other contexts. Furthermore, transferability means that the researcher must ensure that the study's conclusions can be transferred from one specific situation to another.

3.7.4 Conformability

In referring to Conformability it is a consideration of whether the findings and conclusions of a study are accurate to the research objectives as opposed to the biases and values of the researcher. Under Conformability, the researcher must ensure that another study can confirm the study's findings. Furthermore, the researcher has assessed the stereotypes and prejudice hindering the study's objectivity.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided clarity on the research design and methodology. It commenced by elaborating on the theories to be used, namely Pneumatological Hermeneutics and Decolonial Theory, and how they apply to this study. The qualitative research approaches were outlined by alluding to Osmer's Pastoral Model. It then revealed a triangulation data technique to be used by way of content analysis and thematic analysis, which are underpinned by an interpretive paradigm. Having provided the approach to be undertaken in processing the data, the following chapter will aim to establish the history and current state of poverty in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa in line with the first objective of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Re-Conceptualisation of Poverty in South Africa

4.1. Introduction

Poverty is a multidimensional condition of which an attempt to develop a comprehensive description would require more work (Buffel, 2017; Ruiz, 2015). This chapter aims to define poverty or cover all aspects of understanding poverty; it is also consistent with one of the objectives of this study, which seeks to establish the history and current state of poverty in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter aims to reveal the various approaches to understanding poverty in South Africa, encompassing the established categorisation of a Poverty Reality and Poverty of the Mind, but do not have limits.

OBJECTIVE ONE: *To establish the history and current state of poverty in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa*

4.2. Poverty Forms

Statistically, we have seen reflections of the Africa Poverty Report (2016), which assessed the levels of extreme poverty in Africa, which is roughly a third of the population. Further, the Statista Research Department has previously revealed that around 18.2 million people live in extreme poverty in South Africa (Saleh, 2022). These statistics point to what has been assessed through available mechanisms to measure people living in poverty. Such mechanisms can measure the physical reality or at least attempt to carve out valuable information to keep reasonable track of the impact of poverty alleviation aims. However, given South Africa's and Africa's vastness, it is highly questionable if an assessment of poverty could genuinely reflect what is happening on the ground (Sanders, 2015). In a society with inadequate systems, including systems to measure and reflect accurate population, there would be further inaccuracy if a report measuring levels of poverty reality is released. The intent is not to disprove the accuracy of the measured statistics but instead drive the point that the reality of poverty is even direr than reflected. Though the statistics give an idea of probable levels of extreme poverty, they fail to record lived experiences and realities that the data cannot vividly portray, somehow trivialising the actual phenomenon. Saunders (2005, p. 10) highlights that it has become easier for “number crunchers” to produce statistics like she, too, had done in the referred study, but in doing so, the public has become

confused by the numbers and insulated from the realities of living in poverty. These vivid imageries of our societies' conditions and generational struggles spark the need to find theological direction to alleviate poverty in South African communities.

There are different types of poverty: absolute (extreme) poverty, moderate poverty and relative poverty (Sachs, 2005; Sen, 1983; Triegaardt, 2006). Absolute poverty denotes a state in which households are incapable of satisfying fundamental survival requirements. This condition is characterised by persistent hunger, restricted access to essential healthcare services, absence of basic infrastructure such as safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities, and an inability to finance even minimal levels of education for some or all children. Furthermore, such households often lack elementary shelter and clothing necessities, such as shoes (Sachs, 2005, p. 20). In contrast, moderate poverty pertains to a marginally improved standard of living where basic needs are fulfilled, albeit to a minimal extent. Relative poverty, however, is typically defined in comparative terms, indicating a household income that falls below a specific threshold relative to the average national income (Triegaardt, 2006, p. 2). Amartya Sen's (1983) conceptualisation of poverty encapsulates both its relative and absolute dimensions. He contends that poverty fundamentally constitutes a deprivation of basic capabilities, representing an inability to achieve minimum thresholds essential for human functioning. This deprivation, Sen (1983) argues, is absolute in the sense that it transcends specific cultural or societal contexts, signifying an intrinsic failure to meet fundamental requirements for survival and social participation. However, the content of these capabilities, what constitutes the "minimum", is inherently dynamic and context-dependent, varying across temporal, cultural, and societal frameworks. By invoking "absolute," Sen (1983) underscores the existence of a critical threshold in capabilities, below which effective participation in societal life becomes untenable.

Nnamani (2000), on the other hand, proposes at least five types of poverty. Material poverty is seen as the lack or inadequate possession of material goods and basic infrastructures for life. Existential poverty could be understood as relating to poverty resulting from one living a morally depraved life without a sense of purpose. This can apply to a materially poor person and a person of any other categorisation. Anthropological poverty is seen as the "interior loss of selfhood that arises from oppression, disregard, humiliation and the violation of one's integrity as a person"

(Nnamani, 2000:08). Furthermore, he looks at relational poverty by placing genuine relationship with us as essential to the authentic human experience of being. Relational poverty means a lack of respect for one's relations, reducing one's ability to be fully human, notwithstanding the economic standpoint. Lastly is spiritual poverty, which holds a unique meaning (Nnamani, 2000), as it is seen to be voluntary self-renunciation, self-sacrifice and detachment from material goods undertaken to achieve the goal of life. This contradicts the other references to poverty by him above because the rest seem to be imposed, whereas spiritual poverty is not. This aims to connect to God and feed that spiritual desire rather than the monetary one.

According to Chambers (1995), poverty is used in two primary senses. Firstly, it is a common broad usage in the development discipline, a blanket term used to refer to the whole spectrum of deprivation and ill-being. This means there is no particular specification or benchmark for its usage, but it tends to refer to all types of living in lack. The second usage of the word poverty is one of a narrow technical definition which points to particular measurements and fosters comparative activity. In light of this latter, to provide further clarity on money metric poverty, it is helpful to look at poverty lines reporting, which reveals statistical measurement in South Africa. This tool proves beneficial for the processes relating to poverty reduction policy development and programme implementation. The lines contain both food and non-food components of household consumption expenditure. These statistics measure three poverty lines, namely the food poverty line, the lower-bound poverty line, and the upper-bound poverty line (BusinessTech, 2023). It is revealed that the food poverty line, which refers to the minimum amount needed by an individual to afford daily energy intake, currently sits at R760 per person per month. When one is categorised as living under these conditions, it is said to be the "extreme" poverty line (BusinessTech, 2023). The lower-bound poverty line, on the other hand, is reflected to be R1,058 per person per month. A lower-bound poverty line refers to adding the average amount of non-food items of households whose total expenditure equals the food poverty line and the actual food poverty line. Lastly, the upper-bound poverty line is similar to the lower-bound poverty line, except the non-food items of the household are equal to the total food expenditure, which is equal to the food poverty line. This latter line is reflected at R1,558 per person per month.

The current reality of South Africa is that of a consequence situating from an apartheid era. Therefore, poverty in the country cannot be looked at outside of this factor. The apartheid regime

was a system of racial oppression and segregation which "bequeathed its racist legacy" to post-apartheid South Africa (Buffel, 2015, p. 10). This means that the racial outlook and face of poverty in South Africa is majority black because black people were the ones who suffered the oppressive and segregated nature of an apartheid system. According to Buffel (2015), when the regime transferred political power after the 1994 elections, the economic power remained in the hands of the white minority in the South African context. Therefore, inequality is central to the reality of poverty in the country. Statistics reveal a concerning measurement of poverty to date.

Poverty, particularly in the African context, has been dealt with quite substantially through various angles of analysis. As aforesaid, this study identifies the concept of poverty as two-fold. On one hand, it is the 'Poverty Reality' and 'Poverty of the mind'. With this and the foregrounded definitions of the same in mind, one finds it detrimental to look only at a Poverty Reality as same is a narrow Eurocentric economic understanding of poverty (Myers, 2011). It can be said that a Poverty Reality is a result of an underlying problem, a Poverty of the mind, and one can further stretch the foresaid by alluding that it is impossible to address the former without addressing its source, which is a deeper problem worthy of uprooting. It has been mentioned that the inequality legacy of apartheid is fundamental to the statistics of poverty we see. Millions of people are recorded as under the poverty and extreme poverty line. Situations such as unemployment, corruption, and poor service delivery have worsened the living conditions of those engulfed by poverty. This leads us to a need to unpack what has been identified in this study as an underlying issue.

4.3. Comprehending Poverty in Africa

SOS Children's Villages considers Africa the poorest continent on Earth (n.d.). Some would vehemently reject this statement, stating that natural resources and means of production in Africa render Africa a prosperous continent. Its people, however, have had very little to no access to such means of production as a result of colonialism, and more recently, in the South African context, apartheid has been discussed above. In one of the theological conferences I attended, one of the participants made a bold claim that there was no poverty in precolonial Africa. Another quickly rebutted this claim by saying that poverty existed, but it differed in its nature due to the way of life amongst Africans at the time. Nnamani (2000) reaffirms this rationale in stating that the utterance of Iliffe (1987) regarding there being no poor Africa before the colonial rule, market economies

and urbanisation was true, but the same does not mean that poverty did not exist entirely. According to him, poverty was rare (Ibid). Its occurrence differed from the current in that slight economic differentiation and resources (means of production as earlier mentioned) were freely available, and the community structure allowed for empowerment and development. Another reality is the exploitation of one country by another, which is notable as an indispensable component of modern underdevelopment. According to Rodney (1973), the phenomenon of underdevelopment, which has become a central global concern, is fundamentally rooted in the exploitative practices of capitalist imperialism. Societies in Africa and Asia were undergoing independent processes of development before their direct or indirect subjugation by capitalist powers. This domination intensified exploitation and led to the extraction and exportation of surplus resources, effectively depriving these societies of the full benefits of their natural wealth and labour. This dynamic is a core aspect of underdevelopment as it is understood in the modern context. Francis and Webster (2019, p. 2) quoted the approach of Carnegie Two from the workings of Wilson and Ramphele (1994) as follows;

Poverty is a profound political issue. There are four reasons why poverty is significant. The first is because of the damage it inflicts upon individuals who must endure it; the second is its inefficiency economically. Hungry children cannot study properly; malnourished adults cannot be fully productive as workers; and an economy where a large proportion of the population is inferior has a structure of demand that does not encourage the production and marketing of the most needed goods. The third reason relates to the consequences for any society where poverty also manifests great inequality. As Raymond Aron has reminded us, the existence of a degree of inequality that is too great makes the human community impossible. Finally, there is the fact that poverty in many societies is itself symptomatic of a deeper malaise. It is often the consequence of a process that simultaneously produces wealth for some whilst impoverishing others. (Wilson and Ramphele, 1994, p. 4)

This approach reveals various layers of poverty, which point to the idea that it is not merely a monetary or economic issue but also a political one. Buffel (2018:4) acknowledges this multilayered nature by agreeing that poverty is structural (Smith, 2005; Mveng, 1994) and further adds that it is also "anthropological, political and theological". It causes damage to those who have experienced it, and such damage can be seen and unseen. If one has had to endure or continues to

endure it, they cannot fully experience their potential regarding productivity in various human tasks. This, in turn, creates a domino effect of the economy being affected by a large proportion of the population being inferior, thus not being able to be productive and contribute to the demand in production. A more critical point is poverty, which results from the absence of ownership of the means of production. This leads to the Carnegie Two approach's third reason, which examines the consequences of societies where poverty manifests great inequality. This great inequality, when the degree of it is too grave, makes the human community impossible. Lastly, the reason is a deeper malaise that aims to sustain a system that sees the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Poverty is thus a sick cycle that reinvents itself, whether dextrorotatory or in reverse. It is an inequality maintained by systemic structures, which Modiri (2015) also refers to.

It is established by Lawson and Elwood (eds) (2019, p. 345) that impoverishment can be engaged as a relation rather than a category, as an outcome of intersecting political projects of racialised oppression, political-economic injustice and socio-legal control. There is thus a nexus between the “politicised account of poverty” referred to by Modiri (2015) and the “politicising of poverty” by Lawson & Elwood, eds. (2019).

A political, politicised account of poverty or re-politicising of poverty can be broken down to acknowledge poverty as an issue that cannot be considered at face value. As Lawson and Elwood (eds) (2019) refer, it is not a category in which we can place people by their living below specific means. However, there is an attempt to do so, as reflected above, in order to put a measuring tool in place and view any improvements or lack thereof to the situation on the ground. Considering a political, politicised account of poverty or re-politicising poverty exposes these measuring tools' cursory nature and resultant categorisations. They frankly address the consequence and not the source. As Modiri (2015, p. 239) accounts, “not some sort of mistake or unwanted/unintended result, but poverty is a logically conscious outcome of a system which directs benefits and distributes opportunities along specific channels of social power”. This means that poverty is identified as a result (consequence) and consequence of a system with a particular intention. This intention generates the same result: to secure and maintain the system's beneficiaries. This system is established through political projects toward oppression based on race, gender and other differentiations. These are not new systems; they originate and are reinforced to ensure the sustainability of the status quo, which is, at its core, never created to eliminate poverty or to

eliminate the state of poverty to which a majority of South Africans are subjected. Given the 'plural analysis of oppression', it is further identified that the five faces of oppression, being mindful that poverty is oppressive, are exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

This contribution by Young (1949) needs us to pace ourselves a bit in order to grasp its foundation fully. She writes the following in describing the evolving of the meaning of oppression,

New left social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, however, shifted the meaning of oppression. In its new usage, oppression designates the disadvantage and injustice some people suffer not because a tyrannical power coerces them but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society. In this new left usage, the tyranny of a ruling group over another, as in South Africa, must undoubtedly be called oppressive. Nevertheless, oppression also refers to systemic constraints on groups that are not necessarily the result of the intentions of a tyrant. Oppression, in this sense, is structural rather than the result of a few people's choices or policies. Its causes are embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules. (Young, 1949, p. 41)

Now, according to Modiri (2015), what makes Young's idea of oppression resonant with a politicised account of racialised poverty is its understanding of oppression as a structural concept, and hence, its opposition to the traditional usage of oppression as meaning only the direct, formal, institutionalised exercise of tyranny by a ruling group. What this unmasks is the idea that an act of apartheid in South Africa, for instance, is oppressive. Still, not only that, the post-apartheid maintenance of systemic constraints, which are embedded in the norms which continue to prevail undisputed, is also oppression. This oppression is considered structural.

Understanding this further elaborated politicised account of poverty, it is submitted that, though all five faces of oppression seem relevant in our discussion, the key one is identified as 'powerlessness'. Power, in this instance, is not seen to be a position bestowed; for example, the ruling party has been bestowed with a position and responsibility of influence or perceived position and responsibility of influence; such is often referred to as power when it can instead be viewed as perceived power. However, this discussion does not form part of this research. The power

referred to, to be understood herein, is actual power where the absence of it would result in voicelessness, invisibility, and social immobility. Chambers (1995, p. 190) describes the poor as powerless. Their anxiousness in their longing for access to resources and employment makes it difficult to organise or bargain. Because they are usually in a state of physical and financial weakness, they remain vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation. The powerlessness is seen clearer when it is understood to be synonymous with being in a state of having been dehumanised. According to Burns (2011), dehumanising practices can be said to be "man's inhumanity to man", which "makes countless thousands mourn." As with the human who has his or her "humanity" stolen and as well as the human (although in a different way) who has stolen it become victims of a "distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (Freire, 1968, p. 28). In other words, dehumanisation is a process which affects both the perpetrator and the victim, though not in the same manner. Poverty as oppression, as dehumanisation and as powerlessness is revealed as a profound disruption of mutual ethical humanity, relegating those living in poverty to a position outside or beneath the normative category of what is considered human (Butler, 2004).

4.4. Theologising Poverty

In terms of engaging the oppressive nature of poverty, particularly in a formally conquered territory, a necessary contextual religious discourse generally finds expression in academic halls, the Church and society. We have heard many questions about the origins of Christianity and the reliability of the Holy Bible as presented to the conquered through missiological efforts from the West. Lumumba (n.d) once spoke of the oppressed state of Africans and how even the Bible was misused to support slavery and colonisation, among other things. He alluded to the fact that the Bible, which was brought to Africa by missionaries, was the same Bible that such missionaries used for themselves while in Europe. Though such a bible was the same, its use and purpose differed, as the intention was conquest. He made an example of the Dutch Reformed Church in apartheid South Africa. He stated that the Bible "became the foundation stone in which apartheid became articulated in 1948 by Hendrik Verwoerd and his cohort" (Ibid.). ⁴

He clarifies in these statements the unfortunate occurrence of coloniality of knowledge and being. In referring to the decoloniality of being, Mignolo (2007) states that it is a dehumanisation of those

⁴ This reflection is sourced from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjBzbKfhWJc>, which is a recorded address on the topic, "Religion has been used to manipulate Africans into poverty" from the New Africa Channel

who were colonised, othering and lack of recognition of their existence. The monopolisation of knowledge was an additional mechanism to the latter, which sought to produce the result of the oppressed remaining in the condition of oppression. When Lumumba (n.d.) refers to the Bible's authenticity, he links the fact that the Bible has remained the same, as we see it to date, and that the Bible used by the 'formally' oppressed and their 'former' oppressor is the same. The issue is the intended use of the same toward a colonial and dehumanising end. This meant that the pedagogical approach was fuelled by a human desire to conquer rather than God's desire to communicate His word to humankind. This is not to say there were no genuine attempts by missionaries at the time to be transparent about the contents and interpretation of the Bible, but the system of power at that time limited such aims. This discussion reveals a need to fully understand poverty and its theological expression, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa.

I concur with (Shank, 1990) in that it is inconsistent to want to worship God yet not care for the oppressed. He further cautions that any thought that begins to see our preaching, salvation, or church life as having nothing to do with the poor needs us to relook at scripture (Shank, 1990). This centres on the need to encounter the poor and oppressed at every juncture of our relationship with God. There remains a relevance and need for parrhesia and a theology that champions suffering, oppression and injustices in South Africa and the world (Buffel, 2015). Bosch (1991:436) alludes that it is undisputed that the Bible significantly focuses on the poor and their plight. Thus, theological discourse that does not consider "the socioeconomic and political realities is aloof from context and therefore useless and irrelevant" (Buffel, 2018, p. 5).

Poverty is revealed to be a statement about the oppressed and the oppressor; in all cases of poverty, its remote, if not immediate, causes are oppression and injustice, which can be an extension of insatiability. The Bible centres this premise and is expressive of the same. There is a command to have no poor people in your midst, a reference made to Israelites as captured in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 15, verse 4 (Nnamani, 2000). The background of this scripture is about the cancellation of all debts and somewhat a reprogramming initiative by God to ensure that the poor do not continue to become poorer and the rich richer. Mveng (1994, p. 160) refers to an occurrence as a "hellish cycle of poverty". The command Nnamani (2000) referred to was not merely left there, but there were practical examples of how much was to be dealt with. Scripturally, in verses

7 and 11 of the same (Deuteronomy, Chapter 15), it is said that if anyone is poor among you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them but rather give freely to those poor and needy.

Many perspectives have been revealed in the context of the biblical understanding of poverty. In Scheffler's (2013) translation of the original Hebrew and Greek found in biblical scripture, we see that words which refer to people with low incomes have various layers to them, revealing the many connotations associated with the word 'poor'. Like Scheffler (2013), Nnamani (2000), in his African theological reflection on poverty, helps us by outlining the various meanings of the reference 'poor' in the Bible by stating we need to sample the meaning of this word poor in a few languages, to enable us to understand its scope. According to Nnamani (2000), the Greeks identify three types of poverty: 'penia', pitechei and Latinos. He describes 'penia' as an unwealthy who serves his own needs through his labour yet has nothing superfluous. 'Pitechei', on the other hand, is qualified as such by having nothing at all. Finally, he looks at 'lapeinos' as a state of complete destitution or abject poverty and used for the description of somebody humble, lowly; poor, of humble circumstances; down-cast, down-hearted, lacking confidence, meek and mild. He further looks at the Hebrew words which refer to people with low incomes by first highlighting the most generally used term, 'ras'. 'Ras' means somebody who is thin and looks hungry. 'Ebion' is people experiencing poverty as a beggar (Exodus, 23 verses 6 and 11); and the term is commonly employed to characterise an individual whose capacities, influence, and intrinsic value are in a state of decline, often compounded by the dual burdens of physical affliction and economic hardship. Specifically, it embodies a spiritual or religious dimension, signifying an individual characterised by humility and submission before God. Over time, however, the Hebrew conceptualisation of poverty underwent significant evolution, leading to a more distinct differentiation in the application of such terminologies.

4.5. Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to establish the history and current state of poverty in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa. This was done to form a contextual comprehension of poverty before fully grappling with the main question of this study. The chapter starts by reviewing the statistics. The chapter attempted to re-conceptualise poverty in South Africa, where there was a sharing of understanding this further elaborated politicised account of poverty; it is submitted that, though all five faces of oppression seem relevant in our discussion, the key one is identified

as 'powerlessness'. Poverty is revealed as a dehumanised state which needs actions towards rehumanising people in the grip of poverty in South Africa. In the following chapter, there will be a discourse of various voices revealing the theological, biblical and social rationales for and against the prosperity gospel.

CHAPTER FIVE

Theological, Biblical and Social Rationales for and Against Prosperity Gospel in South Africa

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter attempted to re-conceptualise poverty in South Africa. This chapter centres on Theological, Biblical and Social Rationales for and Against the Prosperity Gospel in South Africa. Before doing so, a discussion regarding the "I receive" phenomenon will be undertaken. This chapter shares paramount angles to the Prosperity Gospel and its theology. It brings in different voices from a global to local perspective by quoting some of the renowned proponents and opponents of the prosperity gospel while grounding the submissions to reveal theological and biblical contributions to the theme. The chapter was aimed at ascertaining theological, biblical and social rationales for and against Prosperity Gospel in South Africa, consistent with one of the second objectives of this study, which is to examine and analyse the biblical and theological arguments on how Prosperity Gospel limits the process of dismantling oppression through decolonisation in order to address the state of Poverty in South Africa.

OBJECTIVE TWO: *To examine and analyse the biblical and theological arguments on how Prosperity Gospel limits the process of dismantling oppression through decolonisation in order to address the state of Poverty in South Africa*

5.2 Controversy of “I Receive” within Prosperity Gospel

There has been much controversy amongst the public and the Church regarding the "I receive" phenomenon. The "I receive" phenomenon, in this study, is considered a rapidly growing and largely accepted norm within Neo-Pentecostal or charismatic ministries to teach the principle of prosperity through possibly unfounded practices of making congregants receive this sort of Gospel as a transactional gospel between the "(Wo)Man of God" (as often referred to) and his/her congregants. These transactional gospel practices are seen where he or she acts as a highly revered godlike figure who is mature and wiser in the things of God, to the extent that he or she hears 'deep' things from God and such that they are the only way through which the congregants can "receive" blessings from God. This man or woman then mainly bases his or her ministry on receiving

healing, money, and other assets, evidenced by congregants constantly shouting "I receive" as these proclamations are made by their leader. Therefore, it must not be read in respect of this elaboration that sound Christian theology and practice does not speak of prosperity and that it frowns upon the shouting of "I receive" in exercising a declarative approach to receiving from the Lord. What is being emphasised, instead, are the abuses of these activities, which the impending rationales for and against Prosperity Gospel from theological, biblical and social perspectives shall reveal. Various formal and informal media platforms have alluded to the notion of proclaiming wealth, wellness, and power by Christian leaders to probe the congregants to "receive" those proclaimed things from God by faith. This occurrence has, perhaps indirectly, seemed to have created a perception of gimmicks within neo-Pentecostal churches and, interpretively, all Pentecostal churches. For this reason, this chapter seeks to explore the history and belief of the Pentecostal churches and tradition within the South African context as a foundation to survey their expression of prosperity gospel given the predominance of such Gospel within such churches.

5.3 A Background of Pentecostalism in South Africa

Contrary to popular belief, the prosperity gospel is not entirely constructed or established by the Pentecostal movement but has been considered another form of Pentecostalism (Hollenweger, 1999; Westerlund 2009, p. 1; Adamo, 2021). Ehioghae and Olanrewaju (2015, p. 70) propose that its source can be traced back to the Holiness movement and the Wesleyan doctrines of sanctification of the 1900s. This study focuses on the modern expressions of the neo-pentecostalism-based prosperity gospel within South Africa. The preliminary background of Pentecostalism in South Africa would be worthwhile.

According to Chidester (1992, p. 11), the permanent presence of Christianity in South Africa can be traced to the arrival of the Dutch East India Company in 1652. The Cape Colony, under the Dutch East India Company (1652-1795), prohibited any other religion at the Cape besides the Dutch Reformed – Protestant faith. To this end, there are undoubtedly far deeper roots of colonial mainline churches that are found in the Christian traditions in South Africa today. The rise of Pentecostalism after the 1906 Azusa Street revival placed Christianity in an alarming light as to this new way of believing or doing Christianity, which was witnessed by what can be alluded to as strange occurrences in faith practice, particularly in the latter years. It has not been easy to understand this phenomenon, which is somewhat valid. The Azusa Street Revival was led by the

Black Methodist preacher William J. Seymour (Robeck, 2006), who previously worked under the white preacher Charles F. Parham in Topeka, Kansas. Due to racial experiences, Seymour parted ways with Parham, and it was after that that he became the leader of the Azusa Street Revival, from which most of the world's classical Pentecostal Churches trace their origins. Over the last 120 years, Charismatic Pentecostalism has spread to all corners of the globe with different church structures and organisations while in some places, they have remained formally associated with mainstream protestant or catholic churches. Asamoah-Gyadu (2015, p. 1) makes mention of the gradual emergence of African innovations in Christianity, beginning with the Ethiopian churches of the late 19th century, the African Independent Churches (AICs) and now new Pentecostal churches, which means the spirituality and liturgical styles of historic mission denominations of Western origin have ceased to be representative of Christianity in Africa.

On the other hand, Mangany and Buitendag (2013) argue that African Traditional Religion (ATR) is accommodated in the African Initiated Churches (AICs), which one further opines is not necessarily a practice within Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism distinguishes from ATR's practices about ancestral recognition in their faith walk as a distinctly different approach. According to MacGregor (2011), Pentecostals derive their belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit from the Pentecost narrative, the story of the transfer of the charismatic Spirit from Jesus to the disciples. In other words, having become the exclusive bearer of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, Jesus becomes the giver of the Spirit at Pentecost. He argues that the most well-known biblical account for the Pentecostal's belief in the baptism in the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 2, wherein believers were filled with the Holy Spirit after prayer and fellowship. Though MacGregor (2011) thoroughly explains the position on Pentecostal Pneumatology by arguing its biblical basis, his writings fail to address the subsequent why questions left by what baptism in the Holy Spirit is mainly in the practical present-day context; perhaps this was his intention. At the core of Pentecostalism, Jesus Christ is the only avenue to reach God, whether on earth or post-death. This is premised on Jesus Christ's utterance stating that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14 verse 6). It is somewhat tricky to categorise Pentecostalism because of its various development stages, which have been widely accepted and others rejected. An attempt to source whether to locate the prosperity gospel as a Classical Pentecostal, a charismatic renewal movement, a Pentecostal or "Pentecostal-like independent Church, or Fourth Wave Pentecostalism practice is one that would be cumbersome to undertake in this study. There is a standing appreciation in this study of the

fundamental beliefs this denomination holds as the common factor in the re-emergence of various forms. It could be a consideration whether some of this re-emergence is a form of Pentecostalism or a pseudo-Pentecostalism.

The denominations of Western origins have been critiqued to still maintain the colonial agenda through their influence in the leadership of even the African extensions of the mainline churches. It is believed that Africans have found expression through newer forms of Christianity in Africa. Some have been through ways of indigenous African religions being given a “Christian guise”, Anderson (1990, p. 67), or through sound Pentecostal pneumatology and praxis. The 1960s saw the rise of the Charismatic movement when glossolalia was experienced in the older Protestant and Catholic Church worldwide. There has been a move from what can be classified as more classic Pentecostalism to the emerging mega-church phenomenon, which finds itself more conspicuous and controversial in the latter days. Africa had attempted to shape their Pentecostalism, be it by way of initially AIC in the form of the "prophet healing," "Spiritual" and "Aladura" (people of prayer) churches in West Africa or "Zionist" churches in South Africa; further by way of classical Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission and African Full Gospel Churches; and more recently, the Neo-Pentecostals through the ministries and mega-church fellowship groups.

Anderson (2005, p. 20) mentions that:

The rapid growth of Pentecostalism in the last quarter of the twentieth century, particularly in West Africa, the Asian Pacific rim, India and Brazil, has resulted in other influences and networks quite different from the North American model. Migration and transnationalism remain important features amplified by the increasing speed of travel and communication.

In the South African context, according to Anderson (2005, p. 4), South Africa “was one of the first countries on the continent to receive Pentecostalism, in 1908”. In an account of the prominence of classic Pentecostals, it is recorded that the three largest Pentecostal groups in South Africa include the Apostolic Faith Mission, the South African Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Church of God. There was an increased significance in the “role played by a rapidly growing new form of African Christianity” (Anderson, 1992, p. 2) through Pentecostal and charismatic churches as a “movement emerging in the 1970s” (Anderson 2005, p. 4).

The South African apartheid system, with its racism and enforced segregation within early South African Pentecostalism, drove many Africans into rejecting European forms of Christianity delivered through the vehicle of what is referred to as mainline churches. Charismatic Pentecostalism in South Africa pre-apartheid relied significantly on international support and influence. Its antiracist agenda was made known, though its core mission remained within the various small villages and homesteads. Despite the clear voice against racism and segregation, Charismatic Pentecostalism flourished notably but under strict scrutiny and regulation during the apartheid era. Post-Apartheid, under constitutional dispensation, religious structures generally enjoyed the freedom and expression to practice their beliefs without much constraint. Since then, churches have experienced rapid growth.

Kgatle (2017), in his reflections and recommendations regarding the unusual practices within some Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa, addresses the unusual practices within some Neo-Pentecostal churches that include, among others, the eating of grass, drinking petrol, spraying Doom on the congregants and other experiences. He says many possible theological, psychological, and socio-economic explanations exist for these unusual practices. Given that many South Africans experience various socio-economic challenges, it is argued here that the socio-economic factors are the main explanation for supporting these unusual practices. In a similar breath, Kgatle and Anderson (2020) coin "the abuse of the Spirit", which addresses New Prophetic Churches within the context of South African Pentecostalism. They attempt to elaborate on the function of the Holy Spirit within the study of the hermeneutics of South African Pentecostalism in order to connect its biblical understanding with "the abuse of the Spirit". This is a fundamental task when addressing activities within Pentecostalism because they believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the active role played by the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. When something is then categorised as "the abuse of the Spirit," it is a call for alarm and noting within the Pentecostal community and perhaps a point to whether such activity could be a pseudo form of Pentecostalism.

Adedibu (2019) and Igboin (2019) look at the Latter-day African Pentecostalism movement and its conceptualising of life and death. Historically, traditional Pentecostalism placed great emphasis on the reward and, equally, on judgement that came after death. They argue that in Christian eschatology, the doctrine of the "last things" is not simply about hope for justice in the future but about God's future impact on our present experience. Perhaps this God's future referred to here and

its impact on the present experience may be construed to mean all things being supplied, complete wellness and total prosperity as per the prosperity gospel teachings of this day. Adedibu (2019) and Igboin (2019) look at the accountability element – recognising that there can never be perfect justice in this world, no matter how much we seek to redress past injustices. Prosperity Gospel, however, seeks to say that perfect justice is obtainable by faith. According to their study, drawing the inference between eschatological prism and pneumatology is paramount. The latter cannot exist without appreciating the former, particularly in Pentecostalism. Kgatle (2020) makes a noteworthy contribution to discussing pneumatology within Pentecostalism. In defining pneumatological ecclesiology, he draws on the work of Karkkainen (2001), wherein he alludes to the fact that it is not adding to the function of the Church but is the Church's main function in Pentecostalism. The nuances of the prosperity gospel resonate within the traditional African because of the belief in mystical causality. In an attempt to find underlying reasoning, Settler (2018) argues that the unusual practices for which Charismatic Pentecostals have been criticised are, in fact, a mere extension of Indigenous diagnostic practices, traditionally practised by sacred specialised and now copied and transposed into neo-Pentecostal contexts.

The latter-day expressions of Pentecostalism have also been categorised with what this chapter introduces as leaders who are highly revered godlike figures. This approach to viewing Christian leaders and overseers has tended to produce congregants whose focus and belief is on those leaders rather than Jesus Christ. As a result, when there is scrutiny directed at these leaders, the congregants prove rather hostile and defensive of their leaders. The rigour with which congregants defend their religious leaders reflects what Kgatle (2017) identified as gullibility resulting from socio-economic, psychological, theological and patriarchal issues. Socio-economic because many people in South Africa still have to endure the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Thus, 'religion, even when it is abusive, gives them some hope' (Kgatle, 2021, p. 3).

5.4 Theological Rationales of Prosperity Gospel

Bowler (2018, p. 1) defines Prosperity Gospel, or what she refers to as “a branch of Christianity that promises a direct path to the good life”, as “a bold central claim that God will give you your heart's desires: money in the bank, a healthy body, a thriving family, and boundless happiness”. What is striking about Bowler is that she is a self-proclaimed prosperity gospel scholar and believer who realised after her battle with cancer that she was “in its very grip”. In her account, she reveals

how she had dedicated extensive amounts of time in her theological studies to learn this branch of theology. In her quests, she found that Prosperity Gospel indeed encourages people, more so the leaders, to possess private jets and multimillion-dollar homes as evidence of God's love.

According to Protestant Christianity, the Prosperity Gospel is a belief that teaches a faith expressed through positive thoughts and declarations, and its receivers are persuaded to donate to the Church to draw health, wealth, and happiness into one's life. It is otherwise referred to as the "health and wealth gospel" or "name it and claim it" (Donovan: n.d.). The core of its teaching is the belief that Jesus Christ's salvation includes freedom, not only from death and eternal damnation but also poverty and sickness, amongst other things. The understanding is that sickness and poverty are curses that can be broken with faith in Jesus through atonement. This is premised on the belief that God wants all believers to be richly blessed in this life, meaning physical well-being and material riches are always the will of God for those who have faith. The championing of the Prosperity Gospel persuades those who receive it to accept the status quo and its current economic systems. It suggests a reality of benefitting from such a system without prophetic discernment and a subsequent failure to remedy the attached social ills (Maxwell, 1998, p. 351). Prosperity Gospel promotes materialism, which has sometimes been frowned upon by Jesus in the Bible. It does not address complexities surrounding poverty and can fail to stretch the arm of pastoral care for economically deprived (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. 107).

Prosperity Gospel has thus been critiqued for its propensity to commercialise religion. The commercialisation of faith or the Gospel is defined by Gitonga (2011, p. 320) in Resane (2017, p. 2, cf. Masenya & Masenya 2018) as a presentation of the message encapsulated in the Bible as a commodity for sale for material gain, such as the monetising of spiritual benefits of healing, prayer for particular needs or the like. The other is the Bible message being presented as an object of investment for personal aggrandisement, which would be a situation whereby there are donations of money or assets to the Church with an expectation that God will repay them by multiplication.

An alarming contribution to the debate on the prosperity gospel is one by Soboyejo (2016, p. 1), read with Kasera's (2012, p. 6), which suggests that the prosperity gospel establishes a prosperity theology and such berths a cultic theology. In their contribution, prosperity theology is categorised into three views. This is to say that there is no single prosperity gospel as it may seem, but rather, there are various approaches to prosperity theology that need careful consideration and

differentiation. As with many beliefs, there are extremists and moderates, which is the case in this instance. These three suggested views are as follows;

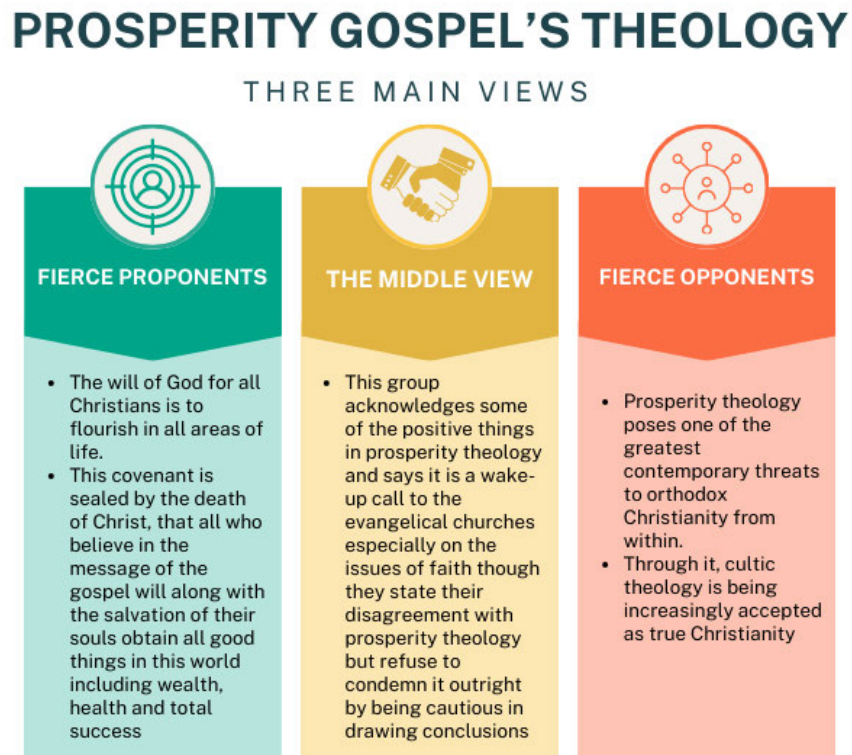


Figure 3: Prosperity Gospel's Theology and its Three Main Views

Fierce Proponent:

In consideration of Fierce proponents, it is noted that such hold the view that the will of God for all Christians is to flourish in all areas of life. According to this group, prosperity preaching means having a holistic approach to man's needs, including his material well-being. Soboyejo (2016, p. 3) refers to David Oyedepo's book, which argues that “possessing your possession” is part of God's covenant and that believers ought to prosper. They deduce that Oyedepo claims that the death of Christ seals this covenant, which all who believe in the Gospel's message will, along with the salvation of their souls, obtain all good things in this world, including wealth, health and total success. When reference is made to Jesus "paying it all" or him saying "it is finished" as he died on the cross, the fierce proponent opines that such was about all things and, in particular, that

which is materialistic. At the core of this belief is the understanding that prosperity reflects how much one has faith in God, and without such evidence of faith, it means the believer has not quite had faith in God enough. The exercise of this faith requires action from the believer, which is specific to giving monetary offerings as a seed to be rewarded by God with material gains. The concept would, therefore, require one to provide more offerings if they want more from God. The level of giving should match the level of blessings expected from God. This giving must be towards the Church or the (wo)man of God. Barron (2022, p. 6) describes this as a "seed of faith", which is a material gift given to God—or to God's chosen representative, who is the soliciting prosperity teacher—as an act of "sowing" that must result in a harvest. This is substantiated using the scripture in Luke 6:38⁵. This is substantiated using various scriptures, such as 2 Corinthians 9 verse 6 (ESV), which says, "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully".

Fierce Opponent:

On the opposing end of Fierce proponents, there are Fierce opponents. According to Soboyejo (2016:04), in this group, there is Hank Hanegraaff (1993), who believes that prosperity theology poses one of the greatest contemporary threats to orthodox Christianity from within. Through it, cultic theology is being increasingly accepted as true Christianity. Soboyejo (2016) refers to Robison (2003), who said prosperity theology appeals to the Western materialistic mindset. This is coherent with the notable theme of materialism and the commercialisation of religion in this study.

Hinn (2023:01) categorically states that Prosperity Gospel is "one of the deadliest teachings in the world today". Further, it believes it is not "good news" and cannot be referred to as a "Gospel". In a critique of this Gospel, Barron (2022) highlights that the Prosperity Gospel has little room for a theology of suffering. It is said to have nothing to say in addressing those who are under persecution or are facing martyrdom. Heuser (2016: 06) refers to a Pentecostal kleptocracy about Asonzeh Ukah's (2013:145) description of the state of affairs about the entrepreneurial nature of mega-churches. This refers to the situation whereby, in the quest to commercialise and gain

⁵ "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." – Luke 6:38 (NKJV)

economic and social status, the Church is used in such endeavours, and the congregants are the ones who fund such economic and social advancement.

Middle View:

The middle view is balanced with the two opinions elaborated above. Soboyejo (2016) says that this group acknowledges some of the positive elements of prosperity theology and says it is a wake-up call to the evangelical churches or other fierce opponents, especially on the issues of faith. Though middle viewers disagree with pure prosperity theology, they refuse to condemn it entirely by being cautious in their conclusions. This view may acknowledge the biblical premise for prosperity to some degree. There is no reference against prosperity in the Bible, and many examples of those who lived well-off lives. However, presenting this prosperity as a particular theology and emphasis on Christianity may be why the Middle view is reserved for entertaining what is now offered as prosperity preaching. Prosperity preaching is elaborated by Soboyejo (2016) as a gospel of wealth that encompasses financial wellness and opulence. Bishau (2013:08) identifies three negative traits of the prosperity gospel. These are the manipulative nature of its ecclesiology, the dangerously literalistic interpretation of the Bible, therefore careless theology, and their misinterpretation of the New Testament, particularly about a warped understanding of the concept of miracles. Though notably identifying the negatives in this phenomenon, Bishau (2013) concedes that there seems to be nothing intrinsically sinister about the Gospel itself. Its tenets are found in biblical scripture and are a mechanism for people to escape poverty and sickness. The problem, however, lies in the perpetrators of manipulation who want to use this Gospel for their gain, and therefore, whatever is evil about this Gospel lies outside of the Gospel itself but in the perpetrator entirely.

5.5 Biblical Rationales of Prosperity Gospel

The conjugate nature of theological rationales and biblical rationales is undisputed. However, it is necessary to further account for the biblical premise for and against the Prosperity Gospel, as sourced through primary data deduced from Christian leaders within Pentecostalism and, more so, those within the Prosperity gospel teaching and preaching practice. The theological rationales above have differentiated three different views in an attempt to categorise the activities that are in

contention within this chapter. The discussion on biblical rationales will lay out these views through a scripture dialogue from the respective viewpoints.

Apostle Brandon Bailey (2024), on a Facebook post, opined on a viral broadcast of Katt Williams⁶ discussing the particulars of his industry and related cons in respect of integrity and morally questionable acts, opined on the topic of Prosperity within the Christian Church⁷. Employing a brief background, following the said broadcast, an anonymous individual was said to have commented on the same by comparing the net worth of Katt Williams against the net worth of the individual he mentioned in his broadcasted interview as having achieved monetary success through untoward and immoral mechanisms, this was done as if to imply that Katt Williams had no place in stating what he did because his net worth is drastically lower than the individual he was speaking of. Apostle Brandon Bailey then cautions against this act by stating,

Let me help you; as long as Mammon is our God, we will downplay conviction, holiness, integrity and real power with net worth.

Make no mistake: God wants you to prosper in every area of your life, but your prosperity must be reconciled with the prosperity of your soul.

3 John 1:2

‘Beloved, I pray that in every way you may prosper and enjoy good health, as your soul also prospers.’

Mark 8:36

‘What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?’

Great prosperity and a weakened soul are not kingdoms. We know kingdom when you get rich and can still raise your voice against everything that contradicts the Light. (Bailey, 2024)

⁶ Katt Williams is an American stand-up comedian and actor who was invited on a tell-all interview which was broadcast on the Club Shay Shay channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oRRZiRQxTs>

⁷ The Facebook post is annexed hereto marked “APPENDIX C.”

Bailey's (2024) cautioning highlights two critical elements from the biblical premise. The first is that the concept of prosperity is consistent with God.

Jones (2015) accounts of a time when Charles Spurgeon (1834 -1892)⁸ spoke to one of the largest congregations at the time and said, "I believe that it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the object of accumulating wealth. You will say, 'Are we not to strive all we can to get all the money we can?' You may do so. I cannot doubt but what; in so doing, you may do service to the cause of God. However, I said that living with the object of accumulating wealth is anti-Christian." Jones (2015) does this as a preamble before outlining what he thinks are the five errors theological errors of Prosperity Gospel. Firstly, he points to the fundamental teaching of Prosperity Gospel, which points to the Abrahamic covenant as a means to materialistic entitlement, as alluded to in the book of Genesis. Based on this Abrahamic covenant, Christians have deemed Abraham's spiritual children; therefore, by being his children, they, too, are heirs of the 'blessings' of faith. The concern comes when this blessing is only bestowed a materialistic connotation, resulting in the misconception of 'blessings' to implore an entitlement to materialistic gains. To support this claim, prosperity gospel teachers rely on Galatians 3:14 (NLT), which says, "Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith." According to Jones (2015), this scripture, for these prosperity gospel teachers, refers to "the blessings of Abraham [that] come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus." This is also a materialistic connotation of "blessing", yet the very same scripture further alludes to the second half of the verse, which says "that we might receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith." Jones (2015) said this was Paul's clear reminder to the Galatians of the spiritual blessing of salvation, not the material blessing of wealth.

Secondly, there is a misconception of what the atonement of Jesus extended to, as there is a belief that the "sin" of material poverty was part thereof. This means there is a belief that the work of Calvary extended to reality. Further elaborating on this error, he points out why this could happen. Moreover, it is the view of the life that Jesus lived, and how such view disseminated amongst some prosperity gospel teachers is that of a Jesus who wore luxury clothes, was rich and had a big house. Therefore, believers are also supposed to live in luxury when, in fact, neither the former nor the latter is accurate in its account. Notwithstanding, he refers to the scripture in 2 Corinthians 8 verse

⁸ This Baptist minister testified as a powerful gospel witness in his time, also known as the "Prince of Preachers".

9, which needs to be understood. This scripture speaks of Jesus Christ in that though He was rich, yet for the sake of the people, He became poor, and through His poverty, the people might become rich. The rest of the scripture is conveniently left out because it clarifies this statement in verse 14 of the same by commissioning, which says that those who are in abundance should supply the lack of those who have not.

Thirdly, I would refer to transactional Christianity, where Christians are taught to give to gain material compensation from God. In making an example of this, Jones (2015) quotes Gloria Copeland (2012) in her book titled 'God's Will is Prosperity', "Give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000. . .". An example of this alluding can be drawn from one of the statements made by Kenneth Copeland (n.d.) wherein he was recorded to have said, "Giving is at the heart of breaking the curse of poverty." This statement was said in the midst of him referring to how poor people should give tithes even from the money which they receive from those who are assisting them. "I do not care if you only have two shillings; one should be given back to God", he further explains his rationale. He says that this is the method by which one can escape poverty. Fourthly, Jones (2015) compares orthodox Christianity and what Prosperity Gospel preachers espouse. Orthodox Christianity understands faith to be trust in the person of Jesus Christ, whilst an example of what Copeland (1974) states points to what faith is conceived as in prosperity gospel trends in saying, "Faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, a spiritual power. It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function".

Lastly, Jones (2015) alludes to the use of prayer to force God to grant prosperity. He states that prosperity gospel preachers rely heavily on the scripture, which says, "have not because we ask not" in James 4:2. To draw from an example of a prosperity gospel approach to this, Creflo Dollar (2016)⁹ writes, "When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass." In one of his sermons, Bishop David Oyedepo (n.d.) addresses this concept of asking God for money through prayer by saying there is nowhere in the bible where we see a prayer requesting money. However, it comes from the addition He (God) promised. In making this illustration, he refers to the scripture, which says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" in Matthew 6 verse 33. He then makes an example of Solomon's wealth, which he mentions was one of the

⁹ The Facebook post is annexed hereto marked "APPENDIX D"

most wealthy examples depicted biblically. However, it was not due to supplication or intercession but merely through an addition. It is known that Solomon's request was not money but wisdom. Money or wealth, according to Oyedepo (n.d.), was an addition.

Significant debate has been regarding the validity of applying scripture to support the prosperity gospel. Tamfu (2020) expressed his alarm upon encountering a flyer for a "Prosperity Conference: Wealth Transfer" posted on Facebook. The flyer proclaimed, "Prosperity is God's will [and] God's best for you. 3 John 1:2. In honour of the sacrifice of Jesus, I am enjoying blood money." Tamfu (2020) noted that many people accepted and embraced this message.

Furthermore, Genesis 1 asserts that Christians have been given dominion over creation, and the ability to exploit it should lead to prosperity (S. Hunt, 2000, p. 332). Redemption or atonement is equated to alleviating sickness, poverty, and spiritual corruption.

5.6 Social Rationales

Reflecting on one's encounters with such practices of commercialising religion, Christianity in particular, as a Christian who would be classified as being of Pentecostal denomination, I have had my fair share of experiences within neo-pentecostal, charismatic and other expressions of Christianity prone to prosperity teachings and practices. One of the stories I can recall was an offering time at one of the churches; I was among those present. I do not recall the reason given for the actions I'm about to lament. I remember being uncomfortable and ashamed that such could be activities within a church. The pastor stood in the front and explained the need for differentiation of offerings, stating that the highest amounts would be called first to stand up and bring their offering to the offering basket in the front, and as and when a certain amount was called, the people offering that equivalent would stand up and walk. So, as a young teenager, I sat there listening as amounts were called. Ten thousand Rand stood up and went to the front, all eyes on them and placed their offering; Five thousand Rand followed suit. One thousand Rand, Five hundred, one hundred. This meant that each time the group went down to give, the congregation would have to wait and watch before the next group was called. At the end, he called for "everybody else" to come and give their offering. This meant everyone else who gave the "least". This occurrence remains vivid in my mind because of the deep spiritual burden it was to witness differentiation or discriminatory behaviour towards the poor. My further logic was that of observing that not all those giving the "least" were actually poor per se, but those made conscious choices not to fall for

the practice that was going on. My cry was for those who were actually of a poverty reality because they are the ones who, even if they wished, had no resources to do so; those are the ones whom the Church is to care for and not belittle; those are the ones that in their giving the "least" actually gave the most. I am reminded of the scripture in Mark, 12: 42-44 (ERV), which states, "Then one poor widow came and put in two tiny copper coins, worth less than a penny. Jesus called his followers to him and said, "This poor widow put in only two small coins. Nevertheless, the truth is that she gave more than all those rich people. They have plenty, and they only have what they do not need. This woman is impoverished, but she gave all she had. It was money she needed to live on."

One has further observed this trend and its prominence within media platforms, be it social media, broadcast media, or print media, inter alia. These trends have been widely spread across platforms and have formed a significant part of the image of Christianity broadly and Pentecostalism specifically. I particularly want to outline what relates to the broader Church, the body of Christ, its name's unwanted tarnishing, and its diminishing impact on society. Societies are beginning to reject the Church because they substantiate it as a business rather than a social impact institution. Cries of Pastors getting richer and congregants getting poorer have surfaced, and there is little room to provide clarity in these acts as they have been so widely populated that it seems like the entire Church's agenda.

The purpose of lamenting this account of a direct encounter with the prosperity gospel is to lay a foundation for consideration of various social perspectives. As this is a desktop study and no interviews were conducted, there is specific reliance on perspectives already in the public domain; however, to maintain credibility, close reliance is had on the words and perspectives vocalised or written directly by the people in question. Within this sub-section, a recap of various social utterances will be critiqued as they reveal rationales for or against Prosperity Gospel.

Vlad Savchuk (2024), a well-known Pastor at HungryGen Church, wrote, "God is not against us having wealth, but He is against wealth having us."¹⁰ His view concurs with Bailey's (2024) biblical reflection on the prospering of the soul being crucial as one prospers monetarily but in reverse. The point being made by Savchuk (2024) is that God does not want people to be consumed

¹⁰ The LinkedIn and corresponding Facebook posts are annexed hereto marked "APPENDIX E" and "APPENDIX F" respectively.

by wealth. This further aligns with Bailey's (2024) assertion and biblical reference, which alludes to the caution in the book of Mark, 8: 36¹¹.

One of the well-known proponents of the prosperity gospel is Benny Hinn. John Henry records his lamentation of the inaccuracies of some of the rationale behind Pentecostal Gospel preachers, and in such recording, he speaks of Benny Hinn (Henry: 2023)

“You do not have because you do not ask” (James, 4: 2b). Prosperity preachers use this verse to teach their followers to "name it and claim it." When you read this verse properly in context, you realise that James is not primarily instructing us how to pray but condemning our covetousness (James, 4: 1–4).

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Galatians, 6: 7). Prosperity preachers use this verse to promise their followers greater rewards if they give the preacher more significant amounts of money. The following verses in context explain that the sowing is "doing good", and what we reap for doing good is "eternal life" (Galatians, 6: 8–9). The verse has nothing to do with money.

"Christ redeemed us . . . so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles" (Galatians, 3:13a, 14a). Prosperity preachers use this verse to teach that God will give us the material blessings he promised to Abraham. If you read the entire verse, however, you find that Paul explains what he means by the blessing of Abraham. It is "the promised Spirit" (Galatians 3: 14b).

"Though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians, 8: 9). Prosperity preachers interpret this verse as about money. But what does Paul mean? A few verses before, he talks about the Macedonian churches being in "extreme poverty." They are not rich, but Paul says they have a "wealth of generosity" (2 Corinthians, 8: 2).

One of the well-known proponents of the prosperity gospel is Benny Hinn. John Henry records his lamentation of the inaccuracies of some of the rationale behind Pentecostal Gospel preachers. In

¹¹ To avoid repetition, this scripture states, "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

such a recording, he speaks of Benny Hinn (Henry, 2023). In the main, Henry (2023) says the following,

These so-called faith healers, prosperity preachers and miracle workers are nothing but liars. But the worst lie these people could have ever made up is the lie of healing. Imagine telling someone you can heal them of some disease if they give you money, and if they do, they do not receive the promised healing, and what you do you tell them that they did not have enough faith (Henry, 2023, 13:50)

This was Henry's opinion after having played recordings of Benny Hinn. These recordings were taken on two occasions, one in 2019 and the other in 2022. The contradiction which Henry (2023) tries to depict is about the fact that Benny Hinn (2019) was seen to have made a public apology, stating,

I will tell you now something is going to shock you. It's an offence to the Lord; it's an offence to say, give \$1000. I think it's an offence to the Holy Spirit to put a price on the Gospel. I'm done with it. I will never again ask you to give \$1000 or whatever amount because the Holy Ghost is fed up with it. (Henry, 2023, 10:50)

Henry (2023) opines that it is conspicuous that these preachers use the technique of pseudo repentance when they realise that their schemes have been exposed. After that, they do the same Skeem, or worse, using a new approach or tactic. To reflect this, he plays a recorded live stream of Benny Hinn (2022) saying,

...and I tell you. If you want to be secured tomorrow, there is only one way. I just told you how the hand of diligence makes the rich. Be diligent with your giving. Be diligent with your sowing; God will bless you with money and ideas to make money, and he'll protect your investment.

And today, as you are listening to me, some of you are in trouble financially, and you don't know what to do. Well, I tell you what, the minute you and I will pray, I want you to sow a seed in honour of the Lord and watch what God will do. Prosperity is not an accident. We obey, and God moves.

Alright, now it's time to sow. Prosperity is not an accident. Prosperity is an act of faith. It's a decision we make. I'm going to believe, and I'm going to sow that seed even if it hurts a little bit... and then expect a miracle. (Henry, 2023, 11:27)

Peters (2023) condemns these Prosperity Gospel occurrences by saying that when wealth is gained from distorting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is a lot wrong with that. Whilst Mac Arthur (2023) takes it further to say it is equivalent to blasphemy because when these promised miracles and riches do not come for those who have promised them, after the sowing of seeds and immeasurable amounts of offerings, those who are wronged, no longer look at the pastor but instead at God. These acts result in them losing faith in God as they have been misled into thinking that these Prosperity Gospel teachings are that of God when, for the most part, they are a distortion of the Bible (Word of God) (Ibid).

Biyela (2022) proposed a regulatory framework within the Church to deal with these issues and hold accountable the perpetrators of such acts. However, Biyela (2022) cautions that it will take much work, given the rights of religious freedom and expression promulgated by the Republic of South Africa Constitution. Furthermore, this occurrence has caused division within the Church, where other denominations have tried to move away from these activities that are associated with them and thus try to differentiate themselves from the Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal denominations through practice and theology. By all means, there will be different approaches and differences in teachings and practices between denominations. However, these acts of commercialising religion are, by far, some of the unnecessary reasons for such differences. The uniqueness between denominations is supposed to unite the body of Christ and not divide at the expense of innocent souls who have been sold dreams as though Christianity is an auction meeting. These should be condemned with the highest contempt.

The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities Rights Commission (CRL Rights Commission) is a constitutional body established based on the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (the Constitution) and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities Act no. 19 of 2002 (CRL Act). The mandate of the CRL Rights Commission is to promote and protect communities' cultural, religious and linguistic rights. The

CRL Rights Act, 19 of 2002, empowers the CRL Rights Commission to monitor, investigate and research any issue concerning the rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic communities.

South Africa was and arguably still is faced with a growing phenomenon that has resulted from the proliferation of practices of public concern within the broader religious communities. In order for the Commission to undertake an investigative study regarding the commercialisation of religion and abuse of people's belief systems in South Africa, it adopted an investigation model which entailed a random sampling method to select random religious institutions/organisations, particularly in the Christian communities across South Africa and denominations. For these churches to be involved, they were summoned to appear at different sub-gatherings organised in the various provinces. The call to appear before the CRL Rights Commission was empowered by the provisions of the CRL Rights Act 19 of 2002, issued by issuing a summons (CRL Rights Commission. 2017: 8).

The appearances of leaders and representatives of religious organisations before the CRL Rights Commission caused a broad spectrum of issues to surface. These issues can be summed up, with particular mindfulness of the research at hand, in the following overarching themes as recorded in the CRL Rights Commission (2017, p. 20). Deliberate exploitation of the poor and vulnerable people because of the commercialisation of religious practices through an assumption of divine/missionary right to directly or indirectly solicit and receive gifts/offerings/tithes in cash or kind from their members (e.g. earnings, pension payouts, movable property, immovable property, etc.) without commitment to responsible financial management and accounting. Abuse of media privileges, such as using TV slots to advertise themselves or their faith or holy products and claims of healing powers for various illnesses and socio-economic challenges. Advertising products without complying with the SA legislation. Instigating/inviting/inspiring deification and hero-worship of church leaders by church members ("personality cult"); subjecting members to practices and rituals that evoke questions of human rights and ethics; Subjecting members to being controlled by extremists/fundamentalists, such as forbidding children to attend school, refusing to use banking facilities and keeping money collected in safes in the institutions, etc.; The use of personal bank accounts as the institutions' account; the assertion and justification of registering as private companies and earning funds as entertainers, not religious practitioners.

5.7 Conclusion

The chapter was geared towards ascertaining theological, biblical and social rationales for and against Prosperity Gospel in South Africa, consistent with one of the objectives of this study, which is to examine and analyse the biblical and theological arguments on how Prosperity Gospel limits the process of dismantling oppression through decolonisation to address the state of Poverty in South Africa. This was done to examine and analyse the biblical and theological arguments on how Prosperity Gospel limits the process of dismantling oppression through decolonisation to address the state of Poverty in South Africa. This was done by drawing from various sources such as videos, texts, and other crucial data sources. The next chapter focuses on the impact of Liberative Pastoral Theology.

CHAPTER SIX

Impact of Liberative Pastoral Theology

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was on ascertaining theological, biblical and social rationales for and against Prosperity Gospel in South Africa. This chapter is on the impact of liberative pastoral theology. In considering whether a pastoral theology toward the poor and downtrodden can be liberative, this chapter seeks to consider liberation theologies presented by the likes of James Cone, Olehile Buffel, Gustavo Gutierrez, Allan Boesak amongst others, but consider the same in the context of Pastoral action. Weaving in Poverty and Prosperity Gospel from previous chapters, the current chapter aims to construct a liberative Pastoral theology that addresses poverty in South Africa. According to liberation theologians, God is unequivocally on the side of the poor and oppressed (Buffel, 2018); the question in this chapter is whether this can be reconciled with a Prosperity Gospel and how far so. Further, it is to consider such perspective within the study of Pastoral Theology and in the mind of Osmer (2008). “For years people have been experiencing poverty always with you; but me ye have not always” (Matthew, 26: 8 – 9).

These are the words recorded to have been said by Jesus shortly before his crucifixion as a response to a concern by his disciples. A woman had come to Jesus with an alabaster jar of costly perfume, which she poured on his head as he reclined at the table in the home of Simone the Leper in Bethany. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.” (Genesis, 1: 28 – 30)

As Jesus mentioned above, the response is an emphatic expression of contextual reality in the world then and now.

“For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always.”¹²

The mistake made is the assumption that due to the statement above being recorded as having been said by Christ, the original divine intention for some humans may have been unto poverty. This is not the case, as the divine original intention was not unto poverty, and the same can be attested to

¹² Matthew, 26:11

by the bountiful nature of the Garden of Eden and the instruction to subdue the earth encapsulated in the book of Genesis (Genesis, 1: 28 – 30) inter alia. Despite not being the original divine intention, poverty, no matter how it can be addressed or how we respond to it, will always exist. This, however, does not mean it should not be accordingly addressed nor that there should not be actions towards responding to it.

There is an evident biblical premise of the role that needs to be played regarding poverty. For example, “He who is gracious and lends a hand to the poor lends to the Lord...” (Proverbs 19:17). This is an example that though Jesus dismissed the concern of the disciples in the formerly alluded scripture, it was purely based on the significance of the worship He was receiving before the ultimate crucifixion and not based on the nonexistence and unimportance of the work to be done in answering the question of poverty in the world. It is a further depiction that actions done to positively contribute to the lives of those in poverty are tantamount to collaboration with the Lord. The assertion that such action is an act of lending to the Lord speaks to the severity of poverty and the call to action against it. The aim of this chapter is thus in line with one of the objectives of this study, namely, to construct a liberative Pastoral theology that addresses poverty in South Africa.

OBJECTIVE THREE: *To construct a liberative Pastoral theology that addresses poverty in South Africa*

6.2 An Interdisciplinary Approach to Pastoral Theology

To discourse 'Liberative Pastoral Theology' in addressing poverty in South Africa, we need to understand what Pastoral Theology is before we can know how it can be liberative.

Intentionally, it is paramount to understand first what practical theology can be described as. According to Hawks (1989, pp. 30-39), Practical Theology is the critical study of contemporary activities and experiences of Christians and the Church about God's will and purpose for them. The study may also involve concepts, ideas, beliefs, convictions, attitudes, and worldviews, as these affect experiences and behaviour. The purpose is to understand, predict, and revise practice to enhance Christians and the Church. Pastoral theology is a practical theology but with a narrower focus on the role of Christian leaders. As pastoral theology, it reflects theologically on "pastoring" or "shepherding" the flock. Authors often use the terms practical and pastoral theology interchangeably, and there is enough common ground between them to merit this. However, more

is needed to cover the gist of these terms defined separately. Thus, all pastoral theology can be deemed practical as it falls under that umbrella. However, not all practical theology is pastoral theology. There will be references driving the distinction and clarifying theology more precisely when discussing pastoral theology in literature. De Roest (2019, p. 98) suggests that many practical theologians wanted to overcome the dichotomy between Church and society. One opines that there should essentially be no dichotomy because the establishment of the Church is centred around its aimed influence on the society in which it finds itself. The understanding that pastoral theology is streamlined to mainly focus on such Practical theology tasks in the hands of the Christian leaders who possess a shepherding role is a useful understanding in aims to ascertain a more implementable consideration of the question at hand, which regards prosperity gospel, a gospel perpetrated directly by the Christian leaders. When we carefully examine this perspective of broadened understanding of practical theology yet zoom into pastoral theology in this sense, we eliminate the cumbersome task of answering all things relating to combating untoward results of the prosperity gospel. However, we take a more attainable trajectory, particularly in so far as this thesis is concerned.

It has been established that poverty is not only a socio-economic issue but, more broadly, a sociological issue requiring sociological analysis and relevant actions against it. Van de Watt (2018, p. 756) mentions that the essential content of pastoral theological reflection differs from systematic theology specifically because it includes reflection on concrete situations, case studies or churchly practices. Pastoral theology includes normative, dogmatic reflection. However, it also includes interdisciplinary reflection, e.g., by comparing theological, sociological, philosophical, and psychological perspectives. He critiques this approach by stating that much of the pastoral theology published during the latter half of the twentieth century was organised around a psychological interpretation of the human experience. Because of this, the focus on God, as the primary subject matter of pastoral theology, became vague in some ways. Van de Watt's (2018) contribution brings a relevant discourse to the interdisciplinary nature of theology, particularly pastoral theology. One deduces from his statement that in the twentieth century, the psychological approach, though having brought interpretation of the holistic human experience, needed to be improved in what should be the primary subject in pastoral theology. In other words, as a study of God, theology aims to be multidisciplinary and focused on genuinely understanding human experience. It should not lose sight of the more profound understanding of God in the pastoral task.

This is not merely a twentieth-century issue but a continual one. Perhaps if we are to look at it more 'correctly', it is not an issue that theology be organised around psychological and other interpretations of the human experience because even the primary subject matter, God, is multifaceted and multidimensional. Suppose humans are made in his image (Genesis, 1:26 NLT). Why, then, would there not be the need to have a multifaceted and multidimensional approach to understanding humans and providing the necessary response to their human experience in interdisciplinary theology, more precisely, an interdisciplinary approach to Pastoral Theology?

In reflecting on Muller's (1991, p. 1) Eco-hermeneutical pastoral care, it is identified that sociocultural and socio-political structures are of central importance to theology and not of peripheral importance. This is why he coined the term 'eco-hermeneutical' pastoral care to address the need for the pastoral task to be described as two-fold, being 'Ecosystemic' on the one hand and 'hermeneutical' on the other. The latter emphasises understanding, and the former refers to the broadest possible system or network of systems. According to YourMatter (2020), an ecosystem is simply a community or group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment. Considering such a definition in a sociological context would be to place the human not as some abstract entity or being but one in and amongst societies, communities and other humans and beings. This also includes considering their living circumstances (economic, family structure, personal relationships etc.), cultures and other religions in that particular context. This is to say that, over and above understanding, there needs to be the facilitation of holistic growth (in terms of the ecosystem) for one or an entire people (community).

Looking at this contribution further, we see a step in the pastoral task towards understanding the subject, which is the person or a community of people. In being mindful of the sociological, psychological, and philosophical human experience, the understanding element is explored in great depth. This does not place the theological reflection outside of the human experience as a disconnected 'ology' but one that fully unveils the elements of the complete human ecosystem. We have already discussed the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of God. In likening this interdisciplinary approach referred to above, we can look mainly at the journey walked by Jesus Christ, one of the persons of the Godhead. Even as He was God, we can learn from His actions to understand the pastoral task. He went to communities, understood the afflicted, impoverished,

oppressed and sick, lived among them and could see and experience their pains. The miracles He performed were not performed in a vacuum. The miracles were an expressive response to the lived realities and experiences of the people of the time, including the reality of impoverishment and captivity. To this end, in Luke, 4:18, Jesus Christ reiterates a prophetic word captured and articulated by the Prophet Isaiah way before His arrival on earth by saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,". Such prophecy is further captured in the book of Isaiah, 61:1.

This lesson learnt from Jesus Christ reminds one of the "Cura animarum", which can be explained as the 'cure-of-souls' tradition'. It broadly refers to ordained Christian leaders who bring the faith community's resources, love and wisdom to meet people's needs. However, it can also be offered by any church representative who embodies its values and is committed to God in capacities other than traditional church leadership offices. Though Pastoral care is a wing of pastoral theology, it does not take centre stage in the current research. However, it shows that the arm of 'doing' is mainly about 'restorative doing' as it will form part of a lengthier engagement in the latter part of this chapter. Notably, not all helping acts of mercy, love, and charity can be called pastoral care. Clebsch and Jaekle (1964) suggest that the content of care includes the four main pastoral functions, i.e. healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. They specify precise content for care within a faith community. Thus, pastoral care is aimed at "troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns." (Clebsch and Jaekle, 1964, p. 4).

The aim is to look at the Pastoral task and pastoral theology holistically to respond to the appropriate response to poverty in South Africa on the backdrop of a colonial or apartheid history. Being mindful of the elaboration by Clebsch and Jaekle (1964) means that pastoral care is an inevitable part of such a task, as the same concerns trouble people precisely. At this juncture, we have located pastoral theology as a subdiscipline of practical theology and pastoral care as one of the arms of pastoral theology.

6.3 A Liberative Pastoral Task: Coining a Restorative Preaching and Doing

Practical theology is to play a fundamental role within our communities as a domain which still holds a particular influence in society today. Despite the controversy and scepticism surrounding the Church's role in society, there remains a Pastoral task and duty expected of the Church, whether

by believers or people in general, through collaborative works within government or direct initiatives and outreach in various communities. 'From a liberation perspective, the primary task of practical theology is not to serve the Church, but to serve society, and to liberate oppressed communities' (de Roest. 2019, p. 98).

Leeman (2021) frames the collaborative role in church-state relations when stating, "God has given the power of the sword to governments and the power of the keys to churches, and he intends for them to work separately but cooperatively toward the greater end of worship". Often, it is forgotten that the Church's role is fundamentally not unto herself but unto mission, and such mission is toward the will and principles of God through his written Word, the Bible, and revelation from that place. It can be said that practical theologies are not only to address the four walls of the Church but are to address, more so, the lived realities of societies in which those four walls find themselves. The role of Practical Theology is to use the Bible as a fundamental resource to address some of the world's challenges. It is, in essence, the utilisation of theological analysis of the scriptures, applying such understanding to realities to reach the goals of God and His salvation.

The pastoral cycle model introduced by Osmer (2008, p. 4) deals with practical theology's four tasks as a method to do practical theological research. The use of the model in this research is in the manner introduced by Osmer, which is to analyse the following steps carefully;

A descriptive-empirical task, 'What is going on?':

(This is an enquiry into a better understanding of particular episodes, situations, or contexts, which involves gathering the necessary information.)

Response: Firstly, we see Poverty in South Africa, but such poverty is not necessarily being addressed by what is presented to us as a ticket out of poverty within Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa, namely Prosperity Gospel. In this instance, reality and poverty of the mind have been identified as the first situation faced in Africa. Secondly, an "I Receive" phenomenon dates the re-conceptualised state of poverty even further within our communities. This can be described as a potentially unsound doctrine about prosperity within the Christian Church, capitalising on the vulnerability of the already downtrodden. It impoverishes the congregants while those in leadership become enriched at their expense, and it fails to address the underlying causes of poverty in the South African context.

Interpretive task, 'Why is this going on?'

(This is how to enter into a dialogue with the social sciences to interpret and explain why specific actions and patterns are taking place.)

Response: In this instance, the elaborative lamentations of politicised accounts of poverty and colonial modernity have been undertaken. We have identified Africans as being at a constant uphill climb, and no matter how many rescue troops could be sent to attempt a rescue during this climb, the methods are futile. Futile because the intervention is limited to what looks to be the issue when, time and again, the root cause has been addressed but has yet to be given much airtime. They say don't build a house on sandy land; rather, you must 'build it on a rock' as per Matthew, 7: 24-25. We, therefore, note through this research that, in dealing with the issues of poverty in South Africa, we cannot divorce Africa from its socio-political identity. Coloniality is a reality we cannot ignore. Prosperity Gospel cannot fully address the issue of poverty because its core teaching has nothing to do with the consideration of socio-political and socio-economic issues in the societies it is presented.

A Normative task, 'What ought to be going on?':

(This would raise normative questions from the perspectives of theology, ethics, and other fields.)

Response: Though it has been established that poverty will always exist, it cannot entirely be extinguished. Such was not supposed to be a reality that strips persons of their human status. God's intended position, as from creation, sees all created humans be seen in His likeness and in a position to dominate the earth as instructed. What ought to be going on is this aforesaid very reality, without any one race or culture viewing another as more superior and worthy of dominating, enslaving, colonising, afflicting and regulating, to the extent of stripping the human to be categorised outside of humanness, a mere thing.

A Pragmatic task, 'How might we respond?':

This shall be engaged more fully through the possible liberative contribution that can be made by the Church independently and through collaborative works within society to address poverty in

South Africa. Keeping in mind what ought to be going on, a theological perspective of God's original intention for humans, and the implored duty and call to answer to the poverty phenomenon, there needs to be an interdisciplinary approach to a scrutinization of the poverty dilemma in South Africa and a further development of the sound doctrine about how poverty is to be dealt, keeping in mind the Prosperity topic and biblical interpretation of same. This approach ensures the restoration of the human from having been stripped of identity through various oppressive rules.

The starting point and the reason for the lamentations above is the understanding of the status quo to the location of poverty in colonial Africa and the resulting agenda of colonial modernity in Africa. This understanding of poverty in its re-conceptualised state reveals the need to prioritise the inclusive biblical intention of the human as a way to humanise the downtrodden. Interrogating the human activity of a people who live in, with and through impoverishment as defined has pointed us in the direction of realising the coat of the non-human, which has covered those whom God had intended as human. According to Graham (2009, p. 14), Pastoral theology must embody a renewed vision of being human. The call to unveil that coat and restore the core position of the human is a long process of uprooting. This process of uprooting is not simply a theological task but a multidisciplinary task that takes cognisance of the psychological, philosophical, sociological, and other steps. Taking this approach and centring it on God and the knowledge of Him, being mindful of His intention for humans, is a fundamental Pastoral task, the nature of which is liberating. In doing this, I coin an essential approach in liberative pastoral theology, namely, 'Restorative Preaching and Doing' towards a liberating end.

Boesak (2020, p. 2) draws a valuable contribution from Biko (2017) in addressing the categorised, dehumanised and racially designated by South Africa's apartheid regime in understanding liberation as being of;

'Paramount importance in the concept of Black Consciousness, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage. We want to attain the envisioned self, which is a free self.'
(Biko, 2017, p. 53)

This contribution suggests that Biko (2017) referred to the freedom to express ourselves as complete. This meant the freedom to be "completely and fully human" (Ibid). He further looks at

a Christian viewpoint by drawing from the book of Genesis (Genesis, 1: 26), where created humans are said to be created in the image or likeness of God, 'and that such was a reference to what he refers to as an 'aberration from the "normal" which is white'(Boesak, 2022). This further implies that being created in God's image cannot, therefore, mean the standard of the 'human' can or should be limited to a particular racial group. I would add that this act of reducing all created humans to only be qualifiable as human if they are a specific, categorised and superior-used race group would be an insult to a sovereign God. Maimela (1993, p. 55) opines that it is human beings and not Gods who are the creators of exploitative structures; it was then just a matter of time before modern historical consciousness would reach the momentous conclusion, namely, some people are oppressed and suffer because they have been denied by the ruling elite the right to become architects of their destiny. In other words, what is new in this situation is the awareness by oppressed groups and individuals that they are not poor by accident or on account of laziness on their part. However, instead, they are made poor and dependent by their human oppressors, who deny them a voice in the shaping of human society and history.

Maimela (1998, p. 118) takes it a step further in stating,

God is not a neutral God but a thoroughly biased God who is always taking the side of the oppressed, the weak, and of the exploited, the hungry, the homeless and the scum of society. (Buffel, 2018, p. 2)

There is a further helpful assertion by Boesak (2020) in that he looks at our freedom, particularly post-Apartheid freedom and in the South African context, in the eyes of the incarnation of God in Christ, who became human to identify more closely with us (human species). He alludes to the fact that Christ did not merely take on the image of a human, but he went further in taking up the form of an enslaved person, 'identifying with what was regarded as the lowest of the low' (Philippians, 2: 6-8). This reference made known to all that the presence of God on earth through His son Jesus Christ was a reflection of not only His mindfulness of all people, enslaved people included, but His willingness to come to them to address their needs, and He revealed Himself as a liberator (Ibid). In discussing the practical implications of the liberative option to have a preference towards the sufferings of the poor in the South African context, Buffel (2018) concurs with Martey (1993, p. 98) that such conscientisation efforts must endeavour to champion and mobilise the poor and oppressed to take a concrete stand against "poverty, oppression and suffering

and join the God of Exodus and of Jesus the Christ (the liberator) to become instruments of their liberation".

If people see how God originally intended, human abuses, such as some of the practices in prosperity gospel movements, would be challenging to pursue. It should be taken upon the Christian community to protect persons from those abuses, as they are usually pointing to a deeper issue of false doctrine and, therefore, an inevitable continuation of other more grievous abuse. We need to include the doer in our considerations of this phenomenon. What can be conceived as the motive and enforcer of the perpetrators of these abuses of religion for commercial and social gain?

Again, we see a reference to Jesus Christ as the depiction of the Pastoral Task and posture to be held. If He, as God, in the form of a human, could understand the communities and their human experience, revealing Himself as a liberator, how much more is the Pastoral duty to continually foster liberation? According to Aguilar Ramírez and de Beer (2020), Liberation theology methodology is not merely applicable to liberation theology but can be applied to all theology. It is revealed to us that one of the essentials of Christian theology is liberation; therefore, the inevitable same is true for the Pastoral Theologian. What, therefore, is to be liberated?

It is paramount that there is an understanding of an underlying system in order to understand how to respond to it. The systems outlined in my latter analysis of poverty re-conceptualised are so embedded in our society, and for them to be challenged, they must be understood. When we understand those systems, we understand the ecosystem in which the people from whom we have a pastoral duty originate. It should be part of the Church's role to analyse society through the eyes of the systems that prevail in that society. In other words, theology should be done in context and not as some aloof concept far from lived experiences. Buffel (2018) thus says that context and its impact on shaping theological discourse or reflection and pastoral ministry or actions must be considered. In the same breath, Nolan and Broderick (1987, p. 12) maintain that all theology has always been contextual. In concurring with Buffel's (2018) view, there is still a need to "do theology" in the context of poverty in South Africa.

In articulating what influences his theological perspective on poverty, Naidoo (2005, p. 3) refers to the book of Isaiah Chapter 61, verse 1, where Prophet Isaiah alludes to the reasons for the anointing to preach the good news to the poor by emphasising the following;

We are to bind up the broken-hearted in providing and caring for those in despair and hopelessness. Moreover, we are to proclaim freedom for the captives. This freedom is directly referring to the year of Jubilee in Leviticus 25:10, where we learn of the laws that God put in place to free people who had fallen into economic difficulty and, as a result, ended up in slavery in their attempt to survive. The celebration of the Jubilee marked a time of replenishment and restoration that God instituted, ensuring that the rich would not get richer, and the poor would not get poorer. (Naidoo, 2005, p. 3)

These accounts of the year of Jubilee and the Good News reveal God's nature of justice and equality. Any act that corrodes his created aim, which seeks to have all humans as human, by such creation being rendered as unqualifiable to be human or viewed as non-human due to another self-proclaimed superior, is an act worthy of championing against. Jean-Marie Hyacinthe Quenum (2021, p. 1) opines that African Christian theology has addressed the problems of post-colonial societies by retrieving traditions of hope and solidarity and inserting them afresh within the cultural context of the African Churches. He identifies that the African Church's challenges within the context of post-colonial statehood are that of mass socio-economic poverty, further alluding that even the Church herself depends on outside help (Ibid, p. 3). The practical struggles resulting from poverty in Africa can mean the need to restore hope but such attempts at restoring hope alone through theological avenues is not far-reaching to be had by the Church. One would opine that Practical Theologians, and the Church in Africa should not be limited to restoring hope but to capacitating and developing Africans to partake in the marketplace and, essentially, in the economy. At the core, instead of the "it is possible to get out of poverty" mission, Africans need a "how to get out of poverty" mission.

Muller, Cloete, and Van Schalkwyk (2017) observed that Africa is in an in-between space. Africans struggle with residual colonial powers (coloniality), business and economic oppressing powers (tyranny of imposed global forces on Africa), competing Western and African philosophies, and many other challenges. Therefore, Practical Theology in Africa should reflect and engage these issues to be relevant. The process is thus one that does not merely touch the surface but goes deep to the roots. Hope alone would touch the surface, but the capacitation and development of people aware of how their present conditions arose would be a more far-reaching, deep-root approach.

It should be borne in mind that preaching and doing must be part of a process of poverty alleviation by the Church. In coining what is referred to as restorative preaching, quite often when we speak of restoration being preached, reference is made to the scripture of the locust at Joel, 2: 25, where assurance is made that the Lord will restore that which the locust had consumed. Restorative preaching in the context at play in this paper is not about restoring a sinner to righteousness, nor is it the gift of salvation unto the formerly cast out; neither is it about restoring lost assets per se. The point in contention here is the restoration of the one who had but, due to the locust, had not, and because of Adonai (God), can then have again, possibly more bountifully. The duty for restorative preaching is located not in the asset but in the human. Put better for purposes of this context. It is the restoration of the one who "was fully human" but, due to the locust (powers that be and resultant systems of such powers", saw themselves as never being 'human' but because Adonai (God) can fully be restored to a system and reality of humanness, a state of liberation. This restorative preaching has little to do with preaching about the limited economic connotation of poverty. However, it may inevitably result in its address, but it has everything to do with positioning, more precisely, the human. For many years, the poor, marginalised, dispossessed, and oppressed of this world have been in poverty of the mind in that they have been conditioned to be less than, to the extent of being un-human. Restorative preaching is preaching to restore humanness through liberation theologies and to rehumanise. Might it be born in mind further that restorative preaching is not just that but should be inclusive of the extended hand of doing, thus being read as "restorative preaching... 'and doing'".

Both victimiser and victim experience "erosion of one's humane responses" and the "perception of others as not being worthy of similar respect and worth" (Oelofsen, 2009, p. 102). The matrix of dehumanisation incorporates a posture that one must "dehumanise those" who are "perceived" to threaten one's existence (Maiese, 2012).

Houser (2019, p. 49) examines dehumanisation from the biblical and theological context. She looks at the concept of the *imago Dei*, which can be described in two ways: firstly, it is God's self-actualisation through humankind, and secondly, it is his care for humankind. She points out how Bonhoeffer (1997, p. 84) unveiled the concept by stating that if humans are created in the *imago Dei*, it construes that one is who they are because of their Creator, and thus, they are free to be what they are. One is considered a free creature and must, therefore, be that. This means that God

essentially bestows sacred trust of free volition within humankind. The Holy of Holies, within each person, finds expression in God-given sacred trust of free will. He allows each human, as created in the imago Dei, to choose a specific expression of volition. God invests humankind with the sacred trust of free volition. Hence, exercising free will creates an aperture for either rehumanising or dehumanising processes among humankind. Remember that this free will is not exercised in a vacuum. There is a relation to the free will bestowed on humans with the original intention of God to be in oneness with His people. When there is reference to the imago Dei, there is an interconnection that is made in understanding where the human is placed in all created things, and that position is that which centres God as his/her source. This leads us to look more closely at God's original intention for humanity. In the second chapter of the book of Genesis, there is a description of where the humans were placed. It is described as a Garden of (or in) Eden, filled with bountifulness in that there was enough food, water, and the like for those placed there to dominate fully. I am reminded of a sermon by Pastor Badibanga, Lead Pastor of Bryanston Bible Church in Johannesburg, delivered on the 7th of May 2023 and spoke of this very scripture. In his sermon, he first outlines how much grace God has extended to humankind for entrusting us with looking after what he so excellently created, which shows His heart for humanity.

The point he was conveying, however, was concerning the location of the Garden of Eden. He mentions that this garden is one in a location overflowing with many streams of water coming in and out of the garden. When looking at an ancient worldview of this symbolic reality, it is revealed that where there are bodies of water that give life and abundance and are conducive to life, they point to a divine presence. This divine presence is interpreted to mean the presence of God. Through the view of the very beginning of scripture, Badibanga (2023) opines that 'human beings were created to dwell in God's presence', and the same is substantiated by scripture. The next occurrence, also seen in Genesis, is of Eve succumbing to the serpent's deceit and eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil, further convincing Adam to eat too. This marked contamination of humankind caused great division between humankind and their God. This is an example of this free will, which was bestowed to remember God's will as the source of one's life. To further emphasise that God's original intention was toward constant fellowship with His created people, we see Him bringing Jesus Christ as a restorative measure. "He gave himself in the incarnation of Christ to live a sinless life among humankind, die for their sins, resurrect, and ascend to heaven (1 Corinthians, 15: 3-4; 1 Timothy, 3:16)" (Houser, 2019, p. 50). With this in mind, one is reminded

of a scripture in John 15 where Jesus Christ speaks of how God is the vinedresser, and He (Jesus) is the true vine. In verse 5 of that scripture, He says, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." With great emphasis on the part of this scripture which states that without Him (Jesus), we cannot do anything and that in this relationship, the Father is the cultivator, the pruner and the trainer and that we should rely on this relationship in order to be able to do anything in this created earth. This reinforces the need for fellowship and the relationship that human beings are to have with God.

Bonhoeffer (1997) weaves these ideas skilfully by saying,

The refusal of God's eternal purpose of relational existence displays itself in the actions of Adam and Eve when they singularly violated divinely given sacred trust through treasonous activity. God created them with free volition to live governed by and subject to His rule. Rather than live this theonomous existence, they negotiated a way that refused relationality with God. Their chosen journey led to estrangement from God, the self, one another, and the environment. They allowed themselves to "be pushed off the track" from outside sources rather than experiencing relational life where "God is at the centre" of everything (Bonhoeffer 1997: 84).

Now that we have walked through the intent of God for humankind, which reveals to us how far the oppressed and impoverished are from and even how far the perpetrator is from that place (though in entirely different ways), it causes a reimagining of a different cause of events should a Pastoral task have a foundation of God's original intention for humankind. The intent should be dehumanisation through restoring the fellowship of God and His people and, in turn, influencing relations between human beings and each other. Pastoral theology should be mindful of the core components of Christianity in its preaching and doing. As mentioned in the discussion about the tarnishing of the Church's image in Chapter Four herein and how it hinders the Church's role in society, it is paramount to look closely at this impact in light of one of the core functions of the Church, Soul winning. It cannot be ignored that there is a great commission to do the following, according to Matthew, 28: 19-20;

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." (New King James Version [NKJV], 1982, Matthew 28:19-20)

If then, there is a great commission to go out to society and make disciples of all the nations, it implies that there is a duty as the Church to ensure the Church continues to uphold a certain reflection, true to that which was taught in the work of Jesus Christ in His walk on earth. This would mean keeping an actual image of the Christ we wish to bring into the world. This is hindered when there are abuses of power by those entrusted to the pastor and essentially to Shepard, the flock. The situation is worsened when the Church cannot self-correct these gross misrepresentations, leading to a proliferation like wildfire, which is captured by various media platforms as though it forms a cornerstone of Christianity or the Church. A pastoral task, therefore, innately endeavours towards the Church's growth through various means for the heeding of the call to make disciples of all nations and cultivating an environment where God's relationship with created humans through His salvation.

In constructing a theology of poverty, Shank (1990) proposes that there are three fundamental biblical concepts which unite "preaching "and the "poor". These point to Jesus' reiteration of His anointing to preach the Good News to the poor and, therefore, give a reflection of the mind of God in the approach to be had in addressing poverty. The concepts are broken down extensively by Shank (1990), and one converses with these as follows;

Unity in God's Love:

This is to say that when we preach the Good News to the poor, it results in finding unity in God's Love. Shank (1990) establishes a need to centre our preaching and doing on the love of God; if such love is not sensed in such preaching or in such doing, no matter how profound a sermon can be or how much outreach can be undertaken, such preaching cannot be qualifiable as the Gospel or the Good News. Many efforts to help people are only helpful when they sense love. Despite the efforts to create programmes to feed and develop the people, such efforts are only possible when they sense love. Shank (1990) asserts that,

God's love finds expression in verbal presentations of the Gospel and physical assistance to the poor. Both the speaker's love and the message's content are Good News. Love of the giver and the

gift offered are Good News; To divorce love from the Good News tears out the heart of scripture. (Shank, 1990:3)

Love as fuel toward a pastoral theology of liberation is notably fundamental in uniting preaching and people with low incomes. Preaching for the liberation of the poor and oppressed is futile when we do not love the poor and oppressed. A biblical instruction requires that all that is done be done with love (Corinthians 16:14 NKJV). Cone (2011), in a reflection on the work of the cross and suffering, alludes that "we must see that love is the motive, but justice is the instrument".

Unity in God's Grace:

This refers to preaching the Good News to the poor who find unity in God's Grace. God calls His people to serve the poor under the acknowledgement that all are without merit. When those we seek to preach the Good News do not sense the grace of God as we do, we are missing the mark in heeding the call to go and make disciples of all nations. How can we speak of the graceful one and call all to Him if they do not sense our likeness to Him in the grace they sense in us? Shank (1990) practicalities this point on grace by saying the following;

God's love is free. It is not earned. God is not obligated to give us anything. It is free. It is a gift. It does not come because we earn it deserve it, or qualify for it. It comes because he loved us. No one is worthy of God's love. Not people experiencing poverty. Not the rich. Not the lost. Not the saved. Out of this understanding of receiving something for free, we help others...; it is a matter of one who has received something undeserved helping another who receives something undeserved.

When we have this mentality in mind, it leads to pride and the belief and thought that one's life can be more valuable than another's. When we understand grace, we reject pride and refrain from boastfulness (Ephesians 2:8-9). This draws us back to the discussion on the act of dehumanisation, where one category of persons thought themselves to be superior to the other and, in their superiority, thought to categorise another as unhuman. The Bible proverb that those who fear the LORD hate evil, and in naming what he (King Solomon) referred to as the evil he hates, he mentions hate pride and arrogance, corruption, and perverse speech (Proverbs 8:13 NLT). Proverbs 11 verse 2 states that when pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. Pride is distasteful and seeks to make the proud think their sovereignty surpasses God's. To think

of self as superior and, through conquest, impose a reality which God did not intend for one's gain is tantamount to bringing insult to God's original intention for humankind. By implication, poverty (as oppression) comes about when the people, incredibly the rich and the mighty, fail to observe the precepts of God (Nnamani, 2000).

Unity in God's Salvation:

Preaching the Good News to the poor finds unity in God's Salvation. If preaching is not about the work of Calvary, the act of Jesus suffering to die on the cross, resurrect and ascend into heaven, then it is not preaching the Good News. Jesus came with Good News for people experiencing poverty, and the Good News about eternal life directly applies to poverty (Shank, 1990).

6.4 A Liberative Pastoral Task: Social Development

According to Browning, the rebirth of practical theology has been called for by focusing on practical reasons to face existential problems in social reconstruction (Browning, 1991:2-4;10-11,15). Practical theology should thus function at the centre of the social or cultural context, where the theologian and the Church mediate the Gospel. There is a need to caution for a tendency of culture to determine what is normative in reality apart from God's self-revelation (Anderson, 2001:21,26). However, most contemporary societies still need to improve theological reflection and pastoral action. This reflects a gap that needs to be filled, in that theological reflection is not merely to serve that purpose of reflection, but such reflection should extend an olive branch through pastoral action. An interesting perspective is that presented by Kgatle (2017) on collaborative efforts that can be undertaken by the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in working with the South African government to address the challenge of poverty in post-1994. The AFM is identified as one of the largest Pentecostal groups in South Africa. Therefore, considering such an approach would be worthwhile in the research herein. Before looking at these collaborative works, Kgatle (2017) expresses the vastness of poverty and how it can be defined or classified, particularly Poverty Reality.

We are given an idea of what the AFM has done to combat poverty through various welfare programs. He reflects on the good works done by one of their national flagship projects, Mephi, which was established to deal with distressed children. The project is categorised into groups such as Street children, Maltreated and sexually abused children, abandoned children, and infants saved

from abortion. Through one of their programmes, Africa Cares for Life, they run pregnancy care/crisis centres and homes for unwed mothers. In response to the increasing social problems of orphans with AIDS, the AFM is running a programme, 'AIDS orphans', to help these children.

Kgatle (2017) then proposes entrepreneurship as one of the mechanisms for collaborating with the government and categorises this into three main contributions: a sowing church, a sharing church, a storing church, and a selling church. This would mean the following suggestions. Firstly, the local assemblies in the rural areas, for example, can engage in agricultural projects to alleviate poverty. This kind of project, he comments, can employ many women from the local assembly on the one hand and deal with hunger on the other. On the other hand, he proposes that the local assemblies in the AFM should start the Soup Kitchen projects to feed those hungry. The community will perceive the AFM not as the Church that takes from them but as the Church that gives to them (Kgatle, 2017)

A key contribution of Kgatle (2017) is moral edification, whereby he identifies corruption as another cause of poverty. In order to alleviate poverty, the AFM needs to support morality in society, which I concur with to such an extent as proposing the capacity of congregants to participate in socio-political and governance structures in the country. Having grown up in the Pentecostal Church, certain teachings prevented believers from participating in politics, governance, and institutions that involved any socio-political discourse or discussion-making. Though it was frowned upon, there have been efforts to educate believers on the significance of their presence in all seven spheres of influence: family, religion, education, media, entertainment, business and government. Though the purpose of this research is not to delve into these, there is a need to emphasise the need for these spaces to be occupied by believers amongst other people. There is a particular influence on moral edification that is to be perpetuated in these various governmental and other structures to ensure sound decision-making, which puts the people first and ensures a liberation of South Africans and an alleviation of poverty mission. This role needs to be taught as a pastoral task through preaching and done through capacity-building structures by the Church and in possible partnership with these governmental structures.

Moreover, according to Wilson and Letsosa (2014, p. 1), eradicating material poverty is not simply a matter of making more and better provisions available but also of expanding participation so that young people might fulfil their roles in the society where they belong. What would make such

possible, would be a collaboration of industries coupled with an understanding that practical theology is not to be confined only within the church. Miller-McLemore (2012, p. 20) comprehensively describes Practical Theology as referring to four distinct enterprises with different audiences or objectives by stating that Practical Theology is (1) the activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in everyday life, (2) a method or way of analysing theology in practice used by religious leaders and by teachers and students across the theological curriculum, (3) a curricular area in theological education focused on ministerial practice and sub specialities, and (4) an academic discipline pursued by a smaller subset of scholars to support and sustain these first three enterprises.

She notes that each aspect of Practical Theology points to different locations, from daily life to the library, fieldwork to classroom, congregation and community, academic guild and global context. Though all may be intertwined and interdependent, it is the latter that is often overlooked and neglecting the latter would make the theology redundant and irrelevant. The role of practical theology in addressing poverty is the trajectory of practical theology, which centralises restorative preaching and doing towards a liberative end. In the discussion, White and Tiongco (1997, pp. 11-29) observe four stages involved in the process of theology and development, which is noteworthy as a manner in which Restorative preaching and doing in addressing poverty is to be approached.

These stages are:

(1) the need to encounter the poor; (2) understanding why they are poor; (3) through reflection, making a critical judgement whether or not our interpretation corresponds with reality; and lastly, (4) planning and implementing the strategies to bring about the required changes. (White and Tiongco, 1997: 11-29).

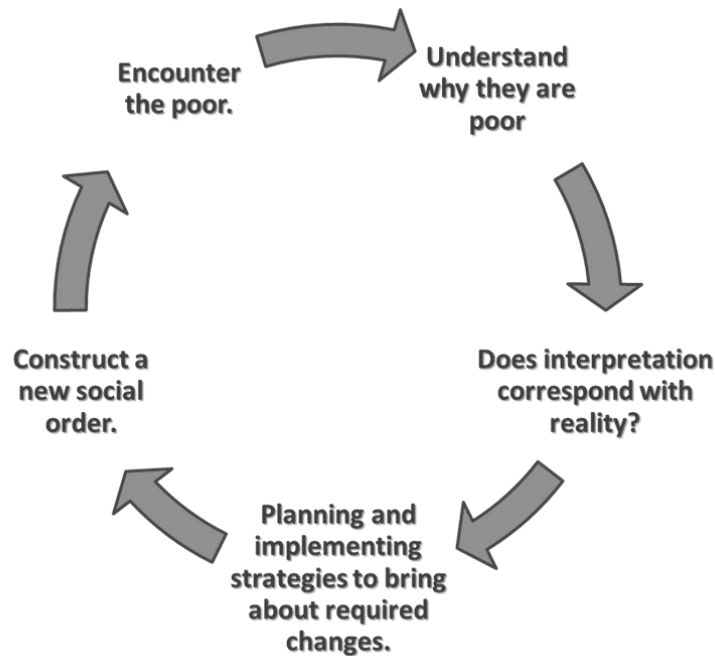


Figure 4: White and Tiongco's Four Stages of Theology and Development

In the fourth stage, planning and implementing the strategies to bring about the required changes, which we have identified as restorative preaching and doing towards a liberating end, would be crucial.

It is notable, therefore, that Gutierrez (1983, p. 45) articulates a profound point that eradicating poverty is not a generous relief action but a demand that we go and construct a new social order. That new social order needs to be constructed through a pastoral task.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to construct a Liberative Pastoral Theology that addresses Poverty in South Africa. In doing so, Osmer's Pastoral Cycle model was used to address the study's pending query. It then considered an interdisciplinary approach to Pastoral Theology, which looked at how Pastoral Theology, though located in the Practical Theology discipline, needs to consider sociological, psychological and other contextual realities. This led to a consideration of a liberative pastoral task, which coined restorative preaching and doing. Further, this chapter is considered a

liberative pastoral task that uses social development within the Church. The last chapter, which is to come, will serve as a conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

General Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The former chapter was centred on data presentation and analysis, particularly in line with objective three of this research. That objective sought to construct a liberative Pastoral theology addressing South African poverty. This consideration resulted from the exploration of poverty in South Africa, the backdrop of its oppressive account, and whether Prosperity Gospel is addressing this reality. This chapter attempts to construct a conclusion which firstly highlights the key data findings of the study and, secondly, the recommendations of the study. As part of the tasks of this chapter, the limitations of the research will be considered, and the future research gap and potential that this research has unveiled will be deduced.

7.2 Key Data Findings

The study was conducted with a particular concern for the alarming levels of poverty in South Africa whilst also realising the commercialisation of religion, through Prosperity Gospel especially. In considering the poverty question more deeply, there was an established nexus between the reality of poverty in South Africa and Coloniality. The idea that people have been liberated due to political power by way of the democratic dispensation has masked the mandate of coloniality, which still rears its ugly head. Poverty's persistence in Africa is deeply rooted in colonial histories and requires systemic and interdisciplinary approaches to address. Contrary to popular belief and possibly appropriation, the prosperity gospel, while often linked to Pentecostalism, has deeper roots in the Holiness movement and Wesleyan doctrines. In South Africa, its expression within neo-Pentecostalism intertwines with socioeconomic and psychological factors, with controversial practices and reliance on charismatic leaders. This theology has been revealed to reflect a broader shift in African Christianity, blending indigenous beliefs with Pentecostal teachings.

One of the aims of the study was to examine and analyse the biblical and theological arguments on how Prosperity Gospel limits the process of dismantling oppression through decolonisation in order to address the state of Poverty in South Africa. The study established that the nature of colonisation is oppressive, and levels of extreme poverty are a consequence of oppressed and

dehumanised people who are landless yet have been exposed to commercialisation and modernity. The study revealed that Prosperity Gospel and its theology promises material success, health, and happiness as rewards for faith and monetary contributions (Bowler, 2018). It advocates for faith expressed through positive declarations and donations to the church. The core of the belief is that salvation includes freedom from poverty and sickness and that material wealth and physical well-being are seen as God's will for believers. On the other hand, the study revealed critics of this belief in that it Encourages materialism and commercializes religion (Gitonga, 2011). It is often criticised for failing to address social issues and economic inequality which is considered a contextual approach (Maxwell, 1998; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). One of the takeaways of this study is that there are different views on Prosperity Gospel Fierce Proponents consider prosperity as a covenant for all Christians where the faith of the Christian is evidenced through material success. There is a practice of financial offerings as essential for receiving blessings (Soboyejo, 2016). The other view is of Fierce Opponents which often critique the proponents by stating that their theology isa distortion of the gospel which promotes materialism and ignores suffering (Hanegraaff, 1993; Barron, 2022). Another view alluded to in the study is the Middle View, which acknowledges some positive aspects but critiques commercialisation and manipulation of the Gospel (Bishau, 2013).

Examines theological and biblical justifications for the Prosperity Gospel within Pentecostalism and in doing so, highlights practical views from Christian leaders supporting and critiquing Prosperity Gospel teachings. Apostle Brandon Bailey (2024) emphasised prosperity should include both material and spiritual well-being. Jones (2015) critiqued the Prosperity Gospel's materialistic interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, arguing for spiritual, not material blessings. Jones (2015) identified five theological errors in Prosperity Gospel teachings being the following, misinterpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, the belief that atonement covers material poverty, the transactional view of faith (give to receive wealth), misuse of prayer to demand prosperity and distortion of faith as a "spiritual force" for material gain. The study highlights concerns about the exploitation of scripture for personal financial gain and calls for re-evaluation of Prosperity Gospel teachings in light of the broader biblical principle.

Furthermore, the study highlights the commercialisation of religion, particularly within Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal communities, as observed in practices linked to prosperity gospel teachings. An example from the text describes a church offering event where amounts were called out, and attendees were encouraged to give based on their financial capacity, creating a hierarchy among the congregation. This revealed the practice involving public differentiation of offerings based on monetary value, leading to discomfort and shame, especially for the poor. For example, people who gave large sums (e.g., ten thousand Rand) were called first, while those offering smaller amounts were last. This public spectacle marginalised those with limited means.

The study reflected that society increasingly perceives churches as businesses rather than social institutions, exacerbated by media portrayals. There are depictions of public complaints about pastors getting richer while congregants become poorer, a sentiment reflected in broader societal rejection of such church practices. Media, including social media and broadcast channels, amplify negative portrayals of prosperity gospel teachings. These portrayals contribute to the perception of Christianity, particularly Pentecostalism, as financially exploitative, undermining its role as a positive social force. Ethical Concerns: Prosperity gospel practices are criticised for distorting Christian teachings on charity and humility. For instance, the study references the story of a poor widow in Mark, 12:42-44, contrasting her selfless giving with the church's practice of elevating wealth over spiritual integrity.

Regulatory Concerns in South Africa: The CRL Rights Commission in South Africa investigates the exploitation of the poor within religious communities. The study mentions this body's findings on abuses, including soliciting large sums from congregants and misusing media for self-promotion, as seen in the case of Benny Hinn's televised appeals for money in exchange for blessings. The CRL Rights Commission documents several abuses, such as the manipulation of offerings, as described in the offering event where attendees were grouped based on their financial contributions. This exploitation extends to media manipulation and creating a "personality cult" around church leaders, as seen with high-profile prosperity preachers like Benny Hinn. It is revealed that calls for greater regulatory oversight of religious institutions to prevent such abuses are necessary. It references Biyela's (2022) proposal for a regulatory framework to address these issues, although recognizing challenges due to South Africa's constitutionally protected religious freedoms.

This study highlights the enduring influence of practical theology as a tool for societal transformation, particularly in addressing issues such as poverty in South Africa. It critiques the Prosperity Gospel for failing to address the socio-political and economic root causes of poverty, emphasizing its exploitative tendencies toward vulnerable congregants. Practical theology, informed by Osmer's pastoral cycle, identifies poverty as a consequence of colonial modernity, perpetuating systemic inequality. Furthermore, the study reveals that theology must extend beyond the church's confines to engage the lived realities of marginalised communities. Practical theology thus seeks to restore human dignity and address systemic oppression holistically.

Oppression and poverty stem from exploitative systems created by humans, not divine intention. Dehumanization involves marginalizing certain groups based on race, economic status, or other discriminatory structures. Pastoral theology must integrate psychological, philosophical, and sociological perspectives to restore humanity. The concept of restorative preaching emphasises the restoration of humanness and liberation from dehumanising systems. Focuses on rehumanising individuals dehumanised by systemic oppression, restoring dignity, and fostering relational existence with God. Drawing on the imago Dei to affirm human value and agency. Liberative theology emphasises the need to address systemic poverty and oppression through conscientization and empowerment. Consideration of God's Liberative Intention based on Biblical teachings and affirmation of humanity's creation in God's image. This emphasising equality and justice. Furthermore, a teaching Christ's incarnation highlights God's solidarity with the oppressed and His role as a liberator.

7.4 Recommendations

The study recommends a paradigm shift in practical theology to prioritise societal service over institutional preservation, as informed by liberation theology. Churches should adopt an interdisciplinary approach, integrating theological insights with socio-economic and political strategies to address poverty effectively. Collaborative efforts between churches and societal institutions are essential to humanise the downtrodden and restore dignity. Additionally, doctrinal teachings, including the Prosperity Gospel, must be scrutinised and reformed to align with biblical principles of justice and equity. Practical theology should engage in addressing systemic issues rooted in colonial history while fostering inclusive frameworks that uplift oppressed communities through sustainable and ethical practices.

The study recommends focusing on the restoration of humanity through the development of initiatives centred on restoring the dignity and humanness of marginalised groups. Part of this is to locate the address the psychological and societal impacts of dehumanisation and apply a holistic Pastoral Task which combines theological insights with interdisciplinary approaches to create comprehensive solutions. This sees a liberative theology as underpinning pastoral practices and social advocacy by championing justice and equality by aligning with God's intention for humanity. Preaching and practice should depict unity through God's love and grace to inspire transformative people. A love-centred preaching places love at the heart of all preaching and outreach to ensure the message is transformative and authentic. Such a message fosters humility and rejects pride by acknowledging shared humanity and divine grace, which calls out the one who abuses power and humanises the one whom power was used against. Avoidance of prideful or hierarchical approaches that dehumanise or marginalise the impoverished, should be seen to be done. Pastoral and Institutional Integrity needs to be maintained in order to foster self-correction mechanisms to uphold the Church's integrity and mission.

As a key contribution to Pastoral Theology, the study proposes restorative preaching and doing towards a liberative end. This considers contextual realities in the task of preaching and incorporates rehumanising practices focused on liberation, dignity, and empowerment. There need be an accompaniment of preaching with tangible actions addressing structural inequalities. Conduct theological reflection grounded in specific societal contexts, especially in Africa. The pastoral burden is one that ensures pastoral practices are relevant and responsive to the realities of poverty and oppression. The study proposes the need to tackle the exploitation associated with prosperity gospel movements and protect vulnerable individuals. This can be achieved by the promotion of sound theology grounded in scripture and God's justice. Further, there is a need to capacitate communities by equipping African communities with the skills and knowledge to escape poverty and influence economic systems. It emphasised on how to get out of poverty is more contextually beneficial than a merely hope centred approach. The type of hope that the Gospel is to present is a message of hope, addressing both temporal and eternal needs.

Lastly, the study recommends a look into implementation of initiatives such as those by the Apostolic Faith Mission's initiatives like Mephi and AIDS orphans. There also needs to be a continuation of implementing of agricultural projects and soup kitchens to benefit communities without losing sight of the underlying systemic issues. Collaborative efforts between churches should be undertaken and partnerships should be fostered with government and private sectors to develop sustainable poverty alleviation strategies, including entrepreneurship. The aim should be to develop programs that prioritise compassion and dignity for the poor.

7.4 Limitations

The study was a desktop study and did not include any interviews of either poor persons and their perspectives or experience in Pentecostal churches. This could have enhanced the study to speak to tangible difficulties. As a non-empirical study, there was also no engagements with people who use a Pneumatological hermeneutics in practice, a task which could have aided the researcher to further employ this hermeneutics in this research at hand.

Furthermore, the study was aimed to be critical of practices within the Pentecostal expressions of Christianity, but this critique may have been limited by positionality of the researcher as a member of the Pentecostal community. Should this research have been done by someone outside of the Pentecostal communities, there may have been further abilities to critique this expression.

When looking at the majority of the sources, they are predominantly curated by either male theologian or male pastors. There was a challenge in locating more sources from female theologians and pastors. This challenge is because, there is even a scarcity of content from this group when it relates to the topics and themes covered by this research. One believes that it would have potentially resulted in different or broader findings if there were considerations of more content from female contributors.

7.5 Aspects for Further Research

One has identified a gap in the space of the usage and development of Pneumatological hermeneutics as a tool to theorise in research endeavours. There are limited sources where such hermeneutics was applied due to its abstract nature. Rather than avoidance of this hermeneutics in

academic study, one has identified a further need to utilise same, but more so, develop it further in future study through empirical methods.

Furthermore, it is identified that there may be a need to focus on the liberation theological frameworks in considering other Pastoral Theology tasks and not simply view liberation theologies as more systematic theological pursuits.

7.6 Conclusion

Ultimately, this study argued that a pastoral theology, in its poverty address, must go beyond welfare initiatives and the mere restoration of hope to engage in a holistic, rehumanising process. It attempts to construct a restorative preaching and doing towards a liberative end by advocating for a theology that prioritises human dignity, re-humanisation and liberation as enshrined in scripture. By addressing the structural dimensions of poverty and oppression, this approach seeks to move beyond the often-individualistic focus of the Prosperity Gospel to foster collective liberation and social justice.

In fine, the study underscores the need for a theologically informed and contextually relevant pastoral response to poverty in South Africa. It calls for a transformative engagement that integrates biblical, theological, and decolonial insights to confront the dehumanising realities of systemic oppression as poverty. This contribution to pastoral theology offers a renewed vision of preaching and doing that aligns with the pursuit of justice, equity, and humanisation. In reconciling, the topic which states, "I Receive": A Pastoral-Theological Re-conceptualisation of Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel, Toward Alleviation of Poverty in South Africa', one highlights that reference to alleviation is essentially an emphasis on the need to address poverty. The study thus contributes to the addressing of poverty and perhaps contributes to a potential reality which sees those who shout, "I receive", being freed from any misuses of the prosperity which is alluded to in scripture.

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APPENDIX A: Ethical clearance letter



Miss Sibusisiwe Nomfundo Pearl Biyela (213509167)
School Of Rel Phil & Classics
Pietermaritzburg

Dear Miss Sibusisiwe Nomfundo Pearl Biyela,

Original application number: 00024276

Project title: I Receive! A Pastoral Theological Re-conceptualisation of Pentecostal Prosperity Gospel, Toward Alleviation of Poverty in South Africa

Exemption from Ethics Review

In response to your application received on [redacted], your school has indicated that the protocol has been granted **EXEMPTION FROM ETHICS REVIEW**.

Any alteration/s to the exempted research protocol, e.g., Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. The original exemption number must be cited.

For any changes that could result in potential risk, an ethics application including the proposed amendments must be submitted to the relevant UKZN Research Ethics Committee. The original exemption number must be cited.

In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE:

Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]
Prof Herbert Moyo
Academic Leader Research
School Of Rel Phil & Classics

UKZN Research Ethics Office
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX B: Turnitin Report

Biyela_Full Research for Turnitin Re_upload.docx

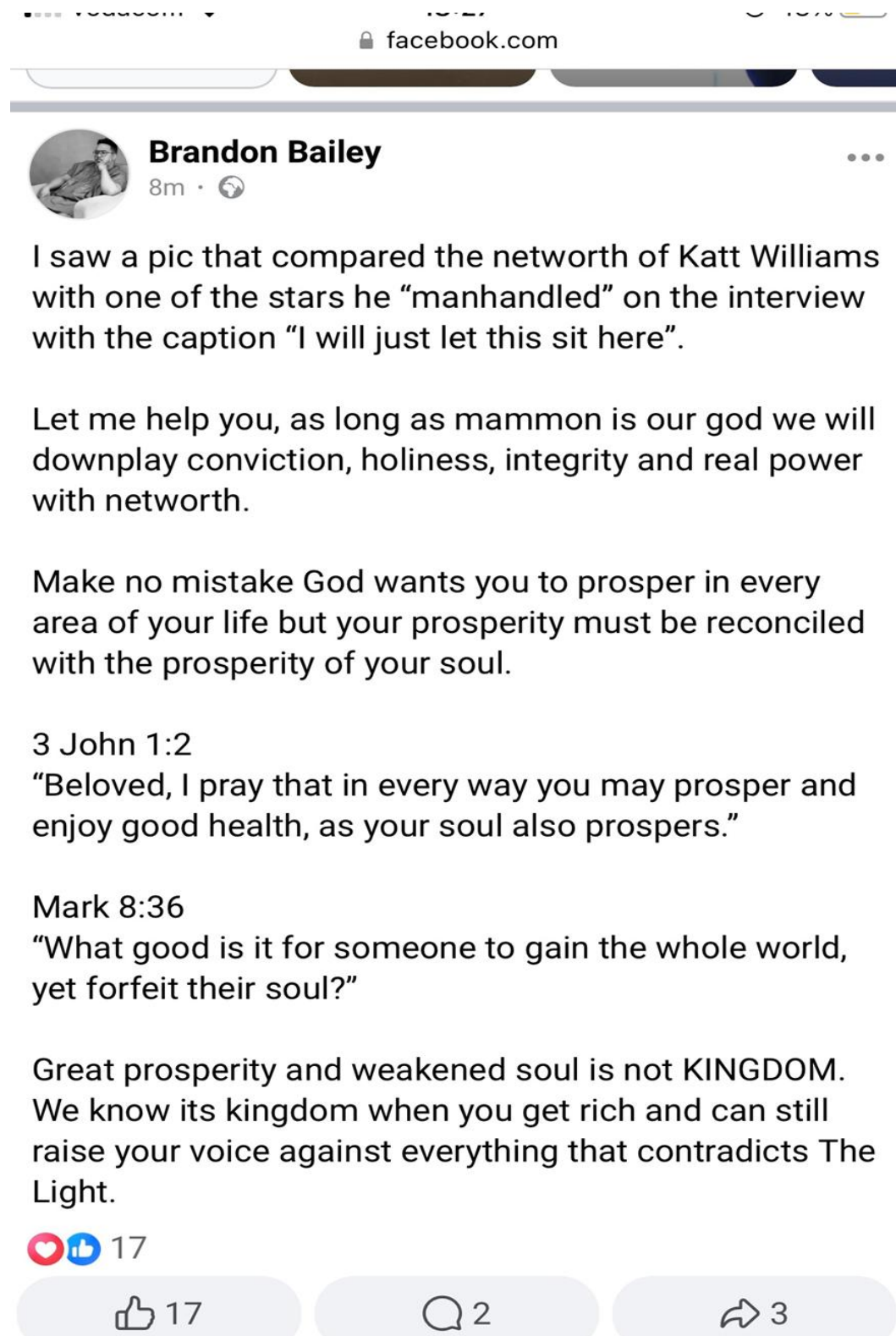
ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%	12%	7%	6%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES


1	www.scielo.org.za Internet Source	1%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	1%
4	Submitted to University of South Africa (UNISA) Student Paper	1%
5	pdfs.semanticscholar.org Internet Source	<1%
6	www.degruyter.com Internet Source	<1%
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8	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
9	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1%

APPENDIX C: Social Media Post of Brandon Bailey



The image is a screenshot of a Facebook post. At the top, the browser address bar shows "facebook.com". The post is from a user named "Brandon Bailey", whose profile picture shows a man with glasses. The post is dated "8m" (8 minutes ago) and is public. The text of the post reads: "I saw a pic that compared the network of Katt Williams with one of the stars he 'manhandled' on the interview with the caption 'I will just let this sit here'." "Let me help you, as long as mammon is our god we will downplay conviction, holiness, integrity and real power with network." "Make no mistake God wants you to prosper in every area of your life but your prosperity must be reconciled with the prosperity of your soul." "3 John 1:2 'Beloved, I pray that in every way you may prosper and enjoy good health, as your soul also prospers.'" "Mark 8:36 'What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?'" "Great prosperity and weakened soul is not KINGDOM. We know its kingdom when you get rich and can still raise your voice against everything that contradicts The Light." At the bottom of the post, there are three buttons: "Like" with 17 likes, "Comment" with 2 comments, and "Share" with 3 shares.

facebook.com

Brandon Bailey 8m · 

I saw a pic that compared the network of Katt Williams with one of the stars he “manhandled” on the interview with the caption “I will just let this sit here”.



Let me help you, as long as mammon is our god we will downplay conviction, holiness, integrity and real power with network.


Make no mistake God wants you to prosper in every area of your life but your prosperity must be reconciled with the prosperity of your soul.


3 John 1:2
“Beloved, I pray that in every way you may prosper and enjoy good health, as your soul also prospers.”


Mark 8:36
“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”

Great prosperity and weakened soul is not KINGDOM. We know its kingdom when you get rich and can still raise your voice against everything that contradicts The Light.

  17

 17

 2

 3

APPENDIX D: Social Media Post of Creflo A. Dollar

  **Creflo A. Dollar**  ...
13 Mar 2016 · 

When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass. He honors His Word! [#GraceLife](#)

 Like  Comment  Send  Share

 **Siyabonga Zulu and 20.2k others**

3.2k shares

APPENDIX E: Social Media Post of Vladimir Savchuk



Vladimir Savchuk · 3rd+

[+ Follow](#)

Author. Pastor. Preacher.

5mo ·

God is not against us having wealth, but He is against wealth having us.

12

1 repost



Like

Comment

Repost

Send

Reactions



Comments

APPENDIX F: Social Media Post of Vladimir Savchuk



Vlad Savchuk



1 d · 

God is not against us having wealth,
but He is against wealth having us.

  JA NE and 6.8k others 219 comments 905 shares



Like



Comment



Send



Share