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Khanyile, Sphesihle Blessing

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The Virtualization of the Church: New Media Representations of Neo-Pentecostal Performance(s) in South Africa.

By

Sphesihle Blessing Khanyile

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Supervisor: Dr. Obvious Katsaura

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ABSTRACT

The advent of new media, more specifically social media, has galvanized and radically revolutionized how religion is experienced, lived and expressed in (South) Africa. Social media has transmogrified the orthodox and normative modes of religious engagement and interaction. Day-to-day religious practices have become highly reliant on the (new) media. It is only logical therefore to foreground and locate the (new) media within the deeper inquiries relating to social phenomenon and social life. Social media has become the benchmark for understanding the transitions with regards to conceptualizing social phenomenon like Neo-Pentecostalism, which in recent times has taken the African continent by storm. This study explores how church performances and practices of controversial South African Neo-Pentecostal church *End Time Disciples Ministries,* led by notoriously shady and delinquent *Prophet Penuel* are represented on Facebook. The study is interested in analysing the online representations of church performance of this particular church. Moreover, the study committed at understanding how audiences (those who engage and interact on Facebook page) decode and interpret the messages and representational exhibitions disseminated through the church's Facebook page. Through the employment of a rigorous Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), both visual and lexical semiotic choices on the Facebook page were analysed in order to demystify discursive, ideological and investments of power. It must be lamented that the intersections between religion and new/social media have been marginally ignored within qualitative epistemic inquiries. This study provides a breath of fresh air in that regard. The current *status quo enlightens* us that social relations have become vehemently *digitized*. It is therefore relevant and expedient for digital platforms to be taken seriously within sociological intellectual inquests. Church performances are receiving great impetus and potency on new/social media domains but minimal scholastic investment has been channelled in that direction. The *End Time Disciple Ministries* Facebook page is a platform where the most salient and non-salient representational projects of violence, power, exploitation, manipulation, hegemony, patriarchy are exhibited for public broadcast and consumption.

Key Words: Neo-Pentecostalism, New Media, Virtual, Social Media, Facebook, Performance, Representation, Power, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

DECLARATION

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Date: 19 July 2016

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> …*Ukuzinikela kwenu ngoba nifuna ngifunde kungikhombisile ukuthi inkonzo yokuzidela iyaphila*…
>
> ***"I am what I am by the Grace of God"***

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CHAPTER 1

THE INTRODUCTION

The *virtualization of the church* endorsed through the advent of new/social media is on the rise in (South) Africa. This recent intervention is radically mutating how church is understood, practiced, represented, performed, expressed, and meditated in (South) Africa. This study stems from a deep rooted desire to understand the shifts and complexities of social life within African public discourse. Ukah (2007:1-6) reminds us that Africa is not only the continent with the highest number of natural resources. More distinctly, Africa is the chief hub where novice forms of spirituality and religiosities are violently mushrooming and forcefully advancing. Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity/Neo-Pentecostalism represent the fastest advancing Christian sectarian group in Africa (Parsitau and Mwauru, 2010; Gifford, 2004; Ojo, 2000). Pentecostalism has permeated and penetrated African public discourses vehemently in recent times. This has largely been due to its deployment of media communication technologies in the form of television and radio and more recently the internet. Formerly, the primal objective of these aforementioned technologies has been for disseminating the Gospel, with the aim of proselytizing constituencies in more resolute, new and militant ways. More recently, new media technologies are doing more. New media technologies have become the focal point of religious performance. New media forms of communication are superseding institutionalized practice(s) that are manifested, performed and expressed within *sacred* church spaces (Hjarvard, 2008). Subsequently, minimal scholarly attention has been invested into how new Pentecostals in Africa have employed new/social media forums of communication to propagate their ritual practices, church performances, institutional ideologies and discursive deliberations for public consumption and engagement- an engagement that assumes a very docile modality within sacralised physical church vicinities. Church as we knew it has been made relevant and accessible through the advent of new media. Asamoah-Gyadu (2007) interestingly asserts that people through new media technologies are '*clicking their way to God'* and employing new media technologies to gain access to God. Brasher (2001) labels such people as '*hungry and thirsty'* for spiritual fulfilment. The new media is being

employed to gain religious access in new and unorthodox ways previously foreclosed and unexplored.

The central objective of this study is to explore how representations of church performance(s) are projected on a Neo-Pentecostal Facebook page, *End Time Disciples Ministries*. The study argues that the most lethal and volatile representations of Neo-Pentecostal performance, ideology and discursive investments are havened and entrenched within the realm of new/social media platforms. It is without doubt that new/social media is more interactive, engaging, far-reaching and dynamic as compared to traditional forms of mediated communication; unfortunately academic literature on Neo-Pentecostalism has not delved closely into the subject of the Neo-Pentecostal appropriation of new media as a means to exhibit church performance(s) online. Regardless of the fact that contemporary church is using new/social media forums to project their church performances and sacred rituals.

Online church performances and representations are re-produced through language (lexical and visual). Through the employment of a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) the study aims at demystifying the discursive and ideological investments entrenched within texts (lexical and visual) on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page. This will be done to ultimately understand how a selected Neo-Pentecostal church represent themselves and their church performances, practices, ideologies and discourses on a Facebook platform. Secondly, the study wants to understand how these representations of church performance are engaged with and interrogated by online audiences (*members*) on the selected Facebook page. The study posits two fundamental questions: The first being how Neo-Pentecostals or *End Time Disciple Ministries* congregants represent themselves and their church performances online. Secondly, to understand how audience members negotiate and interpret those projected representational constructions.

Ultimately, the study wants to redefine and contribute to social research through engaging with virtual horizons with the primal objective of yielding social insights on a formerly unconventional platform. The critical problem of the study is that minimal academic studies have been invested into studying social relations, particularly those negotiated and advanced online. The resounding fact remains that representations

of church performances and practices mediated through the internet have gone largely under-researched and understudied, regardless of the fact that issues circumscribed around religion have become one of the most prevalent items on the internet (Cowan and Hadden, 2000). Furthermore, social research has been very reluctant with employing web-based data as a central reservoir of ascertaining pertinent social research data and insights. Most shockingly, is the fact that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been marginally secluded within the study of social media platforms like that of *Facebook, Twitter, MySpace* to name just a few.

End Time Disciple Ministries has managed to exploit social media to its advantage in a commendable and volatile way. Social media has been used for the project of both individual and *'religious group'* expression. Social media is also home for Neo-Pentecostal ideological and discursive advancement. *End Time Disciple Ministries* Facebook page virtually (internet) projects church performance, representations and practices of an *extreme and exceptional* nature. Moreover, the page is an arena of violence, power, patriarchy, exploitation, cultural violence and performances reinforcing belonging. It is a platform where debates about legitimacy, authority constructions, censorship and identity politics violently converge. The study drew theoretical and conceptual insights on religion from Emile Durkheim which proved dividend. Goffman's theory of dramaturgy and Foucault's concepts of discourse and (bio) power proved useful analytical utensil. Galtung on cultural violence also proved a viable analytical toolkit. Multiple theoretical and conceptual resources were employed to cultivate a wholesome analysis.

The primal submission espoused after employing the theoretical, conceptual and methodological is one; language (visual and lexical) does not have power. Language is power. Those who have power produce knowledge and those who have knowledge produce power. I affirm Galtung's (1990) assertion that language is a violent category. *End Time Disciple Ministries* is one such forum where the violence of language is robustly reflected. *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page amplifies this violence because of its premeditated, selective, meticulous and performative formality characterised through social media. Performance theory suggests that individuals now, more than ever, live by means of performing (Madison and Hamera, 2006; Schechner 2002). Performing is life and we live to perform. The subject of performance and the on-going 'reflexive project of self' (Giddens, 1991)

has become ever more abundant on the virtual domain. This study aims at showing how the virtual domain has managed to do this through the analysis of *End time Disciples Ministries*.

This chapter will now expound on the key concepts that are prominent and prevalent within the dissertation. This will be done in order to extend a terminological and definitional foundation and background relevant and pertinent as bedrock for the study.

1.1) The Origins of *Classical Pentecostalism*

Pentecostalism's origins stems from the nineteenth century American Holiness Movement (Anderson, 1979:28). The word '*Pentecostal'* is derived from the biblical incident known as the *day of Pentecost*. This incident saw the *Spirit of God* descended on the New Testament biblical Apostles. They were all given the supernatural enablement of *speaking in tongues* (biblical reference is *Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2).* The key propellant that propagated the world-wide modern Pentecostal movement originated in a black church in *Azusa Street*, Los Angeles, United States of America in 1906. The emphasis of the movement was/is the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the initial evidence of the vocal gift of speaking in tongues (Anderson, 1992; Clarke and Lederle, 1989; Faricy 1983; Spittler, 1988). Vinson Synan (1997) describes the Pentecostal experience as recorded at Azusa Street as follows: "*men and women would be shouting weeping, singing, speak in tongues and interpreting the messages spoken in English*". Many hold to the view that tracing the roots of Pentecostalism is immaterial because it has always manifested itself within the fabric of the Christian Church in one way or the other (McNamee 1974:16).

The movement was propagated by a black preacher called *William J. Seymour.* Historians tend to highlight the non-racial nature of the movement, where some who encountered the Pentecostal experience claim that the colour bar was washed away through the blood of Jesus (Lovett, 1975:131). The Azusa Street Revival was a model and rubric of rare (as per the social architecture of the time) interracial and social harmonization. It was a black church attended by whites, led by Seymour a son of a slave (Anderson, 1992:23). This change happened in a time when blacks were prohibited to congregate collectively with white people. Seymour is the figure

who internationally broadcast the Pentecostal movement which aided significantly in bridging the political conundrums of the time. This fact has been overlooked by white Pentecostals and scholars alike (Lovett, 1975:131).

Some classical Pentecostal historians have blatantly omitted Seymour as the founder of the movement (Tinny, 1978; Nelsen, 1981). The Azusa moment happened in a time of racial disconnect and profuse segregation. Anderson (1979:122) argues that at Azusa Street people of all races and social backgrounds achieved a new sense of dignity, community and unity. This social rationale is manifesting itself even in contemporary religious spaces like that of *End Time Disciple Ministries*. People enter these spaces for a deep quest of community and inclusion in a deeply exclusionary world. Pentecostal scholars have labelled the Pentecostal movement as the "*Latter Rain Movement*" (Anderson, 1992:17; Synan, 1975:12). This term implies that the church had transgressed an era of spiritual drought but traversed towards an awakening or a '*renaissance'* par excellence' (Lovett, 1975:125). The Pentecostal movement has been said to have culminated and flourished out of radical discontent. Pentecostalism has emerged in climates of rapid social change and amongst people who were socially deprived and psychologically unstable (Pillay, 1988:222). This logic has been used to explain why contemporary Neo-Pentecostal churches have attained global reach. They are said to flourish because they strategically target and cater for those who are socially and economically discontented primarily those situated in the peripheries of a harsh neo-liberal order.

Scholars have enlightened us that Pentecostalism largely identifies with the poor, the oppressed, non-racialism, reconciliation, black leadership, emancipation and reclamation of black dignity (Anderson, 1992:25). The black power movement cannot be seen in contrast to the African Pentecostal movement because both movements are simultaneously religious and revolutionary (Hollenweger, 1974:26). The interracial, multi-ethnic make-up of Pentecostals of the time was in itself a radical criticism and departure from prevailing divisive racial dynamics (Anderson, 1979). The experience of the *Spirit* was more than just a means for personal holiness but divine power to triumph over the injustices and oppression in the social dimension of life (MacRobert, 1988). This is one such element that made the movement relevant in South Africa.

The Pentecostal experience in South Africa culminated first at *Wakkerstroom* (Anderson, 1992). In South Africa, the growth of the movement was amongst the oppressed blacks and the poor white Afrikaners reeling from the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer war. Anderson (1979) charges that the movement expanded its revolutionary impulses in veiled, ineffectual, displaced attacks that amounted to the withdrawal from the social struggle and passive acquiescence to a world they hated and wished to escape (Anderson, 1979:222). The Pentecostal experience meant that God had granted the black person power and dignity in a world so hostile against him. It was a liberation from all that demeans and subjugates the black person-promoting him to a place of equality, self-direction and self-efficacy (Anderson, 1992:26). Allan Anderson (1992:120) argues that the Pentecostal experience is a unifying factor in a deeply polarised and divided society. Pentecostalism can be unifying in the sense of bringing justice, peace for all, and hope for a despairing people. People are unified under the guiding light of the Almighty. In recent times there has emerged a modern, more relevant, so to say, rendition of *Classical Pentecostalism,* namely Neo-Pentecostalism. *Neo-Pentecostalism* as it is labelled has attempted to exhibit something new and fresh in order to meet the needs of the disenfranchised peoples of the Global South. It has brought hope, prospects, problems, chaos, and optimism possibilities for a deeply desperate and spiritually hungry people- a people starved for the sublime, super-spiritual, paranormal and extra-miraculous.

1.2) What is Neo-Pentecostalism?

Hardly anyone is oblivious of the shift in Christian religiosity in Africa. Almost everyone is aware of the charismatic *prayer meetings,* the *mass evangelistic* c*rusades*, *conventions, bible schools, bible studies, bumper stickers, banners and posters* that broadcast church events (Gifford, 2004:25). Neo-Pentecostalism is permeating Africa mightily and uncompromisingly. Definitively differentiating between Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism is a very ambiguous mission, scholastically Ruth Marshall (2009) notes that most scholars have had problems in that regard. However, there is more in common between both movements than there are divergences. Neo-Pentecostals by definition are modern, founder-led independent churches that share phenomenological similarities and affinities with North America's new paradigm churches otherwise known as *Charismatic Christianity Churches*

(Miller, 1997; Buys, 1986; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007). They are the new wine in the old wine skin (classical Pentecostalism).

Noteworthy is the fact that Neo-Pentecostals have been classified in a multiplicity of ways. They have been labelled as: a) *Prosperity Christianity* b) *Health and Wealth Gospel*; c) *The Faith Movement* d) *Name-it- and Claim-it Movement* (Price, 2005; Hasu, 2006). Neo-Pentecostals lament that the active *'spiritual gifts'* have been marginally silenced in *Classical Pentecostal* church spaces (Lee, 2001). Neo-Pentecostalism proposes a radical *renaissance* of the gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, gifts of healing, hyper-evangelism, inspired preaching and spirit-filled worship (Quebedeaux, 1974:5; Paristau and Mwauru, 2010; Brouwer et al, 1996). Neo-Pentecostalism is said to be the revival and recovery of the Christian faith- a revival with regards to liveliness, freshness in fellowship and a sense of belonging (Mashua, 2013; Williams, 2005). Neo-Pentecostals espouse specific doctrines that mark them out among other groups of Christians. Neo-Pentecostals believe that they constitute a special people of God who alone are saved and justified, marking the rest of the world as doomed to eternal perdition (Mashua, 2013:4). As opposed to *Classical Pentecostals,* Neo-Pentecostals idolize the miraculous, healing, deliverance; success and the enactment of bizarre church performances often performed by charismatic and highly influential spiritual leaders. Neo-Pentecostals are *'new'* Pentecostal in orientation because they are said to be trans-denominational (not bound by denomination), socially relevant, unorthodox, non-dogmatic and cosmopolitan- as compared to their *Classical Pentecostal* forerunners (Williams, 2005). Neo-Pentecostalism reflects a popularised rendition of Christianity that provides for the disgruntled third world peoples through provision of psychological and practical aids (Hunt, 2007). The movement helps people survive both socially and psychologically. Neo-Pentecostalism provides participation, support, emotional relief, and sense of belonging (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007). Wolfe (2006) notes that new Pentecostals provides the poor with intense spiritual and psychic motivation as means to counter a reality of depression, seclusion, disenchantment, marginalisation and social instability.

End Time Disciple Ministries, the selected case study of the research, has all the aforementioned traits. Neo-Pentecostals have also been called *Charismatic*

Christians or the *Born Again*. In South African terminology they are labelled the *'abazalwane'*, translated in English as the brethren (Anderson, 1992). Modern South Africans label them *'ama-ministry,* translated as, those of the *ministries.* This name is used to emphasise the fact that these churches commonly have the word '*ministries'* at the end of their brand name. For example: *Word of Faith Ministries, Gods Hope Ministries, and Temple of Faith Ministries.* Togarasei (2006) says that such naming is used to specify their international vision and ambition which separates them definitively from other Christian sectarian groupings. These churches endeavour to permeate and penetrate beyond their immediate constituencies. *End Time Disciple Ministries* is one such congregation that exemplifies Neo-Pentecostalism in the most extreme and exceptional frame.

1.2.1) Why '*End Times Disciple Ministries'*?

The Facebook page *End Time Disciple's Ministries* is the chosen case study for the study. Geographically, this church is situated in the South African black township of *Soshanguve* - a community where abject poverty, lack and crime are the order of the day. Apartheid's legacy to the new South Africa has been that of visible poverty and inequality (Seekings, 2007:1). The visibility of the poverty is/was easily identifiable because it possessed a black face. Some blacks gained social mobility but the formerly disenfranchised blacks have remained in poverty, leaving South Africa as one of the top ranked unequal region in the world. The democratization project came with the myth of reformation and hopes that income poverty would be reduced. The backs have been promised emancipation an enfranchisement through empty slogans of ''*Better life for All''* promised by the ANC, yet poverty still persists. Pilger (2006) proclaimed that ''Apartheid did not die'' because black people have been perpetually rising up on the street in defiance, protest and new social movements. The key factors for the sustenance of poverty in South Africa have been the lack of employment and education (Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). This poverty has also seen an awakening of scandalous religious groups forged and formed to exploit the desperate and needy. *Soshanguve* is one such space where unemployment is still rife, making the place prone to the high susceptibility of bizarre forms of spiritualties and religious practices.

The *Soshanguve* based *End Time Disciple Ministries* came under international spot light when the leader of the church *Prophet Penuel Mnguni* made people eat snakes and rats as a means of connecting to God. Such oddities- worthy of criminality- have received international notoriety. These activities were not performed physically and forgotten, they were further archived within the social media platforms of Facebook - to be relived, reignited and experienced anew. I was fascinated by *End Time Disciples Ministries* because it is a perfect prototype of '*extreme and exceptional'* Neo-Pentecostal performance, practice, exhibitions and discursive deliberations. The page is also a forum where the most robust Neo-Pentecostal ideology and discourses are exhibited for public consumption, scrutiny and engagement. I submit that *End Time Disciples Ministries* is typical and representative example of Neo-Pentecostal church practices in South Africa therefore was a perfect horizon to explore and study extensively.

1.3) What is the *Virtual*?

The virtual domain is the intangible region of the internet otherwise termed the technological region (Maxwell, 2003: 34). This space has managed to forge its own norms, rules, etiquette, rituals, emotional vocabulary, guidelines, subjects, regular users, leaders and followers (Denzin, 1998:99). Steve Jones (2002:14) describes the virtual space as a place to be *among* people yet not intimately being with people. It is a platform of seeking community, belonging and solidarities. The virtual domain is an arena of new knowledge that is starkly different from old knowledge systems. Old knowledge systems are linear, hierarchal and rigid in nature. The advent of the virtual moment is characterised by openness, fluidity, a dynamic quality and a *democratization of knowledge*. It is region of *information deluges* and an *ocean of information* that shrinks barriers of distance and borders (Levy, 1997:190; Wilson and Corey, 2000).

Knowledge is no longer an abstract category but has become the visible and tangible free expressions of groups and individuals who inhibit the virtual domain. Communities discover and construct their own objectives on the virtual domain. It has been purported that the virtual is capable of enhancing the human condition for the benefit of mutual well-being. This is because of its hyper-engaging nature. Sceptics have pronounced that the virtual category *vis-à-vis* the internet leads to

shallowness, individualism, escapism, addiction, elitism and capitalistic fetishism (Maxwell, 2003:346; Robins and Webster, 1999: 245; Slouka, 1996). Brasher (2001) stresses that the virtual space is cold space that does not reflect and sense. However, Ameli (2009) says that chatting through the internet and chatting face- to-face makes the same sense in the current social dispensation. The line between and the real and the virtual has become severely blurred.

The virtual region has emerged as a region of performing of Pentecostal religiosity in the post-modern era, most noteworthy on the African Continent. Ameli (2009:209) coined this region as the *virtual religious region. Virtual religion* is a very ambiguous term, because religion has always been understood as being '*virtual'*- which denotes trans-empiricism or relating to souls, spirits and the metaphysical or supernatural realm. In relation to this study the *virtual religious region* refers to social media and other online resources where religion can be mediated. Dreyfus (2001:3) suggests that *'virtual religious regions'* like (*Facebook, Twitter, My Space, WhatsApp and Youtube)* contributes profusely to protracted projects of belonging, identity forging and sense of community because it amplifies and leverages such categories. The church as we know it is virtualising because of the critical intervention of new media.

1.3.1) What is New Media?

New Media is the form of media or mediation associated with the realm of the internet vis-à-vis the virtual domain. This type of media is exemplified by the unique properties of digital networking, global reach, interaction and many-to-many communication (Flew, 2005; Hackett, 2006). A very critical feature of new media is its digital convergence. This entails the coming together of different media forms such as: *newspapers, cinema and other traditional media forms* (Flew, 2005:193). It is through digital convergence of new media that the media has been afforded a social dynamic because people can wilfully interact, comment, critique, inform and contribute to conversations. This hyper-interactive nature has created social bonds online which has been infused by new media's subsequent part which is social media (*Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)*. New media has infused new ways of communication and new ways of mediating the phenomenon like religion. This shift

has aided in how religious practices and performances are disseminated in the post-modern moment.

1.3.2) *Virtualising* the *'Religious'*: The Advent of New Media

The transmogrification of Christian religiosity in Africa has been overwhelming. Orthodoxies, dogmas and sacred religious performances previously foreclosed within the church walls have recently become reoriented, reimagined and reopened within new engagement horizons through the advent of the internet in the digital times. The realm of cyberspace and its intersection with the religious has become an important research field of inquiry (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007:225). The *sacred* is becoming ever more prominent on profane spaces (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009:17). The dichotomy of *sacred* and *profane* has become muddled, fuzzy and reoriented within the mud pool of the digital times. The intervention of religion into the realm of the internet has radically transformed how we conceptualize, negotiate and practice religion.

The religious *or* sacred is being performed on profane platforms through internet. Face-to-face social interactions and religious practice are becoming marginally obsolete. The obsoleting of traditional modes of contact is due to the advent of new/social media and its societal penetration. It is becoming less feasible to contain and confine religious performances and representations within the parameters of traditional institutional setting (church vicinities). The orthodox performative demand of face-to-face interaction which includes the circulation of sacred texts (*Bible, Quran*) is becoming redundant, delinked with current demands (Stolow, 2005:125). Religiosity has evolved to become fluid and flux- transcending time, space and formality. This process of fluidity and flux has become ever more amplified through the deployment of new media. The digital has become social and the social has become digitized in the virtual era.

The advent of digital media has reoriented the subject of the religious, particularly how it is mediated and practiced. Karl Marx once articulated that religion is the heartbeat of a heartless society (Kalu, 2003). Religion is the royal road to the heart of a civilization, the clearest indication of its hopes and terrors, the surest indicator of how it is changing (Cox, 1999:11). Religion, therefore, needs to be taken very

seriously as it is a critical constituent in fathoming social complexities and how these complexities are enmeshed within the conversations intersecting with new media. The change in the mediation and experience of religion, particularly Christianity in Africa is a clear indicator of social change. Ellis and Ter Haar (2004:2) argue that religious relations constitute the most important way in which Africans interact with themselves and with the rest of the World. Pentecostalism both *classical* and *new* is one such sect that has influenced religion in Africa. The next section of this dissertation tracks the continuities and discontinuities of the foundational and contemporary protagonists of Pentecostalism in South Africa.

1.4) Black Pioneers of Classical Pentecostalism in South Africa: A Contextual Background

This section seeks to provide a conceptual background of Pentecostalism's pioneers amongst black people in South Africa. Prominent pioneers have emerged in the Pentecostal fraternity in South Africa. Key historic figures are *Nicholas Bhengu of the Back to God Crusade* and *Richard Ngidi of the Apostolic Faith Mission* (Anderson, 1992). The reason why these men are specifically cited is to track the change that has transpired in the Pentecostal movement in South Africa pertaining to practice, and orientation. Foregrounding these aforementioned figures seeks to show the transition between Classical Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism in South Africa. Fundamentally, the Classical Pentecostals exemplify decorum whereas the Neo-Pentecostals in South Africa have been characterised by decadence, bizarre practices and out of this world ways of being. *Bhengu* and *Ngidi* are the central Pentecostal figures that publicised and propagated the Pentecostal tradition vigorously in South Africa in a positive way as compared to their novice counterparts.

Nicholas Bhengu is the most famous of all classical Pentecostal leaders in South Africa. Bhengu was born at *Entumeni*, Kwa-Zulu Natal in 1909 and died in 7 October 1985, Cape Town (Anderson, 1992). Bhengu established an effective evangelistic campaign called the *Back to God Crusade,* through which he conducted extensive evangelistic campaigns across Africa (Lephoko, 2005:96). Bhengu's *Back to God* campaigns were charged with healing expectations and materializations from the sickly. The crippled, blind and deaf were commonly recorded as recovering

instantaneously from their physical impediments in Bhengu's crusade (Lephoko, 2005). The *Back to God Crusade* became the most popular and spectacular spiritual revival perhaps in the history of South Africa. *Back to God Crusade* was never a denominational wing. However, as the work grew, it became evermore apparent that Bhengu wanted to initiate his own church but as a black person it was politically barred. Bhengu then affiliated missionary-type Pentecostal affiliate *Assemblies of God* because blacks were barred from church initiation due to the political climate of the time (Dubb, 1976:2; Watt, 1991:155). Bhengu is remembered as a remarkable Christian figure, who according to Lephoko (2005) it is claimed that his work, wherever it set foot, exponentially decreased the prevalence of crime and many other social ills.

Ngidi, a spiritual protégé of Nicholas Bhengu, who was born in 1921 is said to be one of the most influential black leaders that the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) ever had Ngidi's ministry was known throughout South Africa as a powerful one known for miraculous happenings in his crusades (Anderson, 1992). In one of his crusades it was reported that about ten people received their sight. As a result of his contributions, the work in Kwa-Zulu Natal grew tremendously. The denomination Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in Kwa-Zulu Natal became known as the church of Ngidi (De Wet 1989:139). Ngidi had four fundamental practices and beliefs that have influenced the practices of most Pentecostal figures today, these being: (1) emphasis on Evangelism through tent crusades (2) teaching on fasting and prayer to gain divine strength (3) Divine healing, which sparked a revived interest of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit (4) His opposition to the involvement in politics (De Wet, 1989). He is hailed for his healing and preaching ministry, remembered as one of the greatest Pentecostal leaders South Africa has ever seen (Anderson, 1992). A primal reconciliatory attribute is evident in these two black Pentecostal pioneers. The attribute is that they exerted decorum and legitimacy in their operations as compared to the new Pentecostals who are scrupulously wayward.

Black classical Pentecostal in South Africa were premised on evangelisation, healing and national outreach. *Extreme and the exceptional* church antics do not feature in the biographical accounts of the black classical Pentecostal pioneers in South Africa. *Extreme and exceptional* church performances and practices are those of a bizarre

and ethically unsound nomenclature. The classical Pentecostal black pioneers were exemplary in the way they conducted themselves and in how they expressed their belief systems. However, the new custodians of the Pentecostal fraternity have been associated with spiritual decadence, extremity, absurd performances and rituals, and emphasis on money and material acquisition. The aforementioned problematic is specifically the boundary that has somewhat delinked classical Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals in South Africa. It must be made clear that ideological classical Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals are reconciled the critical issue is in how they practice, perform and express their ideologies. The next section will highlight how the Neo-Pentecostal tradition in South Africa, a movement characterised by extreme and exceptional behaviour and absurd expressions of Pentecostal doctrine and ideology. This is due to Neo-Pentecostalism's fetish with the sublime, super-spiritual and extra-miraculous.

1.5) 'The *Extreme and Exceptional'* Prophets of South African Neo-Pentecostalism: A Contextual Reality

Africa in the contemporary age has seen a recent upheaval of radical expressions of Christianity. Some of these expressions of Christianity have orthodox, dogmatic, classical, and missionary styles like those of classical Pentecostalism. Others are out rightly bizarre, *'extreme and exceptional'* (overboard and unique) in their performative gestures and guises. The latter configuration greatly inspired this work. The context of this study was inspired by topical incidences that have transpired in South Africa public discourse. These incidences raised curiosity about the unconventionality of church performances within contemporary African Christianity. Critical questions were sparked about the insurmountable power church leaders, in the (South) African context have over their laymen, and how this power transgresses far and beyond normality.

The below are some of the religious figures that sparked radical curiosity about the state of religion in South Africa, particularly within the Pentecostal tradition. The below mentioned religious figures are namely Prophet Penuel Mnguni (the key inspiration of the study), *Lesego Daniel, Prophet Mbhoro, Dr. HQ Nala* who have representational fronts that raise serious questions. These below examples are noted to protract the argument that Neo-Pentecostals in South Africa are beckons of

religious extremity. They have radically drifted away from their classical counterparts in expression, performance and ideological interpretation. These below, New Pentecostals were the inspirational motivation behind interrogating Neo-Pentecostals in South Africa.

1.5.1) Prophet Penuel Mnguni: '*The Snake Eating Pastor'*



Figure 1: Prophet Penuel rides on top of man who he has miraculously turned into a horse.

End Times Disciples Ministries is situated in the Pretoria township of *Soshanguve*, South Africa. *End Times Disciples Ministries* is a Neo-Pentecostal church led by 24 year old Tsepo Mnguni whom the congregants address as *Prophet Penuel*. The church raised international eyebrows because of the bizarre healing and demonstrative performances exerted on the bodies of church members. *Prophet Penuel* has made church folk eat live snake as a symbol of a militant and radical type of faith (Nemakonde 2015). *Prophet Penuel* claimed that under his order God had turned the snake into chocolate (Dubius, 2015; Meijier, 2015). The national ambivalence and condemnation towards young *Prophet Penuel* escalated when representatives of the *Soshanguve* community amounting to about three hundred people accompanied by the political party EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters) reprimanded the preacher and burnt the church (tent) down in retaliation to his dubious misconduct. Some have argued, contrary, claiming that it was well within the ambits of people's rights to eat grass, snakes or rats or whatever they wanted

(Tau, 2015). Regardless of many divergent views, general consensus within public discourse has been consistently an outright rebuke of the churches and the Prophet's operations.

End Time Disciples Ministries has received ample attention in South Africa and abroad regarding its bizarre and absurd church performances. The church represents these physically enacted performances virtually (internet) which is relevant for the objective of the study. The study finds particular interest in how these bizarre and absurd performances are re-imagined, re-contextualized and re-performed on new media platforms. It is on these particular horizons of representation that these performances are more accessible, domineering, potent and violent. Therefore, they need urgent intellectual probing. The relevant questions to ask would be why are congregants engaging in such grotesque, denigrating activities. Is it poverty? Is it quest for hope? Is it desperation? Is it a diminished self-image? Whatever it is, it has most certainly an adverse and stringent grip on the masses that attend such churches.

Prophet Penuel is a sheer example of how the new/social media has become a focal point of critique, scrutiny and engagement. The virtual is also a space were people are able to express themselves and their discontents honestly and without fear or favour. *Prophet Penuel* and *End Time Disciple Ministries* is also a prototypical example of the shift between classical Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism in expression, performance and ideological or doctrinal interpretation. The Neo-Pentecostal in South Africa exhibits a reality that is stranger than fiction. The bizarre, the 'beyond', the unique and the 'extreme and exceptional' is havened within these spaces. *Prophet Penuel* and his incumbent position of Neo-Pentecostalism prototype for 'unique extremity' made him the perfect and typical cite of inquest for this study. Furthermore, *Prophet Penuel* is typical of how the Neo-Pentecostals manifest within township spaces are capitalising profusely on the ignorance, desperations, hopes and aspirations of common Black Township folk.

1.5.2) Prophet Lesego Daniel: *'the petrol drinker'*



***Figure 2: Prophet Lesego Daniel makes female congregants drink petrol**.*

Inspiration for this study was also drawn from an incident that occurred in a prominent Neo-Pentecostal church in Pretoria, called *Rabboni Ministries,* led by Prophet Lesego Daniel (Motsai, 2014). Lesego Daniel, a suave and wealthy-looking young man is growing in infamy because of his outrageous miracles and expression of Pentecostal theology and practice. Lesego Daniel scrupulously motivated his congregants into the outrageous acts of eating grass and gulping petrol as symbolic gestures of accessing God (Maluleke, 2014; Reilly, 2014; Glover, 2014). These absurd antics were said to be symbolic gestures symbolising divine connection and the omnipotence of the Almighty. Furthermore, *Rabboni Ministries* church members were inspired by the pastor to eat flowers claiming it tasted like *biltong* (a South African brand of dried meat) (Motsai, 2014). These bizarre performances raised serious questions about how modern Christian religiosity in (South) Africa is painstakingly linked to power, spiritual dictatorship, domination, patriarchy, charisma, cultural violence, exploitative traditions, hegemony, abuse, manipulation, human rights abuses and the most obscene and detestable curtailing of personal liberties.

1.5.3) Prophet *'Mbhoro'*

Another fascinating Neo-Pentecostal minister in South Africa is Prophet '*Mbhoro'*. Prophet *Mbhoro* (as known by his followers) has raised eyebrows regarding his unconventional healing rituals. Amongst his many performative and 'unique' ways of healing *Mbhoro* specifically centres on women's reproductive organs and private

parts. Some of his healing rituals reportedly require *Mbhoro* to put his foot, literally, upon the private parts of many a "demon-possessed woman" (Maluleke, 2014). A central element which will be expounded more rigorously in the literature review is the overwhelming fetish behind the subject of healing and being healed in Neo-Pentecostal circles. In a world sick of disease, social discontent, poverty and unrest these spaces act as buffer zones to ascertain energy and the will to press on through harsh times, both socially and economically. New Pentecostals are operating as havens of deliverance(s) against multifaceted ills. However, as recorded above, the ways of expressing church performances and rituals and healing leaves a lot to be desired. In fact a majority of the Neo-Pentecostal churches exert exceptionally different ways of ideological interpretation.

1.5.4) Dr HQ Nala: *'the Plentitian'*



Figure 3: Nala followers bowing reverently before him.

Durban based Dr HQ Nala, as he is popularly known; despite the fact that he has no formal education is another prominent South African Neo-Pentecostal minister. Nala claims that water (bearing his fetishized image) - initially drawn from a tap and which he has blessed and bottled in plastic containers, has the power to cure HIV and AIDS (Madlala and Dzanibe, 2013). Nala's more recent altercation has been his controversial pronouncements that he condones polygamy- claiming that it can be practiced regardless of the fact that it contradicts with New Testament biblical

loyalty (Bambelele, 2015). This is major divergent from Pentecostal ideological interpretation. Nala has been rebuked by his Neo-Pentecostal counterparts for allegedly denouncing Christianity on live Radio. According to Sihlangwe (2015) Nala has initiated his own religion called *Plentianity* which is derived from his surname translated from isiZulu as *plenty*.

The above visual text depicts congregants bowing reverently before Nala. This exemplifies the fetishized and idolized reception that is unanimous with *'extreme and exceptional'* Neo-Pentecostal figures. The leadership figures in these particular sects are canonized in the most bizarre of ways. The above action is uniquely and endemically Neo-Pentecostal in orientation and practice and is amongst many other schisms expressed through the above religious figures that radically stretch classical Pentecostals away from Neo-Pentecostal. Therefore compartmentalizing classical Pentecostalism as the model of decorum and Neo-Pentecostalism as the contemporary deterioration and decadence of the latter movement. I do submit, however, that the differentiating factor between both movements is the performative and ideological interpretations and manifestations of the movements. This is what makes the former appear somewhat dignified and latter to be vilified.

1.6) The Research Problem

The *digitisation*, *virtualisation* or *mediatisation* of religious life has sparked an epistemological reformation which needs urgent intellectual investigation. Johnstone (1983:9) has defined religion as a phenomenon that *binds together*. This definition implies fellowship and group togetherness. However, through *digitisation* there has evolved a paradigmatic shift regarding how religion is fathomed. Pentecostalism in Africa and elsewhere has received numerous studies. The bulk of the literature has concentrated on healing and deliverance, the prosperity rhetoric and global media appropriation of the movement (Maxwell, 1998; Hackett, 1998; Meyer, 1998). The resounding problem is the significant intellectual void regarding how new/social media use intersects with representations of Pentecostal church performance on new media domains, specifically social media. This is the central intellectual contribution this paper seeks to contribute within the academic domain. Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors (2006) argue that Pentecostalism has managed to consolidate counter-public spheres through the media. Through ministerial television channels

and radio shows they have robustly shifted the discourses within the public space in Africa- '*broadening the public sphere'*. But with regards to new/social media forms of communication the limitation is still bulky seeing that the public sphere finds stretch within new/social media platforms. This is a critical problem that sociological academia has to take seriously and invest more time on- now more than ever. Further, an epistemological problem still resounds with regards to how epistemic studies employing CDA have not been employed web-based data and platforms like social networks platforms which have swaths of pertinent and relevant social data. These spaces are clearly havens of exploitation, manipulation and rigorous authoritarian control, patriarchy and cultural violence. Studies located in religious studies, media studies and more relevantly sociology have failed to investigate new/social media as the focal point of exhibiting the aforementioned travesties.

1.7) The Key Argument(s)

The study argues that the *virtualisation of church* is on the rise in (South) Africa. It further argues that the most lethal and volatile representations of Neo-Pentecostal, performance, ideology and discursive deliberations are posited on virtual spaces. Africans are using virtual domains to constitute and themselves with the world and with each other. The virtual is not a retreat from the world rather an intervention into a new world. From this logic, the virtual domain is a researchable and critical sociological region. *End Time Disciples Ministries* has been charged as being a church that projects bizarre, weird and '*extreme and exceptional'* performance(s). The study argues that the online representations of those bizarre performances carry more vigour, impetus and amplification on virtual domains. This is because the virtualised rendition of church allows for engagement, critique and volatility that are often shunned within the physical church vicinities.

The lexical and visual choices on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page perpetuate bizarre church performances, ideologies and discourses of belonging, power, body subjection, patriarchy, hegemony, stringent control, manipulation, exploitation and cultural violence in a more vigorous and amplified way. The use of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is pertinent in unveiling the ideological, discursive and manipulative power of lexical selections entrenched within texts. The

epistemological mission of these arguments is to show that lexical and visual choices on the Facebook page influence how the text is consumed, interpreted and exerts power. *End Time Disciple Ministries* page although a space of belonging and community is by and large a haven of cultural violence, patriarchy, ideological power, (bio) power reproduced through the representational work of the page exhibited through church performance. The performances are more rife, ruthless and non-opaque on new/social media domain of Facebook. *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page is an arena of deliberate and discursively constructed exploitative performances. These exploitative performances are exhibited and portrayed in twofold levels. At one level they are salient and easily identifiable but for many these ideological, discursive repertoires are subliminal and unidentifiable. The research will aim to expose salient ideological and discursive investments that are deeply engraved within the interactions on the Facebook page.

1.8) The Research Question(s)

HOW ARE THE PERFORMANCES OF NEO-PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES REPRESENTED ON THE NEW MEDIA PLATFORM OF FACEBOOK?

Subsidiary Questions:

a. How do Neo-Pentecostals represent themselves on these online Spaces (Facebook page)?

b. How do the audiences respond to the online representations of Neo-Pentecostal churches on Facebook?

1.9) Methodological Orientation

Qualitative research methodology was employed. It proved relevant because the research endeavoured to analyse selected texts (visual and linguistic) from a selected Facebook page named: *End Time Disciple Ministries* in order to ultimately extract meaning(s). The study was interested in how the representations of church performance are represented through the Facebook page. Facebook is a space where multiple meanings are entrenched. Qualitative research is interested in

extrapolating meaning(s), particularly how meaning is constructed and understood (Merriam, 2009). Parkinson and Drislane (2011) further add that qualitative research is not only seeks to extract meaning, but meaning from factual evidences. These meanings are subjective theoretically and evidentially. Halfpenny (1979) highlights that qualitative research is speculative not tested. Qualitative research comprises of flexible meanings that are not fixed or stable. Qualitative research holds dear to theoretical interpretation rather than quantifiable conclusions, as with quantitative research. The aim of the qualitative intervention was its enabling ability of deciphering complex ideological, discursive and subliminal messages engraved in texts making it pertinent to the objectives of the study.

1.10) The Methods: Semiotics

Semiotics is interested in the business of signs and sign-making (Barthes 1986: 7; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006:6). The *sign* is that which stands for something, sign-making is the process of reconciling the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning) to consolidate a sign, and meaning making. Meaning can be forged through written texts, images, texture, gaze, gestures and postures (Chouliaraki, 2008). Signs take up multiple forms and serve multiple purposes; they can stand for things concepts, ideas, branding and corporations (Berger, 2005). Semiotics has been applied to a multiplicity of disciplines. Semiotics scholars have emphasised that everything can be analysed and read through semiotic means. Neo-Pentecostals deploy signification for identification through dress code, language, accessories in order to distinguish, assimilate, and negotiate and re-negotiate themselves within spaces. Eco (1976) does remind us that inasmuch as signs can be informative, they can also be used as instruments of deception and deliberative manipulation. Therefore they can be geared and engineered to manipulate the unsuspecting eye. Signs, both visual and lexical have denotative (literal) and connotative (figurative) meaning (Barthes, 1977). These conceptions are important in understanding the representational make-up of *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page, and importantly, forging a wholesome analysis.

1.10.1) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Texts use strategies that look neutral on the surface but have great ideological investments. CDA is the ability of close reading texts in order to demystify ideological

and discursive investments of particular texts, implicit and explicit (Van Dijk, 2001:104). CDA is interested in the relationship between ideology and power within text - making it visible through critique and analysis. The '*critical'* aspect denotes the act of denaturalizing, unveiling ideas and absences within texts (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Van Leeuwen, 2006; Fairclough, 2010). Furthermore, it seeks to expose strategies employed that naturalize relations of social inequality (Fairclough, 1985). It is also interested in how power abuse is produced through social interactions, communication and discourses organized institutionally (Van Dijk, 1993:303). Chouliaraki (2008) reminds us that CDA should never be thought of as a universal tool kit. The method is always context specific and more often than anything relates with a relevant research topic.

1.10.2) Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)

There are things better expressed in pictures rather than words. Barthes (1977) says that scholars have gone great lengths to show how images can communicate implicit and explicit meanings. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is interested in demystifying the ideological meanings engraved within visual texts. MCDA understands that discourses can be communicated through the verbal, visual, sound, music, scent, and touch (Harrison, 2008:57). MCDA is an advance of CDA, premised on analysing both linguistic and visual properties within texts. This approach is very pertinent with regards to the online domain whereby multiple modalities of communication are chosen and exhibited. Machin and Mayr (2012:30) have devised a toolkit for ways people relay discursive and ideological messages through lexical and visual choices. These scholars are interested in how these meanings are expresses in minute forms. Fowler (1991:82) says that every text is a lexical field, a map created by the author of the text leading us to a particular location or subject. The most basic of any MCDA analysis is lexical analysis. This entails looking at the vocabulary, words used and words avoided in a particular text (visual and lexical). All texts have an ideological and discursive inclination; this is seen through the type of choices encoded in a particular text. The below are the common lexical and semiotic choices as well of choices made to represent people.

The below according to Fairclough (2003:145) can be known as representational strategies:

1.10.3) CDA Analytical tools and techniques

Common Lexical Semiotic Choices

a) Over-Lexicalization: overuse, persuasive, and repetitious nature of statements employed to justify and validate particular claims.

b) Suppression and Lexical Absences: when lexical make-up is simplified or certain aspects are left out.

c) Structural Opposition: when opposing concepts are enticed through lexical selection to support ideological squaring.

d) Genre Communication: choice of words that indicate levels of authority and co-membership with audience (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Common Visual Semiotic Choices

e) Attributes: ideas and values communicated through objects, for example, clothes and accessories.

f) Setting: the issue space and the discourses, values and ideas communicated through its specific arrangement.

g) Salience: features in a visual text made to stand out in order to foreground certain meanings. Salience looks at potent cultural symbols, size, colour, tone, focus, foregrounding, overlapping to analyse the salience of visual texts (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Common Lexical Tools for Representing People

h) Personalisation and Impersonalisation: when certain information about a person is concealed or revealed.

i) Individualisation versus Collectivisation: the consideration of how social actors are represented as individuals or part of a collective.

j) Specification versus Genericisation: when individuals are represented as specific individuals or generically.

k) Nomination or Functionalisation: participants nominated or functionalized according to what they do, through the use of honorifics.

l) Objectivation: this is when a social actor is represented through a feature.

m) Anonymization: participants in texts are anonymised.

n) Aggregation: subjects are quantified and treated as statistics.

o) Suppression: what is missing in the text is just as important as what is in the text.

p) Us, We and Them: pronouns used to align ideologically and with or against particular power relation.

1. 11) How was the Data Collected and Analysed?

The first step was to remind myself the research questions initiated. This was to help sift the relevance of the data extracted from the Facebook page. The research questions were interested in how *End Time Disciples Ministries* represent their church performances, discourses and ideologies on Facebook, and secondly how Facebook audiences engage with those representational fronts. I archived the texts (status updates) that vigorously displayed the church performances of *End Time Disciple Ministries*. The texts, dating back from mid-2015 to early 2016 were saved and thematically archived using screenshots. The screenshots were then saved on my USB. Once I had saved the data, I divided the data according to themes that prominently emerged from the data. The themes were saved and archived according to these demarcations: *representations of preaching*, *representations of prophecy*, *representations of miracles*, *representations of testimonies*, *self-representations of Prophet Penuel and representations of bizarre church performance*. I made sure that the data was tweaked in order for the confidentiality and anonymity of the people who reflected on the data to be maintained.

The second level of the data collection process required me to collect data from the audience responses to the *End Time Disciple Ministries* church performances represented online. Immediately, after I had concluded the analysis of the representations of church performance I went back to the Facebook page and copied all the comments to each performance that was analysed. I then divided the Facebook page comments into themes- twelve themes emerged from that division. I

then expanded the conversation on the thematic discourses that prevailed analysing them rigorously most importantly how they can speak back to key sociological theory provided in the literature review section. The challenges that prevailed in the analysis were attempting to juxtapose the findings of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with relevant theoretical rationale. With regards to the data collection it was the finding concrete thematic discourses that prevailed throughout the engagements of the Facebook page that proved difficult because multiple conversations were in contestation. The process was time consuming and mentally demanding. Secondly most of the comments had to be decoded and interpreted because some were not clearly articulated by the Facebook audiences. The study also had to ensure ethic consideration in order to maintain that the research was innocuous.

1.12) Ethical Consideration

Ethics was applied for and approved via the *University of the Witwatersrand* ethics clearance office. The application was approved on the basis that the study involved no human contact because it took on a methodological approach that was void of any human contact. The research methodology and methods to be undertaken were deemed innocuous by the institutional powers that be.

1.13) Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 is the literature review. The subject of African religious ritual and its link to Neo-Pentecostalism will be explored. The chapter sketches the multiple literary debates in the realm of African Christianity to foreground relevant scholarship in the realm of African Christianity. Key pertinent studies in the realm of Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism will be foregrounded. The chapter further touches on the phenomenon of (new) media and its intersections with religion, particularly the sect of Neo-Pentecostalism. The chapter examines the research that has been invested in that domain. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the research that has employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within online regions, more specifically Facebook pages. Finally, the chapter will give the theoretical and conceptual tools relevant for the empirical work of the study. *Chapter 3* is the presentation of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) findings of the representational themes prevalent on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page. *Chapter 4* gives an analytical reading

of audience responses to representations analysed in *Chapter 3*. The audience responses were divided twelve thematic discourses. Finally, *Chapter 5* gives an analytical reflection and conclusion on the empirical findings of the study with relevant recommendations.

Chapter 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature for this study is located in the realm of religious studies, media studies and sociology. The work endeavours to make a valid and formidable contribution and intervention within the above scholarly domains. This literature review addresses five key issues. Firstly, the chapter sketches in brevity the idea of African religious ritual, paralleling it with the broader conversations within Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa today. Secondly, the chapter reviews the historic debates and key scholarship conducted around the subject of Christianity and Pentecostalism in Africa. Thirdly the chapter addresses how modern Pentecostals are categorically labelled as a movement of *hope*, *chaos, experientialism* and a people that exert a complete *'break with the past'*. Fourthly, the chapter outlines modern Pentecostalism as a Christian sect relevant to the plight and struggle of African peoples. The chapter further discusses the themes of *signs and wonders*, *money and success* which have been prominent themes within Neo-Pentecostal scholarly literature. Finally the chapter address Neo-Pentecostalism in the age of mediatisation vis-à-vis virtualization. The section addresses how Neo-Pentecostalism has conversed and connected with contemporary new/social media interventions. The chapter highlights the evident academic void or minimalist explorations with regards to CDA studies conducted within online domains. Finally, the chapter concluded by noting the contribution this study will have in sociological academic literature.

2.1) Religious Rationality of Africans: *Drawing Parallels*

Vast literature informs us that African religious rationality and practice has a deep affinity towards ritualistic practice. Ritual practices of healing, thanksgiving and worship are canonised and highly esteemed in Africa (Eiselen and Schapera, 1934). Africans have had rituals and performances for everything under the sun. African ritual performances celebrated healings, fertility and birth (Chidester, 1992). These ritual performances foregrounded the body in space as the chief site of performance. The body was the script where the performances were inscribed- the *tabula rasa* (Devisch, 1993; Fernandez, 1991; Rappaport, 1999; Schechner 2002;

Stoller, 1995). The advent of Christianity required divergence from such *'atavistic'* African ritual practices because they were deemed backward and paganistic- not providing a theology of escape and redemption (Mbiti, 1969). African religious systems were relegated as primitive, devoid of philosophy or soteriological relevance because they lacked scriptural reference and backing (Schwartz et al, 1975). African rituals and performances were premised on the belief of ancestors having connection with the living. Ancestors were believed to bestow blessings and misfortune (Chidester, 1992:6). To maintain good fellowship and a working relationship with ancestors one needed perpetual and repetitive rituals to be performed, perpetually. Similarly, the discourse of blessings is a dominant discourse amongst the Neo-Pentecostal tradition. Blessings, in these spaces are reinforced through ritualistic and volatile giving and monetary sacrifice (Gifford, 2004). African customary religious rationale finds unique *renaissance* within Neo-Pentecostal spaces. Neo-Pentecostal spaces can be imagined as avenues of reconnecting with the supernatural vigour found in African religious custom which has been marginally inhibited with the introduction of missionary Christianity that demonised and valorised such rationales and modes of being and doing.

Literature has also focus on the fact that Modern Pentecostals rely bountifully on ritualistic antics. McGuire (1992) and Kertzer (1988) describe ritual as symbolic actions that strengthen and affirm group belief which often have a formal quality. Such actions are often accompanied by a sense of awe and follow highly structured and standardized sequences enacted in particular spaces and times. Rituals are often accompanied with symbolic meaning. Ritual in Africa can also be conceived as habitual expressions of religious identity, affiliation, elicit revelation, empowerment, transformation and transcendence (Coleman and Collins, 2010:317; Grillo, 2012:112). The way that Africans rationalize their customary practices and rituals is the same rationale by which new Pentecostals are rationalizing their performative practices. African customary practice and Neo-Pentecostal in Africa both have an affinity with the miraculous, blessings, acquisition of success and ritualistic means of transcending towards prosperity and access. Little scholarship has focused on the fundamental connection between Neo-Pentecostal and African religious custom fanatics. The next section charts the primary scholarship and

debates that have been incorporated within the realm of African Christianity and Pentecostalism in Africa.

2.2) Debates and Scholarship within African Christianity and Pentecostalism

A bulk of the literature on African Christianity has been based on the missionary intervention. The missionary intervention was the '*civilizing project'* of the gospel message imported to African soil by Westerners who desired to civilize the savage natives (Coleman, 2000:6). Scholars who reject the rationale purported by the missionary intervention argue that the inception of Christianity on African soil obliterated the cultural and customary dynamics of Africa (Manala, 2005). Scholars argue that the African modes of being were radically frowned upon by the instigators of the missionary project. African ways of being and doing were deemed fundamentally atavistic. The missionary intervention was cognitively envisaged as a project missioned to progress the savages towards civilization and humanity (Pityana, 1999; Helgesson, 2006). This assumed *'lack of civilization'* proved to be the pivotal reason why the missionaries were burdened to instil social and developmental services such as education, hospitals and other developmental initiatives (Ukah, 2007:5). Contrastingly, there are scholars who seek to debunk the missionary intervention myth, altogether. Fatokun (2005:357) down plays the dominant narrative that Christianity emerged after the advent of colonialism. He submits that Christianity has been virtually existent in Africa since its genesis. Regardless of those insights it is the missionary view that still holds as the dominant justification for the inception of Christianity on African soil. It still sustains as the dominant narrative.

The academic field of anthropology has been in the forefront in the study of African Christianity (Meyer, 2004). Christianity in Africa is complex and ambiguous in its history, structure, doctrines and practice(s). The African Christianity landscape comprises of a multiplicity of denominations established by Western missionaries. The denominational sect that has become most prevalent in Africa, however, is the Christian sect of Pentecostal nomenclature and descent (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007:128). Furthermore, Charismatics/Neo-Pentecostalism, a subsequent part of Pentecostal, is believed to have reshaped and reconfigured the religious landscape of Africa in a mighty way in recent times (Coleman, 1998; Onyinah, 2007). These are

some of the key scholarships in the field of Pentecostalism in Africa and abroad: Matthews Ojo (1988) has examined the historical roots of Pentecostalism. Ruth Marshall (2009) has sketched a political framework for understanding the networks, organizational structures and doctrinal emphasises of the movement. Paul Gifford (1998) has traced the development of the movement in different countries within the political and socio-economic context. Maxwell (1999) has traced the genesis of the movement in Southern Africa Region. He has also shown its trans-denominational and multi-racial character. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) has provided a theological examination of the practices of the movement. Birgit Meyer (2003) examines the cosmology of power African Pentecostalism and its employment of the media. Marshall-Fratani and Corten (2001) examine the transnational and global nature of the movement. There is minimal scholarship on how Pentecostals and African Christians have are employing new/social media to exhibit their church performances. This minimalist contribution is what this study seeks to change, urgently.

2.3) Modern Pentecostal Movement in Africa: a Movement of Hope, Chaos and Experientialism.

As propounded earlier, Neo-Pentecostals or Modern Pentecostals is the strand of Christianity that has impacted Africa bountifully. Modern Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon has received notable reception and attraction in Africa and Latin America. Scholarly attention on these geographical vicinities has zoomed into how religious studies have begun to take note of the Global South (Kalu, 2003:87). Modern Pentecostalism personifies the contemporary religious quest in Africa, a religious quest which is pervasive and multi-directional. The potency of any religious sect is in how it is able to wiggle itself amidst the challenges within the social ecosystem of a given public domain. Modern Pentecostalism has successfully executed that through their insurgence into the rural and urban spaces. Pentecostalism has managed to pull substantial numbers of young people from mainline churches (*Anglican, Roman Catholics, and Methodists*), due to their fronted freshness, relevance, dynamic services, and spontaneous music (Kalu, 2007; Mashua, 2013). However, many still vacate the movement due to its hyper-performativity and alleged shallow biblical exegesis.

Pentecostals of old interpreted the bible at face value. The logic behind this approach was that bible scripture is more convicting if taken literally (Kalu, 2003). Modern Pentecostals, however, are open to non-literal and symbolic interpretations of scripture (Ervin, 1981:22; Ellington, 1996:17). Emphasis is on relational, emotional, oral faith, immediacy of biblical text and a freedom to interpret and appropriate new and multiple meanings of scripture. The danger of such interpretations is an eclectic reading of scripture which is detrimental in the hands of an ill-trained leader (Kalu, 2003; Land, 1993). Furthermore, Modern Pentecostalism is conceptualized as an experiential type of Christianity (Bruner, 1970). This is a common literary critique of the movement. By experiential Christianity, Bruner (1970) means that the new Pentecostal orientation of Christianity is not interested in the dogmatic inculcation and routinely performed religious acts. Rather, it vehemently emphasises personal experience with God- where the individual has to have his or her own encounter with God. Modern Pentecostalism is a religion that *'has to do with experience of God rather than thinking about God'.* This is the ultimate truth for them (Smail, 1993:50). MacArthur (1993) posits the claim that the fetish around experience and emotionalism gives the charismatic leader the power to exploit others. This is fundamentally what young Prophet Penuel does. He exploits the thirst people have for the miraculous, sublime and extraordinary. They then justify their behaviours through the use of scripture as a resource to validate and authenticate fundamentally criminal acts.

The modern Pentecostal message is contextualized as per the present conditions of the people, turning biblical texts into oral and experiential categories. The songs, dances and yells of audience participation are used as an instrument of performing the religiosity before it is rationalized (Rambo, 1993:113). For some it is a ministry of hope and possibilities. For others it is interpreted as a movement of chaos, disorder and biblical shallowness. Anderson (1992) and Martin (2004) argue that modern Pentecostalism projects a facade of withdrawal and escape from social struggles of the world. This claim has been supported with the fact that most of the initial growth and membership of the Pentecostalism movement in South Africa, even in the past, was amongst the poor (De Wet, 1989:39). More recently, Ruth Marshall (2009) rejects the claim that Pentecostalism is a means of escapism. She suggests it is a means to survive the power monopolies and socio-economic impediments of the

time. For many, it is interpreted as a movement that advocates for total *'break with past'* and the charting of new futures, new aspirations and new hopes.

2.3.1) A '*break with the past'* and the Charting of New Futures.

The born again ethic is the foundational rationale of Pentecostalism, both classical and the modern rendition (Kalu, 2003). Ruth Marshall (2009) calls it the *'break with the past'.* This is where the individual confronts the past and seeks unmitigated forgiveness from his past in order to champion a new future by beginning a new life under the guiding light of God. Theologically, a person is born again when he or she is regenerated or sanctified by accepting, acknowledging and confessing Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour. This sanctification purifies the believer from sin and all forms of internal pollution (Ukah, 2007:11). Pentecostalism in many of its local manifestations is rich on its disjunctive discourses and practices aimed at making ruptures with the past and chartering new futures (Robbins, 2003:224). The discourse of conversion resonates with the idea of a complete '*break with the past'* which means complete transformation and personal change. The core ethos of the born again ethic is a redefinition and re-invention of identity, and an establishment of a new life vision.

Born again-ism is a complete rupture from a sinful past and sinful nature. Life attitude becomes God focused, through an upbeat mood, optimistic attitude and positive thinking which is emphasised to create a mutually balanced life (Kalu, 2003). The born again ethic provides the power to survive anxieties and the crises of modern Africa. It is a militant project for the charting and building of new futures and possibilities. It inspires holistic personal transformation which should reflect materially (money), physically (health) and psychologically (renewed mind) and spiritually (sanctification). Spiritually, one must disconnect to African custom practice (Meyer, 1998:182). Godly covenants must replace the old ancestral ones which represent atavism and paganism. Deliverance rituals like the laying on of hands is aimed at ridding the demons lodged in the past. The power of the present dislodges the anxieties and problems of the past (Van Dijk, 1992:173). It is a radical project of transformative energy.

The *born again* ethic emphasises a rigorous policing of bodies and an emphasis on sexual purity. The *born again* cannot marry non-Christians. Perpetual ritual makes

sure that the born again subject does not become '*the burnt again' or* '*hell's fire'*. The ritual practices like prayer, fasting (*food abstinence*), night vigils and bible studies maintains the born again's sanctification (Kalu, 2003). It has been argued that these aforementioned rituals keep males focused and less promiscuous and creates a new social control model that challenges societal norms of promiscuity and waywardness. '*Born again-ism',* if you like, infuses a sense of community and aid. Some churches own businesses, health care services and universities, hence uplifting the educationally, economically and socially down-trodden. Gifford (1993) stresses that the movement offers a *'sense of belonging, emotional gratification, a new caring community'* and relief from internal guilt (bequeathed by the past). The constructive attitude of born again-ism is even seen in the simplest of things such as dress aesthetic. Modesty is the order of the day. This is not the case with new born again like *End Time Disciples Ministries* who project a youthful aesthetic, were dogmatic modes of dress and décor are rejected. New modes are being used to indoctrinate and proselytize contemporary constituencies. Modern Pentecostalism is in a constant voyage of transitions in its quest to keep abreast with the post-modern moment.

2.4) 'New' Pentecostals in Africa: The Obsession with Signs and Wonders, Money and Success.

The early missionaries failed to understand the African world view and present an African inspired type of Christianity, relevant to African problems. Anderson (1979:222) argues that modern Pentecostalism in Africa was a movement born from radical social discontent and a time of great spiritual hunger that needed to be assuaged through an authentic spiritual hunger in Africa. The gospel proclaimed by the missionaries was an impoverished gospel because it was detached from the struggles African peoples (Daneel, 1987). Maimela (1985:71) suggests that a majority of African Christians believed that the church was irrelevant to their social struggles. He further states that the greatest attraction towards the indigenous African churches was the open invitation of bringing social problems to the church. Pentecostalism in Africa finds its pertinence in how it has been able to transform and mutate to the contextual problems of the indigenous African peoples (Mashua, 2013). African Pentecostalism finds relevance in how it allows for the leeway for culturally relevant forms of expression (Shorter, 1975:24). Africans have a deep

obsession with healing and the miraculous. Therefore, the missionaries had to find a rhetoric that was able to connect to the needs of the people.

Healing and the miraculous has become a budding industry, with many Africa preachers' emphasising divine healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues, exorcism of demons and the protection from evil. This message is a relevant message for a poverty stricken continent with pandemic issues like malnutrition, tuberculosis and A.I.D.S (Mashua, 2013). Neo-Pentecostalism has been labelled the '*Signs and Wonders' Movement*. The key emphasis of *'Signs and Wonders'* is the supernatural works of God and the miraculous (The emphasis is on power evangelism, prophecy and healing propagated through televangelism and mass crusades (Mashua, 2013:4). The *'Signs and Wonders'* movement finds home in Africa particularly because of the fact that miracles and healing are inextricably inseparable with African religious ritual, as stipulated earlier. Religion in the African context is said to bring restoration in relation to brokenness in relationships, social and spiritual networks (Ukah, 2007:14). The new Pentecostal churches purport to heal all manner of disease without exception, particularly diseases doing much damage in the Sub-Saharan region like AIDS (Mashua, 2013:6). It is a religion of possibility and hope.

Literature has also highlighted that Neo-Pentecostals profusely emphasise the subject of monetary progress as a sign of Gods favour (Young, 1997:4). No one in God's family was ever destined to exist in sickness, fear, ignorance, poverty, loneliness' and mediocrity (Idahosa, 1987). The fundamental proponent of the prosperity teaching is that Christians have the right and the responsibility to be prosperous in all spheres of life (financially, physically and spiritually). The monetary driven gospel has been labelled the *Health and Wealth Gospel* or the *Gospel of Prosperity* (Gifford, 2004; Brouwer et al. 1996; Gifford, 2001; Gifford 1987). The prominent champions of the teaching have been the likes of *Kenneth E. Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton John Osteen, Creflo Dollar* among many others. Kumuyi (1990) writes that it is God's perfect will that a believer should enjoy perfect health, spiritual and material blessings, victory, promotion, peace, joy and satisfaction. Scholars argue that it was the protestant ethic which gave rise to capitalistic spirit endemic within the Neo-Pentecostalism. Maxwell (2007) informs us

that the Protestants ethic was based on hard work. The ethic leads to the accumulation of wealth and investment rather than consumption.

The ideological parameter of the *Health and Wealth Gospel* encourages congregants to *"Name and Claim it".* The '*Naming and claiming it'* principle is based on the premise that one can get whatever prosperity he or she desires granted he or she speaks forth what he/she desires. Some have understood it as a type of Christianised form of '*positive confession'* (Jackson, 1989). Jean and Jane Comaroff (2001:23) have found parallels between *occult economies*, the use of magical means for material ends, and the new *religious movements* across the world. Both of these economies have two dimensions: a material aspect founded on the effort to produce wealth or to account for its accumulation by appeal to techniques that defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason. In agreement with the Comaroff's new Pentecostals use simplistic and magical modes of acquiring wealth one such method is '*positive confession'*. The sad reality is that the poorest of the poor name it, but the prophets, apostles; pastors are claiming it and getting exorbitantly rich at the poor's expense (Maxwell, 2007). Theologically, it is difficult to give a coherent summation of the prosperity teaching because it does not present itself as a written theology, yet lingers in the realm of the rhetorical and experientialism. The appeal is much tied to the language used and the personality (preacher) propounding the ideal rather than the theological content (Young, 1997:4).

Literature has further highlighted that Neo-Pentecostal church spaces have a reoccurring theme of success. This is evident even in the name of the Churches: *"Winners Chapel, Victory Bible Church, Power Chapel etc*. This theme of success is also evident in the conference themes and the bumper stickers stuck on cars which advertise about the churches. Neo-Pentecostal spaces are motivational havens and platforms of social security, resources and access to counselling, regarding marital matters. The key objective of the success rhetoric in churches is consolidating *self-esteem, ambition and confidence* (Gifford, 2004:140). The churches are havens of upliftment and catalysts for better prospects. Therefore, they assume motivational and success rhetoric. Literature on Neo-Pentecostals has focused primarily on its nature and attributes. It has been less active in charting out how Neo-Pentecostals

are appropriating new media technologies to represent their natures, attributes and institutional settings. Scholarship has not been forefront in addressing how Neo-Pentecostals have navigated themselves in the age of mediatisation to represent their performances, rituals and ways of being.

2.5) Neo-Pentecostalism in the Age of Mediatisation: The Consequences.

Africa has been near absent in the journals, biographical essays and research in the field of religion, media and culture (Iherjirika, 2008; Stout and Buddenbaum, 1996). This scholarly limitation is puzzling seeing that intersections between religion and the internet have become an important field of academic inquiry (Badd and Wadley, 1995). Religion has become one of the most popular items on the internet (Cowan and Hadden, 2000). The media is becoming the new discursive avenue for the representation of the self and other. In fact, many of the religious groups tend to define themselves over and against other groups in this evolving public and virtual space (Hackett, 1993). There has been an effort to bring together the wide gap of misunderstanding between religion and media scholarship. It seems no longer feasible to contain religion in the confines of traditional institutional settings. Symbolic religious forms have been transformed through the incorporation of the new forms of communication like websites, bumper stickers and television dramas. The media have become central in interactions within the imagined worlds that constitute the sacred in the global present (Stolow, 2005:125).

Prominent scholar, Hjarvard (2006:5) posits the argument that the media has become central in the project of religious change. This is because the media has been elevated as the vehicle of *enlightenment* (Demerath, 2003). Hojsgaard and Warburg (2006) further add that the internet has become a prominent platform of dissemination of ideas-radically changing how institutions engage with communities and potentially secularizing them. In the religious domain ritualistic practices of worship, celebration and mourning have been taken over by the media (Martino-Barbero, 1997). The modern media have not only secularized religion, but have also damaged how religious issues are represented, shifting the very authority of religious institutions. Scholars maintain that religion has become *mediatised* meaning that the *sacred* and *sacrosanct* has undergone rapid secularization or

modernisation. Hjarvard (2006:4) has coined this transformative activity as the *mediatisation of religion.* This is evident in the *End Time Disciple Ministries* where sacred church performances are easily disseminated and broadcast-therefore tweaking their sacredness and sacrosanct nature. Charismatic leaders and their movements desire to be seen and heard through performances that are propagated through the media (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007:237). The internet particularly through social media is a convenient space for public display and representational work. The modern information technology gives us an unprecedented capacity to connect with each other and violently exert our representational projects.

Modern information technology can be understood as an inexhaustible stream of ideas, information, cultures, images, arts and products (Mitchell, 2005:9). Therefore, it is the space where knowledge resides. On the contrary, the internet can be a dangerous place for all kinds of activities such as unsolicited communications for the acquisition of non-existent wealth, sexual crimes and ungraceful chats. The coming of the internet has established a new electronic medium that will prove to be as much significant in the future development of religious communities as the earlier inventions of writing, printing and moving images (Beckerlegge, 2001: 221). The internet has fundamentally changed our sense of perception, knowledge, subjectivity, community and agency (Vries, 2002:19). It has also changed how religion is lived, expressed and performed. Religious movements are exploiting new media technologies (both old and new) for their own devises.

New media technologies are being used as resources to secure legitimacy and to communicate with distant followers-most importantly to proselytize uncommitted constituencies (Stolow, 2005; Hackett, 1999). Cyber-evangelists are invading Muslim chat rooms to challenge their beliefs and practices (Hackett, 2006:69). Through technological advance there has been a rapid change in the content and structure of prayer, ritual performance, story-telling, knowledge production and other religious activities. The capacity to store, transmit information, and the putative effects of such technologies to refashion the body and compress time has been instrumental in changing and reshaping the practice of religion (Stolow, 2005:124). For some people, the internet is a site of practice and location of ritual and inspiration for offline religious devotions (Berger and Ezzy, 2004). For many, cyber-

spirituality (internet church) holds more of an attraction because it affords fewer stigmas then attending a formalised place of worship. Some surveys suggest that this is the trend of the future especially for youth (Clark, 2003). However, some argue that the internet cannot compete with live, broadcast, expressive and emotional forms of religiosity. The credibility of organizations is deemed suspect if it does not have web presence (Hackett, 2006:69-72). The internet has also been envisaged as a long awaited medium for the *democratization of knowledge* from hierarchal elite, those who monopolize knowledge and power (Gunther et al, 2000). The internet is also a space of new possibilities and new experiences, experiences of (*absorption, asceticism, escapism, seeking and oneness*) - an arena or space for psycho-navigation (Hackett, 2006). Hoover (2003:11) argues that the most important trend in contemporary religion is *'personal autonomy'* in matters of faith. The internet has also become a space of marketing the sacred. The cures for sickness and solutions for life's problems have become broadcast on new media forums (Hackett, 2009:72). The activities that have been hidden in the sacred physical space have become desacralized through the advent of new media.

The media has become part of the religious self-definition of churches and NRMs (*New Religious Movements*) in the twenty-first century Africa. These media instruments are used as utensils by which others can be Christianised or proselytized. Churches have to use all new technologies available. De Witte (2003) says that the '*devil is using all technologies at his disposal, so people need to use the same weaponry to fight him. Churches need to move beyond the confines of the buildings'*. *In contemporary society journalist have more influence on society than pastors preaching in their churches, because television and especially radio are everywhere. She further says that* , *if we do not want to lose out, we have to use the media to spread the gospel to the world, the separation between the scared and the secular needs to be broken"* (De Witte, 2003:185). The internet (in the African context) offers more than just technological opportunity and access, but a virtual arena of spiritual warfare (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2004).

Spiritual activities are now represented and performed on virtual horizons. In the Western context, it is common practice to systematise, label and distinguish between the animate and the inanimate, the physical from the metaphysical, the scared from the secular, the natural from the supernatural. To the African such

distinctions are futile because the unseen (spiritual) is deemed active within the natural order (Dickson, 1984:49). Getting on the internet is a spiritual venture. Famous Neo-Pentecostal minister Pastor *Chris Oyikhilome* once said: *"God told me to get on the internet if you want to win more souls for me*"(Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007). De Witte (2003) argues that the use of televised and internet media creates a specific form of worship-one that is visually available for anyone regardless of religious affiliation or orientation.

Martino-Barbero (1997:103) critiques the project of modernity and says that it has led the world to a direction of secularisation by drawing off its sense of sacred. He further argues that modernity has rationalized the world and created a loss of awe and reverences which largely evident amongst contemporary cultures. In other words he argues that modernity has necessitated disenchanted. This disenchantment has left a sense of emptiness in the lives of people. He understands the boom of internet use in Neo-Pentecostal spaces as fundamentally the exercise of power and presence of Western secularism. Other Christian denominations like the Roman Catholics have not been as innovative in their use of the internet. Hence forth they have lost the *"wavelength of the masses".* The media insures that religious and discourses can permeate without impediment (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007:235). The Neo-Pentecostals in Africa have maximized this truth.

Martino-Barbero (1997:109) adds that some churches have been able to transform radio and television into a new fundamental mediation for '*religious experience'*. He further argues that these mediums are not simply a physical amplification of the voice, but add a new dimension to religious contact, religious celebration, and personal religious experience. Regardless of this fact, Cowan and Dawson (2004) object and claim that there is a thin line between *religious information* and the actual *practice of religion* (Cowan and Dawson, 2004). Martino-Barbero (1997:11) further emphasises that the distance between the *sacred* and the *profane* has been narrowed, making the proclamation and religious experience possible through the internet. Therefore, shifting how religion is mediated, lived, experienced and performed. Church as we know it has been radically changed. Hence, it is expedient for social research to venture into the virtual domain because the social phenomenon of new media is a critical horizon of social interactions. New media is impacting the Neo-Pentecostal sect in a mighty way.

2.6) ‘New Media’ and New Pentecostals in Africa.

New media are the performative avenue where modern Pentecostals are representing themselves. African Pentecostals are vigorously developing websites as an interface for interactivity between members and converts. This paradigm shift has been largely under-published (Hackett, 2006; Hackett, 2009).African intelligentsia has failed to focus on the intersections between the Neo-Pentecostals and new media- particularly how they project their church performances on the new domain. New media developments allows for a re-commodification of power and re-configurations of boundaries of belonging and self-location. Hackett (1998:3) argues that modern Pentecostals use electronic media to disseminate their teachings and erect their empires. These new media developments have resulted in the transformation of the media landscape by facilitating transnational cultural flows and global connections. This quest for global reach through the preaching of the gospel has undergone a paradigm shift, through the inception of new media. It is no more about preaching in busses, trains, schools and hospitals. Through formerly unconventional means such as music, videos and new media forms the evangelistic objective can materialise (Ojo, 1995). The highly mediatised nature of New Pentecostals has raised questions about audience, community, new religious public formations and new forms of religious discourse, publication and practice (Hackett, 2009; Marshall-Fratani, 2001). De Witte (2003) argues that media and religion share an indisputable symbiotic relationship. She argues that media are not just message transmitting instruments but spaces that must be sacralised, Christianised and kept from the wiles of the devil (De Witte, 2003:185). The advent of new media forms has seemingly amplified that project, particularly on *Facebook* and other social media domains where most New Pentecostals are representing themselves, their brands, ideologies and ritualistic church performances.

2.6.1) Understanding Social Media: The Nature of Facebook.

Social media is a form of Computer Meditated Communication (CMC) that is used to keep in touch with constituencies around you. CMCs have two critical characteristics that effect communication. First is the reduction of social cues, particularly the non-verbal cues used in face-to-face interaction to test sincerity. Secondly is the asynchronous nature of information exchange (Deumert, 2014).

Literature testifies that there has been a limitation as to how religion (particularly Neo-Pentecostalism) is propagated and revolutionized through CMCs like Facebook. Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others, who work, study and live around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos and messages, and share links and videos, and primarily to learn more about people they meet. Deumert (2014:23) projects the argument that the social networking spaces like Facebook present a '*ludic self and a carnival attitude'.* She does not reject the fact that social networks are also used for serious and information focused information she suggests that the common conversational maxim is *fun, light and free-spirited* (Danet 2001:8)*.* De Mul (2005) has called this playfulness the ludic self-construction- a space where we relate to ourselves and others in a playful manner. This playfulness is seen in types of interactions that people engage in online. They play games, joke, and flirt or just hang out with one another. The *ludic self-construction* according to De Mul (2005) has drawn on Paul Ricouer's theory of narrative self-construction to develop his idea of ludic self-construction in new media contexts. Ricouer's work is based on the insight that we do not have access to ourselves through mere introspection, rather we come to know about ourselves through mediation. Through mediation we construct an image of who we are both for others and for ourselves. Through the stories we tell, the way we dress, the food we eat and the music we listen to we construct a sense of self. We might for example construct an image that we overcome obstacles and appear victorious and strong (Deumert, 2014:24). De Mul (2005:254) differentiates two models of identity or self-construction. Those being a narrative identity which is based on coherence, continuous and linear plot or story and the ludic identity which is sporadic and a multiple possibility of being. The dual interactivity of online interaction facilitates a playful experimental, yet social, state of mind. The online space becomes a playing field that enables us to (re)configure all kinds of different worlds through our actions and interactions (De Mul, 2005: 262).

Facebook interaction is becoming ever more like a game. Life on Facebook is a game. Although participants can open chat window or belong to special interest groups of more serious nature (McClard and Anderson, 2008:12). As we engage in this playful mode, we mobilize (and desire) a particular type of self and particular set of social relations, for example: light hearted and creative, enjoyable and full of

possibilities. That is how Facebook communication is communicated through texts, sounds and images. This conveys information about how we want to be seen, and how we perceive the world (Deumert, 2014:27). The conversational nature on social media is often carnival, where the tensions and frustrations of everyday life are temporarily suspended. It reflects a deep quest for freedom from constraint, dogma and authority. Liberation is achieved through play and the transgression of the proper order and values (Lachmann et al, 1988). Laughter is central to the carnival spirit, whereby laughter is foregrounded as a very central component. Furthermore, beyond language, the multi-modal nature of digital communication allows for a move beyond the language of the market-place towards the visual depletion of grotesque bodies (Bakhtin, 1984:315). The images on Facebook often depict the bodies' *carnality*, *corporeality*, *biological profanity*, *excess, sexuality, decline and destruction*. According Zhoa et al (2013:1) people experience the Facebook platform as a region of performance and impression management, a region of presentation of self-image and a personal region of archiving meaningful facets of life.

Social media is often characterised as spaces for context specific theatrical platforms. The performances are not ephemeral but can be relived and re-enacted through digital traces that act as digital collections of performance(s).The exhibitions on social media are not limited to others but have far greater meaning to the self and how the personal is created. There is an increasing desire to use online media as a way for archiving life experiences and reflecting on identities (Greengard, 2012:15). The archive and the exhibition reflect the importance of the past performances in social media. However, minimal inquiry has been invested in the co-existence between performance, exhibition and archiving on social media (Odom et al, 2012; Zhoa and Crosley, 2012). There is a complex relationship between the people on Facebook and the data that is posted on the social media platforms. The data on Facebook can be categorised into three broad regions: *a performance region*, *exhibition region* and the *personal region* (Zhao et al, 2013:2). Regardless, of the virtual domain being a fascinating arena of projecting the self it is puzzling to know that minimalist critical inquiries in academe have been deduced from the online domain.

2.7) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Research Online.

Literature informs us that the implementation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on the online domain like Facebook has been limited. This is regardless of the fact that the social media domain is key site for articulations and contestations of social issues. CDA has not taken the intellectual duty of extracting data from electronic sources to yield new social insights. Fletcher (2004:91) suggests that this is rather bizarre because the internet is not only a tool for information moreover it is a huge repository for the retrieval of authentic data and self-renewing linguistics resources which outdoes fixed and stable *corpora.* Regardless, of this fact discourse analysts have neglected the web as a primary site of data acquisition. The research has largely focused on the semiotic, textual and interactive properties of Computer-Mediated-Communication (Harrison, 2003). A lot of study has been invested in how the characteristics of internet have had an influence on teaching and learning (Ryder and Wilson, 1996). The theoretical approaches that have been incorporated to study the internet analytically have been critical theory, discourse analysis and sociological theory (Di Maggio et al, 2001). CDA has remained silent for the most part with regards to engagements with the internet.

Mautner (2005) laments the point that linguists which see discourse as a social practice and socially influential should have jumped at the opportunity to approach the issue of discourse in medium that is key for engaging with social practices. It is unfortunate that studies that have used web based data are still limited. The most common sources are cites of inquiry have been mostly newspapers, magazines, meetings, television debates, political speeches, adverts, school texts. Di Maggio et al (2001:307) postulate the argument that the discipline of sociology has been very slow in the studying of the internet in order to gain social insights. The internet is valuable a source of data because of its relevance and significance in social domains. This research seeks to contribute to sociological studies in that regard. The study is a research will open up new research trajectories in future because very few, if any sociological studies has delved into the online domain using CDA to uncover meanings. The study will now look at the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings that informed this study.

Conclusion

The chapter addressed the African religious rationality as a basis to understand Neo-Pentecostal practices. Scholarly debates and literature circumvented around the subject African Christianity and modern Pentecostalism were explicated. The chapter provided a brief discussion on modern Pentecostal movement as a movement of *hope, chaos and manipulative* practice. The chapter also foregrounded the discourse of *'breaking with the past'* which is an ethic that influences the operations of modern Pentecostals profusely. Literature testifies that Neo-Pentecostals exhibit an overwhelming fetish and obsession with the thematic of *signs and wonders* (healing and miracles), money (prosperity) and success. The chapter further addressed the new/social media appropriation or use by Neo-Pentecostals in Africa- highlighting the subsequent absences academic research has invested in that domain. Finally, the addressed the of minimal CDA research that deploys online data.

Chapter 3

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This section provides the theoretical and conceptual underpinning that informed this study. Durkheim's insights were employed to understand the sociology of religion, particularly how it relates to the representational work on the *End Times Disciples Ministries* Facebook page. Goffman's dramaturgical theory was used to understand the representations of performances on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page. Foucault was employed to understand the concepts of discourse and power in relation to the performances and representations depicted on the Facebook page. Gramsci was used to understand *ideological power* and *hegemony*. The concepts of *belonging* and that of *patriarchy* proved to prevail in the empirical section hence were theorised in this chapter. Lastly, the concept of '*cultural violence'* proved to be very handy seeing that the representations of performance on the Facebook page were saturated with violence. The aforementioned theories and concepts helped to forge a formidable rationale of the representational repertoires on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page.

3.1) Conceptualizing the Religious

Religion is a system of symbols by means of which society becomes conscious of itself. It is the characteristic way for thinking about collective identity and social environments (Durkheim, 1897). Emile Durkheim when conceptualizing religion elevates the idea of sacred to great lengths. *Sacredness* in Durkheim's understanding suggests that all societies have given certain objects a status that is inviolable. The concept of sacred resonates with ideas of *holiness* and *consecration*, it can also mean accursed or horrible-as something devoted to a divinity for destruction. Ordinarily, it stands for something society holds in high esteem. Never to be desecrated. Durkheim (1897) elevates the idea of sacred even above religion itself, and has been foremost in defining the concept of scared in conjunction with religion. The idea of scared cannot be understood in isolation; it assumes meaning when it is juxtaposed with its logical opposite which is the profane (*unholy, common, wicked or secular*) or according to Durkheim something

that abolishes, threatens or undermines the basic attributes of the sacred. The idea of sacred versus that of profanity is the basis of all religious thought. Religious life gravitates and vacillates between the dichotomous and polar vicissitudes of pure and impure, saintly and sacrilegious, divine and diabolical. The sacred things are those whose representations society has fashioned and valorised. The profane things are those which we constructed from our individual impression (Pickering, 1984). These impressions are often negative. Durkheim views society as having characteristics of the *sacred* and *profane*-organized dichotomously. This dichotomy has been a necessary step by scholar since it expresses the contestation or opposition between the individual (profane) and society (sacred) (Douglas, 1966:21). The individual is initiated into society through the socialization into the things *sacred*. The individual is socialized into thinking that scared things are different from profane things in their very nature. Man has visualized the sacred and the profane as separate classes of objects (Pickering, 1984:124). However, with the advent of new/social media this dichotomous matrix has been fundamentally tweaked. The *End Time Disciple Ministries* Facebook page represents *sacred* things (church performances) on profane spaces (internet).

3.2) Dramaturgical Theory

Sociologist, Erving Goffman (1959) is the central figure in the study of performance. Performance(s), conceptually, are all the activities of an individual displayed in the presence of observers, this is known as the *front*. The *front* is the expressive region employed by the individual during his/her performance. The performance cannot be enacted without the *setting* which provides the scenery. Noteworthy, *front* does not allude to the geographical setting but the personalities of people and how they wish to be perceived, this is termed the personal front. *Personal front* may include: sex, age, race and bodily gestures. *Personal front* is made up of two things those being appearance and manner. *Appearance* refers to social status of performer. The manner is the role or function the performer will be expected to play out in a particular situation. *Fronts* therefore are selected not created. They are a matter of choice rather than grooming. *Fronts* have an objective of projecting an impression while in aural and visual proximity towards audience. Another critical performance region is the back stage; this is the region of relaxation (Goffmann, 1959:105). The advent of social media has created a depletion of the *front stage* versus *back stage*

dichotomy because the online world has made performing perpetual, habitual and natural. We perform in the *front stage* and also in the *back stage* where we are supposed to be docile, reserved and relaxed- at least theoretically. Furthermore, Goffman (1959:15) argues that when an individual plays a part he requires the performance to be taken seriously. The audience should be convinced that the character performed, as well as the attributes of the character is real. The performance duty is always exhibited for the benefit of the on-looking other. There are dual levels to the performative duty. The performer can be mesmerized by his performance, convinced that the performance fostered is the real reality, this is a *sincere performer*. On the contrary, it can so happen that an individual be totally unconvinced by his own performance, this is *cynical performer*. The performer vacillates and oscillates between being a *sincere* and *cynical* performer. This is the resounding case on social media domain where the self is fluid and flux. The *End Time Disciples Ministries* is a hive of representational activity, an avenue where constructions of self and group identity are robustly manifest and exhibited; Goffman (1959) calls this selective self-representation. Social media, act as storehouses, where old data is saved and preserved for future consumption and engagement (Hogan, 2010:377). This amplifies the future engagement and re-presentation of data. The use of social media for personal archiving has become the important audience rather than the other. Through editing, framing, regulating the selection of the *front* is maintained on the online space. The online region is vehemently an arena of naturalized performance and impression management. Impression management has been largely applied to self-presentations in online environments (Chester and Bretherton, 2007). Most of the scholarship has been on how Goffman employs impression management to images and photos. Impression management has been concerned with what is concealed and revealed on the online space. However, due to the complex nature of online audiences, it is ever more complex to know what to reveal and conceal for public consumption (Palen and Dourish, 2003). Theoretically, Goffman (1959:203) defines impression management as the successful staging of a character, or putting on a performance to satisfy individual or team expectations. A team is a set of individuals, who share performative solidarity (Aspling, 2011:6). Teams have three forms of dramaturgical impression management. These forms are 1. *Dramaturgical Loyalty; 2. Dramaturgical Discipline and; 3.Dramaturgical Circumspection* which are important techniques used to avoid

disruptions, incidents and scenes within a performance. More importantly, they are about preventing the *back region* from being exposed to an unwelcome audience. The idea of *dramaturgical loyalty* is about maintaining strong team solidarity. It entails keeping a professional distance and not being too close to them. It is also about behaving according to the vision and front stage solidarity of the team- so that ultimately the team performance is not jeopardised. *Dramaturgical Discipline* according to Goffman (1959) is the *'self-control'* and '*presence of mind'* that the performer projects on the *front stage* so as to not make an unmitigated move. The performer must show intellectual and emotional involvement in what he/she is doing or presenting (Goffman, 1959:210). This kind of *impression management* is found in the policing and controlling of bodily gestures (Goffman, 1959: 211). Lastly, the idea of *dramaturgical circumspection* is about carefully selecting the right team members and making sure they adhere to dramaturgical *loyalty and discipline*. It is also about selecting an audience that will give minimal resistance regarding the show the performer wants to showcase (Aspling, 2011:6). These three elements are evident on the *End Time Disciple Ministries* page. *Dramaturgical loyalty* is exerted when those who associate to the Facebook page remain loyal and supportive of *Prophet Penuel* regardless of his criminal and denigrating representations exhibited online. *Dramaturgical disciple* is exerted in the choice of words and consistency of the Facebook page administrators and the audience that comments on the page. *Dramaturgical circumspection* is expressed when Facebook participants make sure that whatever they say does not have robust backlash when received by audiences. The next section will now look at the concept of discourse which proved relevant as theoretical tool to understand interactions on the Facebook page.

3.3) Concept of Discourse

The term discourse has been formally monopolized within the realm of language. The key scholar to have comprehensively defined the term is non-other than Michel Foucault. Foucault understood discourse as a system of representation. By discourse, Foucault meant a group of statements that provide a language for talking about and representing a particular moment (Hall, 2001:72). Fundamentally, discourse is about the production of knowledge. All social practices entail meaning. These meanings shape and influence what we do (Hall, 1992:291). Linguistically, the term entails passages of writing or speech. However, it must be noted that the

concept of discourse is not purely a linguistic term. It is not exclusively about language but also about disbanding the traditional distinction between language and practice. It is about dismantling the distinction between what one says and what one does. Foucault (1972) argues that discourse determines how a topic is talked about and understood. Furthermore, it determines how ideas are put into practice and how they regulate and moderate the conduct of others (Hall, 2001:74). Discourse regulates how we ought to speak about a particular concept or topic. It also determines how we ought to not speak about it (Hall, 2001:72). Nothing exists outside of discourse because every topic and every conversation we have is cocooned and compartmentalized beneath a specific discourse. Discourse does not consist of a single text, statement or source but rather how a multiplicity of texts and statements combine to forge a particular meaning. Meaning and meaningful practice is constructed within discourse. This is the constructionist orientation, which suggests that meaning is constructed within discourse. Foucault argued that discourse produces the objects of knowledge and that *nothing existed outside of discourse*. Regardless of this claim Foucault does not dispute the fact that something can have material meaning (Foucault, 1972). The concept of discourse is not in whether things exist or not but more so in where discourse emanates from. Foucault argues that since we can have knowledge of things and meaning, it is because of discourse. Therefore, in a nutshell discourse is a system of statements that construct meaning and knowledge about a particular subject. If we maintain with Foucault thinking we understand that in any space what discourse analysis is interested in is how meanings are produced, specifically by whom and how they are produced and ultimately how all those components intersect with power (Krijnen and Van Baumel, 2015:24). Social Media is a hive of discursive deliberations and machinations.

3.4) 'From Power to Bio-power'

Power is interested in how discourses are put to work through discursive institutional settings that regulate the conduct of others. Foucault's key concern is the relationship between knowledge and power. Particularly how power operates within what he calls the institutional apparatuses and technologies. These institutional apparatuses and technologies include both linguistic and non-linguistic means. For example, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws and morality are some of these institutional apparatuses. The apparatus is always linked to certain co-

ordinates of power. The categories of language and power are seen as enmeshed together because it is always applied in social conduct and the regulation of human bodies (Hall, 2001:75). These institutional apparatuses infuse particular discourses. For example, the church *End Time Disciples Ministries* is an institutional space that projects discourses of radical and militant Christianity. These discourses are able to regulate police, control and subjugate bodies within the ambits of those institutional spaces. Foucault does not hold dear to the Marxist concept of ideology- which suggests that those in the economic base of society are the ones who are responsible for the ideas that get disseminated in society. He sees the question of knowledge and power as being more about class power and class interests. Foucault claimed that the knowledge linked to power assumes the authority of the truth. There is no knowledge that does not constitute, regulate power relations (Foucault, 1977:27). Truth is not outside power, truth is a thing of this world, and each country has a regime of truth or a general politics of truth (Foucault, 1980:3). There are certain discourses that are naturalized and accepted as true. According to Foucault this happens through discourse and power. Foucault advanced an altogether new conception of power. He understood power as not moving on a top-down direction. For Foucault power circulates and permeates every site of social life, both the public and the private sphere. Power is not only repressive but also productive because it also induces pleasures (Foucault, 1980:119). Power is not deployed only through the monopoly of knowledge. Power permeates to the point where people have power over the lives of others. Foucault further forged the concept of *bio-power*, which according to Rabinow (1984) was the power that sovereign leadership had on the people with regards to letting die or letting to live. They had the leeway to regulate the destinies, progress and ultimate ends of people. Institutional settings are instruments for the necessitation of bio-power in the modern day. Through stringent rule, the policing of bodies, birth rates, population regulations, prisons and churches *bio-power* is exerted upon subjects, and their bodies and their destinies.

3.5) Cultural Violence

Cultural violence is the violence caused and perpetuated by the symbolic spheres of existence. These symbolic spheres of existence are the religious, ideological, language art, empirical science as well as formal science. These aforementioned

elements become cultural violence when they are employed to justify, legitimize, authenticate, validate, confirm and condone *direct or structural violence.* Direct violence is the category of violence that is linear and direct, for example killings and murder. *Structural violence* on the other hand is the more institutionalized form of violence like that of exploitation or poverty (Galtung, 1990:291). Direct violence is an event; structural violence is a process; cultural violence is an invariant permanence (Galtung, 1977). Cultural violence naturalizes direct and structural violence. It makes it feel right and appropriate. Cultural violence changes gross atrocities and gives them gives them an aura of acceptability. For example, killing because you are patriotic to your country or killing because your religion tells you to. It is when ideology propels one to act dangerously and irrationally. This is the power of cultural violence, which is evident on the *End Time disciple Ministries*.

3.6) Hegemony

The concept of ideology is a concept of much debate and misapplication within the realm of social theory (Williams, 2003:147). Many employ and think the term ideology is a term that has exclusively pejorative connotations. The term is taken to mean a system of wrong, false, distorted and otherwise distorted belief typically associated with political communication. It is often thought to suggest a strong emotional or psychological attachment to biased ideas. The more accurate definition of ideology is a *system of thought* or a *system of belief.* Not all ideas can be considered an ideology. They need to be shared by a significant amount of people and must be connected to the use of power in society. The concept of hegemony was forged by Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci dismissed the claim made by Karl Marx that people are 'brainwashed' by the dominant class. Gramsci theory of hegemony rejects view that people are passive recipients of the dominant class (bourgeoisie) ideology. Dominance according to Gramsci is not imposed but normalized and naturalized by the dominant class. The dominated class consent to be dominated by the ruling class. (Williams 2003:147). This consent is earned and not solicited through coercion. Gramsci argues that ideology is not something injected into the dominated class through indoctrination. Rather, the subordinated groups accept the status quo as norm through consent. Consent is the more effective means of controlling as compared to coercion. Therefore, the subordinated class is not forced to be exploited or dominated- they choose to be dominated. This

allows the dominant class to have monopoly on the cultural and moral leadership (Williams, 2003:153). Hall (1977) is cited as asserting that the media perform the ideological work of the ruling class, the media frame reality that serves the interests of the dominant class- this is the hegemonic effect of the media. In the case of the *End Time Disciple Ministries*, *Prophet Penuel* can be envisaged as the dominant class and the congregants consent to his coercion and control. *The End Time Disciples Ministries Facebook* page is a hive of hegemonic activity and patriarchal violence.

3.7) Violence of Patriarchy

The fundamental tenet of patriarchy or male domination is the benefiting of men at the expense of woman. Men, through the patriarchal lens are viewed as the dominant sex and females as the subordinate sex. That matrix maintains and sustains male violence, as depicted in pornography and rape scenes. Women are seen as emotional and irrational. Males are seen as logical and economic providers. The feminists thinking emerged in order to disband and debunk this atavistic rationale (Williams, 2003:37). The feminist movement in the field of mass communication had its origin in the woman's movement. The media were regarded as central to the necessitation of the discrimination of women in society. The woman's movement complained about the absence of women in the media and the focus on representing woman as 'sexual commodities' and the emphasis of them being victims more rather than aggressors (Williams, 2003:38). The feminist critique is based on two propositions. Firstly, it analyses the structures of power and oppression in which women are subordinated. Secondly, there is an emphasis on the politics of representation and the production of knowledge in which women are objects rather than active subjects (Gallagher, 1992:2).This particular theoretical tool proved relevant seeing that a majority (as will be seen in the empirical chapter) of the bizarre and outrageous church performances on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* were projected through women.

3.8) Belonging

The concepts of belonging and the politics of belonging need to be differentiated (Yuval-Davis, 2011:10). Belonging is an emotional attachment of feeling at home in a particular space. Home is a space which entails a sense of hope (Hage, 1997:103). This feeling of hope often makes the home a vicinity of safety and security (Ignatieff, 2001). The idea of feeling at home does not always resonate with positive feelings (Hessel, 2010). Belonging is often naturalized and by and large part of everyday practice. It is only formally structured and politicised when threatened in some way. On the other hand, the politics of belonging refer to the specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging to particular collectivises according to specific boundaries and demarcations of space (Yuval-Davis, 2011:10). Space is an embodiment of social networks. The presence of bodies within space is central for belonging to advance and be entrenched. Rowe (2005:1) claims that belonging is conditioned by bodies and where they are positioned on the globe. Debates on belonging and the politics of belonging have been central themes around which classical psychology and sociology have been premised. In the social psychological realm key interests have been vested in how people need to conform to groups the groups they belong to for the fear of being made inferior. In sociological theory the key interest has been how people belong to key collectives and states. During modernity peoples sense of belonging has become reflexive. Belonging has moved away from civil society of nations and states through a network society (Giddens, 1991). People can belong in many different ways and to many objects of attachments. These attachments can vary from particular to whole of humanity in concrete or abstract ways (Yuval-Davis, 2011:12). Belonging is dynamic and not always reified into a fixed formality. Fixed formalities are only/often manifest within hegemonic relations of power. Yuval-Davis (2011) clarifies the conception of social and political belonging through three analytical constructions. Those constructions are *social location*, *identification* and *emotional attachments*. Social locations are peoples belonging towards a particular social and economic location; these carry a particular weight in terms of power relations and positions. For example being a man or a woman, black or white, working class or middle class. Identity is the narrative, stories people tell themselves and others relating to whom they are and who they are not (Martin, 2005). Furthermore, identity is the narrative of who people want to be as

emblematic on Facebook forums. These stories are not always about belonging to a particular collective but can be about individual attributes. For example, body image, vocational aspirations or sexual prowess. These stories ultimately deduce to belonging to a particular collective (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 14). According to Wetherell (2006) identity narratives provide people with a sense of order. She argues that identities are not just personal; they provide a collective sense of order (Caverero, 1997:3). The identity and belonging process is a complex act of yearning. Individuals and groups are caught up within the wanting to belong and the wanting to become matrix, which is fuelled by yearning rather than positing of identity as a stable state (Prosbyn, 1996:19, Fortier, 2000). The politics of belonging involves not only constructions of boundaries but the exclusion and inclusion of certain people by those who possess power.

Conclusion

This chapter had a fundamental aim of providing the theoretical and conceptual resources for grappling with this study. The chapter outlines Durkheim's conceptualization of religion. The *dramaturgical theory* by Goffmann and theory of performativity by Butler was used to understand the performances on the Facebook page. Foucault was employed to understand the concepts of discourse and power and bio-power. Lastly, concepts of patriarchy, belonging and cultural violence were foregrounded as they were expedient to analyse the prevalent issues in the empirical chapters. The grounded theories and concepts in this section served as a stepping stone aimed at helping the close reading of the texts that were selected for the empirical section. This chapter focused on foregrounding the theoretical and conceptual toolkit. The next section outlines the actual analysis for this study. Furthermore, seeks to answer and give light to the research questions provided in the introductory chapter.

Chapter 4

The Online Representations of *End Time Disciples Ministries* Church Performances

The chapter is aimed at presenting the analytical findings for the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) conducted upon the online representations of church performances and practices exhibited on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page. Furthermore, the chapter wanted to answer the subsidiary research question: ***How do Neo-Pentecostals represent themselves and their performances within online spaces?*** The discussion for this chapter is initiated by giving a brief descriptive reading of the page. The descriptive reading attempts to give preliminary information about the Facebook page. Furthermore, the description aimed at familiarizing the reader pertaining the symbolic and face-value content exhibited on the page. The data that informed the analysis was meticulously selected from the Facebook page and divided into three central and prevalent themes. The first thematic extrapolated from the data was that of *bizarre church performances* instigated by *Prophet Penuel* on his congregants. The second set of representations analysed was the egotistic *self-representations of Prophet Penuel* the third were the *representations of ritualistic church performances*.

The bizarre church performances selected and analysed were: 1) *Prophet Penuel* making a young girl eat a piece of cloth; 2) *Prophet Penuel* making a woman eat a live snake; 3*) Prophet Penuel* miraculously turning a weave to food and congregants eating the weave; 4) *Prophet Penuel* increasing the temperature in winter and people taking off their clothes, and finally; 5) *Prophet Penuel* walking on female congregants. The penultimate thematic analysed was that of *Prophet Penuel* representing himself on the Facebook page. These particular representations were those that depicted *Prophet Penuel* egotistically self-representing himself and out rightly retaliating towards his ministerial nemeses. The final theme presented in the analysis was the representations of Neo-Pentecostal ritualistic church performances. The ritualistic church practices or performances that were analysed and readily accessible on the page were representations of *preaching, prophecy, and testimony*

which are deeply entrenched in the doctrinal and ideological nomenclature of the Neo-Pentecostal tradition. These three themes or discourses characterised and exemplified the central representational postulation of the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page. It is these three themes which the online representation of *End Time Disciple Ministries* is predicated and based.

4.1) '*End Time Disciple Ministries'* Facebook Page: A Descriptive Reading of the Page.

The Facebook page, *End Time Disciple Ministries* has a following of 11,639 people (as of 19 July 2016) who have subscribed to the page by voluntarily *liking* it. The page is owned by Facebook member Penuel Tshepo which is the Facebook identity of *Prophet Penuel Mnguni*. The high numerical page following suggests and supports the fact that the page has substantial public reachability, interest and worthwhile engagements. The engagements on the page are by-and-large a combination of lexical (language) and visual (pictures) representational projections. These representational projections profusely foreground church practices and performances- both normative and extremely bizarre and exceptional. The Facebook page does not have any video uploads or performances expressed in other modalities besides regular Facebook updates expressed through words and images. The majority of the posts on the page canonize and idolize *Prophet Penuel*. The page administrators consistently represent *Prophet Penuel* as a demi-god-a person who is the bearer of all supernatural powers and capabilities.

The posts on the page sparked multi-directional and multifaceted reactions and interactions. Some of the comments were emotive and sought to denigrate and critique *Prophet Penuel* together with the church performances he exhibits. On the other hand, others valorise and praise him. There are a multiplicity of representations and engagements relating to *Prophet Penuel's* recent sermons, testimonies, prophecies, miraculous demonstrations and controversial church practices exhibited through visuals and words. A disturbing and traumatic element about the Facebook page's representational make-up is its overuse of woman in representing bizarre and violently outrageous church antics. Women are the one's depicted eating snakes, being stood on and being used as demonstrative nonentities. Primarily, it is less

prevalent for men to be projected in demeaning and dehumanizing ways on the Facebook page. Woman are used as objects of power, not subjects of power.

The visual and lexical representations on the page are framed, edited and tweaked to suit a particular agenda, message, ideology and discursive mission. These are the initial signs of impression management demonstrated by the Facebook page administrators, who select particularly textual arrangements in order to impress audiences, most importantly to exert a particular impression to the masses who engage on the page. The page is infested with illustrations that advertise the churches recent and up-and-coming events. All the activities that happen in the church are robustly represented on the Facebook page- even those with recreational undertones, such as church plays, choreography, musical renditions and children's plays. The most striking aspect of the page at first glance is its exorbitant use of bright, appealing and mesmerizing visual colours. The colours deployed through the texts (visual) on the Facebook page draw one in interest. The page also exerts multiple symbols and signs that are posited to portray their representational identity. These signs depict how they want to be perceived and conceived at the initial visual contact. The page is visual and lexical circus of discourses, ideologies and performances of the Neo-Pentecostal page centred fundamentally by the cultic figure of *Prophet Penuel*.

4.1.1) Key Symbols of the Facebook Page

This section comments on the lexical and visual symbols employed by the Facebook page administrators that project the *End Time Disciple Ministries* representational identity, or projected identity. First is the cover page (background picture) of the Facebook page which visually depicts *flames of fire. Fire* symbolises the power of God. The biblical reference is Acts of the Apostles chapter two. Furthermore, fire symbolises the Pentecostal experience which is characterised by *fire*. The aforementioned symbols are instruments deployed to differentiate, categorize and divisively otherise. This otherisation is not only an othering towards non-Christians but also an exclusionary mechanism between other Neo-Pentecostal sects. Branding is an instrument of othering and a means of classification. The social media forum Facebook prescribes an option for the page administrators to give short lexical

description of what the page is about. The *End Time Disciples Ministries* describe themselves as thus, according to the Facebook page description:

> ***God said in Numbers 11:23, "Moses, is there any limit to my power?" He was saying, "Moses, you saw Me part the Red Sea, stop the sun for Joshua, keep three Hebrew teenagers safe in a fiery furnace, don't you realize that I can bring water without rain?" There's no limit to God's power.***

The above description is pivotal in understanding the central theology, ideology, rationale and representational identity that the church *End Time Disciples Ministries* subscribes to and identifies itself with. A relevant and pertinent point to ponder on would be: *Why did the page choose this particular scripture to describe themselves*? *What is it about this particular portion of scripture that encapsulates the central ethic and spirit of the congregation*? Notably, is the fact that *End Time Disciple Ministries* have a deep affinity towards the miraculous and supernatural happenings? This is justifiable through the general content and discourses manifesting on the Facebook page. This is where they source and fuse their central rationale from. The above extract is their apex conviction stipulated in writing. They define themselves through the most *extreme and exceptional* forms of 'tangible' demonstrations of the *miraculous*. That is why the administrators use the discourse of the biblical Moses supernaturally parting the Red Sea. The demonstration is a great example of an exceptional happening. The church holds dear to the premise that nothing can limit God's power. As will be seen in the later analyses, it is evident that the church takes this assertion dead seriously in its representational work.

The literature review foregrounded the idea that Neo-Pentecostals have an obsession with the miraculous. Miracles, demonstrations, healings are part of their definitive identity. The experiential is also catapulted above the dogmatic and the rational within Neo-Pentecostal vicinities. *End Time Disciples Ministries* brand themselves as agents that project and demonstrate divine power and a special experience with God. This rationale is eminent in the majority of the Facebook posts which seek to suggest that they are the chief custodians and agents who hold monopolistic access to the power of God. Through constant and repetitive representations, of bizarre miracles, demonstrations and performances *End Time Disciple Ministries* congregants seek to validate and authenticate the above

Facebook page description prescribed. The page has thwarted representations of belonging as far as the audience membership is concerned. Trying to pin down the agents most active on the page as well as their ideological inclination is complex.

The audiences on the page are multifaceted with multiple personalities and identities. The majority label and identify themselves as Christian because they subscribe to Christian discourses. However, many are merely irreligious critics who have personally subscribed to the page in order to purposefully criticize *Prophet Penuel.* The other striking feature of the Facebook page is the *church emblem*. The *church emblem* is endowed with a multiplicity of symbolism which communicates deeper discursive meanings about the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page and what they stand for. The Facebook page, at first glance resonates with a multiplicity of discourses: *those being power, violence, aspiration, blessings, healing, abuse, hope, poverty, deliverance, obsession, miracles, belonging, fanaticism, demons, escapism to name just a few*. The register of the page administrator is direct and declarative, particularly towards the audience (those who sympathise and criticise the page's elaborations and means of representation). Fundamentally, the Facebook page, at first glance, presents an encapsulated world view for the *End Time Disciples Ministries* church member. It presents a place of belonging for those who subscribe to the church and a place of warfare, rebuke a venting zone for those who challenge the churches ideologies and discursive trajectories.

4.1.1.1) The Representational Emblem of *'End Times Disciples Ministries'*: The Discursive Symbol of What the Church stands for:



Figure 4: Church emblem of *End Time disciples Ministries.*

The above church emblem is a symbol of belonging, identity, vision and the founding ethos of *End Time Disciples Ministries* church. The emblem is a symbol of aspiration and longing to become that which the church stands for and identifies with. Butler (1990) argues that identification is a constant process of becoming. It is the eternal project of how we consistently represent ourselves and is indicative of what we want to become or how we want to be identified. Becoming is achieved through retro-actively constituting and reconstituting a sense of selfhood or group identity. Social network behaviours like profile building, constant updating, tagging, album adding are ways and means by which individuals and groups forge identity. These activities share resemblance with everyday practices of self-hood formation and consolidation. Cover (2014:57) argues that social media are forums whereby subjects and groups achieve intelligibility and recognisability. This process towards self-hood is constituted through language both (visual and lexical) (Butler, 1993). The construction of identity or self is a process of coherence (how the individual wants to be seen consistently overtime) (Butler, 1997; Cover, 2004:18). There is also constant reiteration of the self or group identity through symbolism that definitively pronounce a particular identity.

Facebook gives participants the ability of constantly adjusting and reworking their representational identities, through profile pictures and perpetual status updates. The profile picture of the Facebook page *End Time Disciples Ministries* depiction the church emblem. It is the key symbol of identification, belonging and the constant reminder of what the congregants' are and also what they are not (identification and negation). The church emblem visually depicts a representation of Jesus Christ hanging on the *cross.* Christ is positioned at the centre of the globe (Africa). This symbolically signifies that Jesus has come to redeem Africa (the Dark Continent). The church emblem also depicts two *swords* penetrating the globe (this signifies the nations of the whole world). The *swords* connote the spoken word which is to pierce the hearts of the people. The two *sword* penetration symbolises the fact that the transformation of the world and that of Africa will be happen through the insurgence of the word of God which is basically the message of the Gospel. The *scroll* symbolises the adherence and loyalty to biblical scripture (the church's guiding document).The church emblem also depicts a visual illustration of *two doves* which symbolises peace. Most fundamentally, the dove also symbolises the Spirit of God

in Biblical symbolism. *John 1:32 John said, "I saw the Spirit come down as a dove from heaven and stay on him.* This is a critical and important symbol amongst Neo-Pentecostals.

The message that the above emblem seeks to project is that the world needs to be penetrated by the word of God and acknowledge that Jesus died on the cross. Furthermore, it suggests that people need to be saved (*born again or 'break with the past'*) and then peace will reign in the land (Africa and the World). This visual message exhibits a Christian doctrinal discourse. Another interesting point is that the church does not classify themselves as *End Time Disciple Ministry* but as *End Time Disciple Ministries*. This classification implies that they have a vision of global permeation-as do most Neo-Pentecostal organizations as stipulated in the introduction and reviewed literature. The visual choice of locating an illustration of a globe on their church emblem supports this assertion. They aspire to disseminate the *End Time Disciple Ministries* brand to broader horizons beyond the local space *Soshanguve*. The mission is always to delocalise and internationalize. This is the reason why these particular ministries have words such as *international, global and ministries* after their brand names. The naming emphasises the trans-denominationalism of Neo-Pentecostal spaces in Africa. Above all else, the emblem of *End Time disciple Ministries* is a symbol of belonging and group identification, authentication and approval. The emblem is representational utility that binds together but also excludes. The study will now present the finding of the three thematic and discursive configurations that characterise the representations on the page.

4.2) THE FACEBOOK REPRESENTATIONS OF BIZARRE CHURCH PERFORMANCES: *extreme and exceptional performances*.

This section presents the analyses of the bizarre church performances represented on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* Facebook page. These performances brought head waves in the South African public discourse because of their graphic, bizarre and dehumanizing categorization. As expressed, earlier the majority of the representations of bizarre church performances on the page were exhibited through woman. This was very worrying and raised great concern about the hierarchal, patriarchal and sexist make-up of the congregation. It can be argued that it was

through woman that *Prophet Penuel* or the *End Time Disciple Ministries* page administrator represented denigrating, humiliating and savage performances. In the below analysed performances the Facebook page depicts people *eating live snakes*, *pieces of cloth* and *Prophet Penuel literally standing on them*- all in the name divine instruction. *Prophet Penuel* objectifies woman in order to represent his professed supernatural prowess. In the below chosen Facebook posts *End Time Disciple Ministries* represent themselves as custodians of the miraculous and the supernatural. All the represented performances are to affirm and confirm the church's divine power. The below analyses support the claim that the representations of bizarre performances on the Facebook page are highly patriarchal, inspired by hegemony, ideological power and ruthless forms of cultural violence, discourses of exploitation, manipulation and abuse. The page exhibits crude, grotesque and vile representations of church performance behind the cunning veil of doctrine and scripture, holiness, miracles, divine power and God. The first representation analysed was the church performance that depicted bizarre rituals exhibiting manipulation, bio-power, hegemony, cultural violence, patriarchy. All these used females as instruments of sub-humanization and representation.

4.2.1) The Representation of Bizarre Church Performances through Women: Manipulative Manifestations of Bio-Power, Hegemony, Cultural Violence, Patriarchy and other injustices.

#Demonstration of Power

Roman 14 Those with small faith eats only vegetables but the ones with great faith eats everything. During service Man of God commanded a snake to change into a chocolate and it obeyed.



Figure 5: Woman Chews Snake at Prophet Penuel's Command.

It can be claimed that the above is a performance that displays the violence and power of institutional settings (church) specifically the power to curtail individual rights of congregants and furthermore create divisive measures of identification in order to belong, other have labelled these acts as the sheer psychological instability of willing participants (Pollitt, 2015). Finally, the performance exhibits absurd levels of power which is discursively masqueraded as inspired and commissioned of God. The above demonstration sent massive head waves and militant outcries in the South African public discourse, at large. This *'demonstration of power'* depicts a young black woman who has eaten a snake at *Prophet Penuel's* command within the church space. The picture is graphic in nature because the hideous snake contents are clearly visible from the mouth of the woman. The visual text represents the woman having her mouth wide open. The opening of the mouth full of snake contents plays into the patriarchal idea of submissive female bodies that are commissioned and geared to satisfy male directives. It resonates with the idea of female bodies being disposable and dispensable.

The snake that the woman has eaten is said to have transformed into chocolate. What inspires such behaviour? What drives a young black woman to eat a snake at the simple command of *Prophet Penuel*? It is extremely odd knowing that the fears and anxieties of most black people are lodged on the symbol of the snake. The snake represents diabolism and witchcraft and all things evil amongst black South African people. The snake discursively represents an object never to be meddled with and entertained, let alone approached. The act of consuming a snake offers something of a social paradox since great enmity exists between the snake and black people in South Africa because they resonates with very crude and dangerous discourses. Those who have power are those who also have leeway to construct and reconstruct particular knowledge, which then subjugates and controls those disempowered.

Prophet Penuel subjugates his followers through the knowledge he despatches to the disempowered. Statements like *Weave to Food, Congregant turned into Horse* and *Snake turns to chomp* (chocolate) are statements of power. It is through power that *Prophet Penuel* is able to dominate, manipulate and curtail people's freedoms. It is through hegemony that he is given a leeway to do so. *Prophet Penuel* exerts hegemonic influence and manipulation over the congregants therefore able to exert

power on their bodies. Through bio-power he is able to make people who fear snakes to eat them at his command. This is because he is a voice of authority and people obey him. Machin and Mayr (2012) remind us of pertinent lexical and visual discursive strategies in the methodological section evident in this above text. The page administrator employs these strategies to project particular discourses. Notably is the fact that the woman is *foregrounded* in the visual text. She occupies significant space on the particular visual text. This signifies attention and importance. The woman is represented as a subject that should be granted intimate attention. The *size* of the visual text reflects a high level of *salience.* The *tone* of the picture has a dark background but the woman is represented as bright and visually accessible. The bright *tone* serves to draw attention and salience towards the woman.

The visual illustration focuses on the snake contents in the woman's mouth. This *focus* is a tool to draw attention and to stipulate the subject of importance in the text, which is, in this case the *'consumption of the snake'*. This is a project and strategy of *framing* as Goffman (1959) would suggest. The woman is framed in such a way as to authenticate that she indeed ate the snake which was *'miraculously'* converted into chocolate. This particular performance is represented as a *sincere* performance (Goffman, 1959). The woman in the picture is taken by her own performance; she genuinely believes the snake is a *chocolate*. The visual *focus* is to validate and authenticate that she indeed ate the snake which was assumedly turned into *chocolate.* It is important to also note that the woman in the visual text is *individualised* rather than *collectivised*. This discursive strategy is to give undivided attention on the woman. It is not only visual selections that depict the discursive construction of this particular visual text. Lexical texts also exert discursive investment:

Roman 14

Those with small faith eats only vegetables but the ones with great faith eats everything . During service Man of God commanded a snake to change into a chocolate and it obeyed. People ate it and enjoyed it.

The above linguistic extract accompanied the above status update. The underlined statements and words are central and have huge discursive investment. The first sentence of the above statement exposes a politics of faith and othering-a segmenting of those who belong and those who do not belong. The statement

…"*Those with small faith eats only vegetables"…* seeks to divide and otherise, (A divisive dichotomy between the 'ones who 'have *faith'* versus the *'faithless'* ones). Those who 'have small' faith are those who do not belong but those **…"*with great faith"…*** are those who belong to the *End Time Disciple Ministries* in-group*.* The statement ***…"eat everything"…*** sugests that those within the in-group transgress the norm and are exceptionally different and unique brand of Christians compared to other Christians sects. *End Time Discples Ministries* uses the viel of doctrine and scripture in order to justify a fundermental wayward activity. The illegitimate is justified through citing the sacrosant and Godly. The congregants of the church adhere to the deception because they want to belong to the collective. Belonging is the process of creating a sense of identification with ones social, relational and material surroundings (Miller, 2003). This divisive mechanism of ***us*** and ***them*** is enhanced through the use of words like '***those'*** and 'the '***'the ones'.*** It is a process of stipulating belonging and group identity through segregation. The ones who belong *'**eat everything'*** and the ones who do not belong *'**eat only vegetables'*.** Vegetables project discourses of limitation, weakness, impotency and powerlessnes. Whereas, *'**eating everything'*** connotes omnipotentence and unlimited empowerments to demonstrative power. *End Time Disciple Ministries* define themselves as the custodians of exclusive devine power and biblical rationality is used to subjugate and to inforce violence.

> ***During service Man of God commanded a snake to change into a chocolate and it obeyed. People ate it and enjoyed it.***

The quotation shows that the *man of God* is the one who initiates power to change inanimate objects to assume animate natures. The statement man of God (as stipulated earlier) is strategic and has connotations of supernatural ability. The statement is an instrument of *functionalisation* (the individual is defined by what he does). By using the classification *man of God*, the discursive tool of *impersonalisation* is employed because *Prophet Penuel* is *impersonalised* (Machin and Mayr, 2012). The author of the text could have used many identifications but chose to use *man of God* because of the underlying discourses related to the term. This is a very authoritative choice and is used consistently in the other church performances to label *Prophet Penuel.* Fairclough (2003) also defines this type of communication as genre communication, used to display authority levels and signification of power.

Man of God is a very aloof, elevated and domineering classification amongst Neo-Pentecostals. It resonates with values of power, authority, leadership, divine inspiration and godliness. *Man of God* resounds with heavy connotations and affinities of sacredness. If the *man of God* is not respected it is equated to profanity. The term carries with it the appendages of *cultural violence*. It legitimizes mistreat and exploitation. Mistreat and exploitation is legitimized through the deployment of this classification. The *man of God* can perform and enact virtually anything he is inspired to do because he is assumedly lead and commissioned by the Almighty. The word *command* is another important lexical choice in representational project of *End Time Disciple Ministries* and *Prophet Penuel* in particular-depicted in the above text. The word *command* connotes agency, power, and divine capability. He is represented as the one who has authority to initiate and direct supernatural transitions and shifts. Transitions and shifts like that of snakes being turned into chocolate and supernatural advances. *Prophet Penuel* is being represented, equated and leveled to having the powers of God Himself. He invariably has power to distribute and also dispose of life because he has divine unction to do so. The word *command* is a word that seeks to cannonize, fetishize and idolize *Prophet Penuel* as an initiator of the supernatural. The status update also represents people/congregants as having enjoyed the eating of snakes. This is seen through the statement:

People ate it and <u>enjoyed it.</u>

The above statement suggested that people (the church or congregants) enjoyed the eating the snake. The above statement is used to justify the absurdity of the performance by implying that people did not object to the act but concentially agreed to eating the snake. Hegemonic manipulation is always consential. The masses are subjugated and socially curtailed through consent and not coercive measures. This statement is speculative and manipulative, deployed only to support a terribly bizarre performance. How does the author of the page know they enjoyed it? This statement seeks to represent the congregants of *End Time Discple Ministres* as complicit and cooperative but more so, *stupid and gullible.* The congregants continue in the acts because those who object to this bizzare act would be rejected, othered and demonised. The word *'people'* is a *impersonalisation* of the congregants. In this case, it is employed to legitimize the eating of snakes by not

cherry picking specific people (individualising). The above status update is infested with discursive constructs of belonging.

Baumeister and Leary (1995:497) argue that the need to belong is a powerful and extremely pervasive motivation human subjects possess. The fundermental lesson that resonated from the above linguistic choice is that of belonging. The above cited portion confirms Weeks' (1990) assertion which suggests that identity is about belonging. Fundermentally, what we have in common or uncommon with other people. Eating snakes rienforces a politics of belonging as far as the *End Time Discples Ministries* is concerned. As emphasised earlier, eating snake creates an *in-group* versus *out-group* dichotomy. Those who chew snakes belong and those who dare object and disengage are the lost ones. Those who are delinked from the *'fraternity'*- if you like. The discursive configuration of this above demonstration is thus, in summation: *Prophet Penuel* exerts bio-power when he suggests that he has turned a snake to chocolate. He uses ideological power and hegemony to convince them that indeed that is the case. A politics of belonging is created when those who eat snake versus those who do not eat snake are represented through divisive discourses. All this is justified and endorses through the employment of scripture. The scripture or ideology is employed to justify a ruthless form of cultural violence. This is the discursive meaning entrenched in the above bizarre church performance.



Figure 6: Prophet Penuel turns females Weave into food

The above church performance deliberately presents itself as a 'miracle' but is actually a ruthless projection of patriarchy and a blatantly vicious attack on black South African femininity. The above visual depicts *Prophet Penuel* violently holding the head of a woman. The above woman's hair (weave) is said to have 'miraculously' turned to food. This particular performance is titled as *God's Demonstration*. The use of the term *'Gods demonstration'* is strategic and a highly discursive lexical choice. Why was this lexical discursive choice made? Why did the administrator of the page not title it as: *The Demonstration,* or *Divine Demonstration* or even *Prophets Demonstration?* The word God is used to justify, validate and legitimize that *Prophet Penuel* indeed changed a *Weave to Food*. The word *God* resonates with discourses of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. The word is deployed as a tool to authenticate and legitimize the performance. The rationale behind the selection is

that God cannot be questioned. Hence, the administrator grants this particular performance as being orchestrated by the Almighty.

Weave to Food

Man of God held the braid of the woman at the church and people ate. Its taste was more than a cake.

This particular status starts off with the statement *Weave to Food*. The word *Weave* (braided hair) has got a multiplicity of negative connotations, especially in the South African context. The *Weave* amongst dominant black patriachal masculinities is deemed anathema of African femaleness. In 2015, world renowned South African jazz musician, *Hugh Masekela* refused to take a *selfie (picture)* with a black female fan because she had a weave. *Masekela* alrightly dismissed the lady with the words: *'I do not not take pictures with ladies who have weaves'* (Dlamini and Bambelele, 2015). *Weaves*, amongst black South African patriarchs resonates with values of fakeness, superficiality, and an anti-authenticity aesthetic. The *Weave* is regarded as the instrument that amplifies the idea that black woman have hollow souls, always needing assimilatory tools in order to construct a formidable sense of self.

The attack on the *weave* has got nothing to do with *weave* in and of itself, I argue. Rather, it is a deeper protracted project for the villifying of (South) African womanhood and femininity. The *weave* being turned to food connects with the idea of destruction, annialiating, demolishing and disposing of the black femininity. Food connotes consumption and devouring. The *weave* being turned to food resonates with it becoming desposable and destroyable. Prophet Penuel is said to have given the weave to the church people and they ate.The linguistic strategies of *collectivisation* and *impersonalisation* (Machin and Mayr, 2012) are employed in the statement '*the church and people ate'*. The social actors who ate the weave are *collectivised* through the word *church* and *impersonalised* through the word *people*. The collectivisation and impersonalisation is employed to validate and authenticate this logic : *'If everybody did it, that means that it is surely legitimate'.*

…Its taste was more than a cake.

The extracted statement suggests that the people at *End Time Discple Ministries* enjoyed eating the *Weave*. This enjoyment and gratification is centred around the lexical selection of *Cake*. Congregants said that the *Weave* tasted like a *Cake*. This

particular statement advances the humiliation of the congregants and more so the woman in the picture. The woman has been humiliated and denigrated but the administrator of the page project the deed as pleasurable and divine. This is the most lethal form of *cultural violence*. This act is fundermentally oppressive and patriarchal because it uses the woman as a sample to project the performance. The feminist analytic would suggest that this particular text is mired with a central dynamic of inequality, domination and discrimination towards woman (Gill, 2008: 7). Why the specific attack on the black weave? Why the attack on black feminimity? The weave in this instance is the crucible of attacking and denigrating black woman through both visual and lexically choices. Eatening the weave is a deeper discursive projected on critiquing, denigrating and disciplining the black female body. *Prophet Penuel* once again employs hegemony through the Neo-Pentecostal miracle discourse to infuse cultural violence which manifests itself through a patriarchal performative exibition that the congregants are manipulated into thinking is a miracle. The project that is relayed through the above representation is a project of partiarchy and an anti-woman discourse.

#***Demonstration***

The man of God prayed for a cloth and called the congregation to come eat. The congregation came and ate and it tasted like chocolate…



Figure 7: Prophet Penuel makes young girl eat a piece of cloth that assumedly tastes like chocolate.

The above Facebook update visual and lexically represented a church demonstration that saw *Prophet Penuel* supernaturally turn a piece of cloth into *'chocolate'*. The particular representation illustrates how *Prophet Peneul* has a complete power over the life of his congregants for the purposes of controlling and subjugating them. *Prophet Penuel* exploits the congregants' obsession and desperation with the miraculous and the demonstrative. He exerts patriarchy and abuse because of the obsession the congregants have with the miraculous. The above status labelled the represented performance as a *demonstration*. In Neo-Pentecostal terminology a demonstration is a miraculous intervention or the tangible working of the power of the God amongst people. *Demonstration* resonates with ideas of divine intervention, healing, demon manifestation and exorcism and miraculous power. The Facebook page administrators consistently signify these types of performance, by using the *(hashtag)* label, which is common linguistic tool within the realm of social media specifically for identifying and coding activities. This signification of '*demonstration'* further reinforces the aforementioned Neo-Pentecostal obsession with *'signs and wonders'*, healing and experientialism (Lee, 2001; Hackett 1998) as espoused in the literature review.

Prophet Penuel is dressed semi-casually. He is adorned youthfully, with a purple blazer, blue shirt exposing his chest. The dress code of *Prophet Penuel* resonates with the idea stressed in the literature review. Neo-Pentecostal churches are often initiated by young ministers with youthful aesthetics. They attract a huge youth following because of connecting to the youth market (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2007; 389). They are entertained by the obscenities characterised by the rare antics performed by *Prophet Penuel*. *Prophet Penuel* is depicted as feeding a young girl a piece of cloth. I use '*feed'* purposefully because it resonates with the idea of power and an attitude of *patrimonialism* which is clearly evident on the above visual text. The act of feeding is *foregrounded* and reflects an amplified *size* on the picture. This emphasises the importance of the act in the discursive objectives of the post.

The picture also depicts *Prophet Penuel* as the domineering man in control. He is represented as governing the situation and exerting power and control. The young girl is depicted as subservient, subordinated, subdued and submissive. This is a clear sign of a patriarchal dividend. According to Gill (2008:31) all men benefit from this *patriarchal dividend* but some more than others. *Prophet Penuel* is able to

exploit and maximize this patriarchal dividend within the ritualistic church space. The post is important in understanding how discursive constructions of power are advanced through lexical and visual means. The discursive choices are used to give *Prophet Penuel* an aura of power and supremacy.

The man of God prayed for a cloth and called the congregation to come eat. The congregation came and ate and it tasted like chocolate…

The above extract projects another important lexical choice within the Facebook update- the word *congregation*. *Congregation* is repeated twice to emphasize the idea of oneness, togetherness, unity, fellowship and solidarity in the act of eating the cloth. Machin and Mayr (2012) classify this lexical ideal as c*ollectivisation*. This is when individual members are classified as a collective within a particular discursive practice. In this particular case, the performance and the performer is *collectivised* to validate the act. If all were represented as doing it, it so validates and legitimizes the bizarre activity. The word *chocolate* is the other lexical choice that is employed to validate and to affirm a nonsensical behaviour. The word *chocolate* connects to values of *pleasure, enjoyment and sensuality*- deployed to romanticise and legitimize a dreadful and inhumane church performance. The woman in the picture is represented as having done the performance jubilantly and euphorically.

The church performance is simultaneously a production and a reproduction of power. Foucault (1980:119) argues that power does not always weigh in like a force. It also induces discourses of pleasures. It must be considered as a productive network which runs through the entire social body much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. Most importantly, power produces knowledge, knowledge that the powerless agree to. This particular demonstration was ignited by the twisted knowledge that a piece of cloth can taste like chocolate through divine intervention. People consented because of hegemony. *Prophet Penuel* manipulates through hegemonic means so that what they perform is naturalized to them and the on looking congregation. It is disturbing to view that in most of the represented the congregants are not moved nor are they troubled by the bizarre performances. This is hegemony at work.

Lethal and inhumane acts are vindicated as innocuous due to hegemonic influence which proved to be consistently entrenched in most of the representation of church

performance. The representations of men and woman have been important amongst feminist scholars (Krijnen and Van Bauwel, 2015:20). Media representations of woman are two-fold. First, is the numerical presence of woman and men in media texts. Second is the more complex which involves the study of the ideologies of gender within texts. The media are central platform for cultural meanings to be projected. Mulvey (1975) argues that men are represented as active agents; females are portrayed as passive objects. Goffman (1959) further expands that gender displays are socially learned and socially patterned. They function as ritualistic affirmations of social hierarchy.

The above illustrations are discursively constructed to support and necessitate hegemonic masculinities, which is an ideal predicated and established on the subordination of woman by men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is further necessitated in the below status update. It is through meticulous ideological and discursive manipulation that *Prophet Penuel* acts are delinked from rationality and human dignity. The act of making the woman eat a cloth is patriarchal and hegemonic. This status update shows that *Prophet Peneul* has a complete power over life of his congregants for the purposes of control and subjugating them. *Prophet Penuel* exploits the congregants' obsession with the miraculous and the demonstrative. He exerts patriarchy and abuse because of this obsession with the miraculous and the sublime which is fetishized amongst the new Pentecostals.

Evening Live Service

 # Increased Temperature

Man of God increased the temperature and People began to take off their clothes. The night was cold yet we felt not (Romans 8vs 19). For the earnest expectation of the creature waitheth for the manifestation of the sons of God.



Figure 8: Prophet Penuel increases temperature and young girl starts taking off clothes.

The above chosen church performance is a sheer exertion of power which is validated through the manipulative employment of bible doctrine. This particular miraculous wonder is marked by the *(hashtag) Increased Temperature,* stipulating that *Prophet Penuel* increased the temperature. It shows *Prophet Penuel* having his hand over a young woman who is represented as taking off her jacket. This posture serves to justify that the temperature did indeed miraculously increase. The physical stature of *Prophet Penuel* is foregrounded on the above visual text. This strategy of *foregrounding* is a strategy employed to discursively construct levels of importance within visual texts. It is evident that *Prophet Penuel* assumes a dominant role whereas the young lady who is seated down assumes a position of docility, submission and subservience. It is because of a protracted discursive project which led the authors of the text to select such a text to portrait the demonstration. *Prophet Penuel*, in the particular visual text represents dominance. Contrastingly, the woman represents the subject that is coerced, oppressed and subjugated. *Prophet Penuel's*

face is represented as upright and assumes a jolly and confident stature whereas the young woman is discursively depicted as looking downward which represents humbleness, meekness and weakness. *Prophet Penuel* represents a hegemonic masculinity and the woman represents the docile femininity. The above text is *focused* on the girl taking off her red jacket which signifies the importance of such framing. This visual choice serves to convince (manipulate) us, those who consume the text that the temperature miraculously escalated. Discursive practice is in its very nature very manipulative. The lexical choices are meticulously selected and show huge discursive investment.

> ***Man of God increased the temperature and People began to take off their clothes. The night was cold yet we felt not (Romans 8vs 19). For the earnest expectation of the creation waitheth for the manifestation of the sons of God.***

This above particular statement is also used to validate the claim that the miracle was legitimate. The particular miracle transpired in the middle of winter. This particular statement suggests that this particular miracle was indeed authentic. The particular status update uses a bible verse *(Romans 8vs19),* as a reference statement to support the claim. The discourse of the bible is used to legitimise the church performance. They appealing that they are the sons of God and that ‘’*creation waitheth for the manifestation of the sons of God”.* The term ‘’*Son of God’* suggest that *End Time Disciples Ministries* congregants are custodians of the power of God- the chosen or the elect. This particular demonstration is a sheer illustration of bio-power. He is able to increase mutate natural laws and increase the temperature; he is above natural law. If he has power over life it means he has complete sovereignty over the congregants. It is also evident that in order to exert this power over their lives *Prophet Penuel* uses hegemonic indoctrination. They consent to him having power over their lives because he uses bible scripture to validate and support his claims. It can be maintained that through hegemonic indoctrination (the bible) he is able to pertinently and potently exert power over their lives. The next represented church performance is an extension of this idea represented in this performance.

Sunday Service

 # Demonstration

The man of God Prophet Penuel called the congregation and commanded them to sleep and after that he stepped on top of them. After that he woke them up and asked if they felt any pain .Those who were sleeping responded and said they felt nothing there is no pain. Genesis 2:21, this can only happen by the power of God…



Figure 9: Prophet Penuel stand on female congregants.

The above representation is depiction of (bio) power, patriarchy and cultural violence achieved through spiritual discourse vis-à-vis a biblical doctrine. *Prophet Penuel* exerts physical violence on them through the use of cultural violence. The text shows *Prophet Penuel* standing on top of two women lying flat on the ground. The women he is standing on appear to be unconscious and seem oblivious of what he is doing. Prophet Penuel is visually represented as standing on these women while the congregation watches on with different facial expressions. The focus and foregrounding within this particular visual text is on *Prophet Penuel*. He is the object of display and exhibition. It is interesting that the visual representation does not focus on the women who are being stepped on. *Prophet Penuel* is discursively constructed as being important and dominant whereas the two women are represented as less important and insignificant. The size of the picture gives more affordance to *Prophet Penuel*; he is the object of attraction. This according to Machin and Mayr (2012)

resonates with ideas of importance, significance, presence and power. There are key lexical choices that have fundamental discursive orientation. The below is one of them.

> ***The man of God Prophet Penuel called the congregation and commanded them to sleep and after that he stepped on top of them.***

The above statement depicts the extremity and the hold *Prophet Penuel* has upon his congregation. It suggests that the *man of God* called the congregation and commanded them to *sleep*. *Man of God,* as elaborated in the previous analyses is used to validate the power that *Prophet Penuel* has been bestowed. This divine enablement gave him the ability to make the people *sleep*. The word *sleep* is a discursive lexical selection employed to suggest that the women being stepped on where not in their conscious state of mind. Moreover, the act of making people sleep and wake up at one's command seeks to suggest power over the natural realm. *Prophet Penuel* has power over the woman's bodies within the church space and has power over their lives, more so in the church space. He is able to exert physical violence on them because of the violent power he possesses over his flock.

This type of violence is a cultural type of violence not a direct type of violence. This type of cultural violence is justified through theological and religious means. Stepping on woman like ants is justified and justifiable by *Prophet Penuel* because it exemplifies the power of God in operation. This is one of the most lethal forms and examples of cultural violence. Knowledge is used to subjugate and control. In this case the cosmological theological and the ideological is validated through physical violence therefore, making it fair to suggest that the *End Time Disciples Ministries* is a haven of cultural violence, exploitation, manipulation, power, stringent control, patriarchy and diverse manifestations of coercive deliberations.

The above analysed bizarre church performances had many elements in common hence some of the findings expressed similar issues. The first point of similarity is the fact that the people who were represented participating in the church performances were mostly woman. Furthermore, they were all victims of cultural violence, exploitation, manipulation, power, stringent control, patriarchy and diverse manifestations of coercive practice. All these coercive measures were imposed and validated through/by a hegemonic Christian discourse. This highlighted the oppressive and saliently draconian nature of Neo-Pentecostal space(s). More

specifically it exhibits and confirms that discourse, ideology and power find home on the *End Time Disciples Facebook* page. The next section will look at the self-representations of Prophet Penuel on Facebook page.

4.2.2) SELF-REPRESENTATIONS OF PROPHET PENUEL AND END-TIME DISCPLE'S MINISTRIES

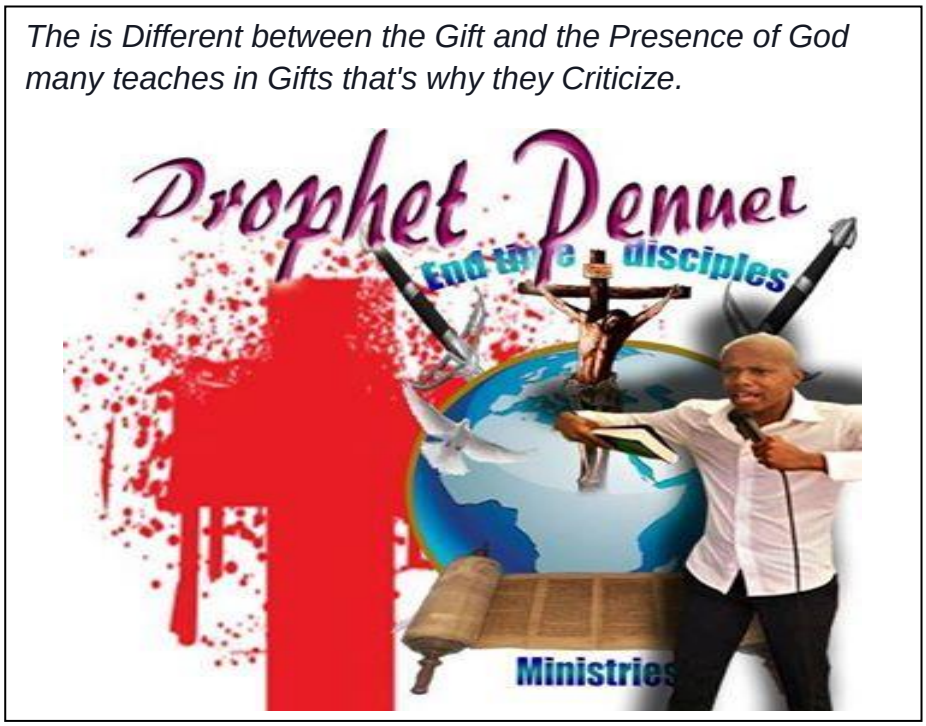

Figure 10: Self-representation of Prophet Penuel.

Prophet Penuel, I argue, when self-representing himself projects a sacrosanct and perfect demeanour through downplaying the significance of his counterparts. This is the most manipulative type of impression management, framing and front stage presentation on the page. The above post is a self-representation of *Prophet Penuel.* The register of the post attempts to convince the reader of the text that *Prophet Penuel* composed the post. However, this is an assumption since we do not know concretely know who the administrator of the page really is. It could be *Prophet Penuel* himself, or an influential member of the church, or maybe a lay person merely re-contextualizing the happenings in the church. The above text depicts *Prophet Penuel* holding a microphone with his left hand and a bible with his right hand. He visually represents himself as preaching, an act of power and authority.

The visual illustration depicts him as *overlapping* the church emblem. *Overlapping* is employed to connote importance, dominance and prominence within visual texts

(Machin and Mayr, 2012). Directly on his right is an illustration of *Red Cross*. The *Red Cross* is Christian *cultural symbol* which has a multiplicity of connotative meanings. The *Red Cross* symbolizes the Jesus and His crucifixion. The crucifixion is represented through the sprinkles of blood that are circumventing the illustration of the *Red Cross*. The *Red Cross* also resonates with values of *being born again* and being saved through Jesus Christ. The visual text positions the logo of the church centrally, as it is the central symbol of the church. It is interesting that *Prophet Penuel* is represented as *overlapping* the church emblem. This symbolically represents the leadership and prominence of *Prophet Penuel* within the conversations within the *End Time Disciples Ministries*. The *individualisation* of *Prophet Penuel* on the picture places emphasis on his supremacy and prominence within the church. According Machin and Mayr (2012) *size* on a visual text emphasizes degrees of importance. His name is written in an amplified font and placed directly above the visual illustration. This resonates with ideas and values of authority, governance and complete dominance. This particular visual positioning depicts *Prophet Penuel* as a cult of a personality. He is represented as the chief authority of the congregation. The linguistic selections in the above text are also indicative of discursive and ideological investment(s):

> ***The is Different between the Gift and the Presence of God many teaches in Gifts that's why they Criticize.***

The above statement has got an overriding discourse of othering and segregation. There is an othering and segregation between those who *teach gifts* and those who know the *presence of God*. *Prophet Penuel* represents himself as an agent who has the *presence of God;* whereas those who criticise him do not have the presence of God, but operate using their gifts (human ability). The *presence of God* connotes connection with divine immeasurable power of God. The gift implies natural ability or talent. *Prophet Penuel* represents himself in a volatile way. He seeks to delegitimize his critics by suggesting that they do not have the *presence of God*. Hence, they criticise him. These particular submissions resonate with the Goffman (1959) submission of robust impression management. Through the lexical submissions made *Prophet Penuel* is represented as projecting a particular impression in order to delegitimize his critics. He is framed as legitimate and authentic. Whereas his critics (other pastors) are deemed fake. He exerts a front of perfection to project himself.

He presents a front that seeks to elevate him above his peers. This particular framing has got huge discursive investments because it is evident that *Prophet Penuel* is no holy cow or perfect. He only projects himself in that light so that he is able to challenge his critics publically.

4.2.2.1) Representing Church Events: Neo-Pentecostal Advertising and Self-Branding



Figure 11: End Time Disciples Ministries Night prayer poster.

End Time Disciples Ministries like most Neo-Pentecostal churches uses their Facebook page and online space as an avenue of advertising. The above poster was used to advertise a *night of prayer*. Rogers (1914:186) defines a poster as a printed sheet produced for the purpose of advertising. The poster may be wholly pictorial, or consist of words only. This definition still suffices but within the virtual age the poster has taken on a digitized formality. The visual appeal of the poster should be key since its non-appeal could repel possible attendees. Ojo (1994) says that the poster is used to promise the needy miracles and is instrumental for attracting people within Neo-Pentecostal circles. Ojo (1994) further reinforces a very central thematic within Neo-Pentecostal circles, that of the miraculous. The first aspect of the poster that is very appealing is the picture of *Prophet Penuel*. The picture has been edited and inserted on the above poster.

Prophet Penuel is on the poster because he symbolises leadership, authority and power. The designer of the poster places him on the poster because of his apparent influence, importance, and significance within the *End Time Disciple Ministries.*

Prophet Penuel is *foregrounded* and *individualised* on the poster. His name is also foreground which resonates with the aforementioned qualities. Machin and Mayr (2012) also advise us that when analysing a visual text it is important to look at the attributes within the particular text. The first object that has major significance in the poster is the microphone that *Prophet Penuel* is represented or depicted holding in his hand. The microphone resonates with ideas of communication or speaking, but within the context of the poster it resonates with preaching. The microphone is also a symbol of power because the one who holds it is able to disseminate knowledge, information and ultimately exert power. Durkheim foregrounds the idea of *sacred.* The microphone is a *sacred* item because it is the instrument by which the ministers and anyone relaying a message in the congregation is given the power to use within ritual spaces.

Denotatively the microphone is merely a technological gadget. However, within the performative and ritualistic church space it resonates with deeper meanings, meanings about who or who are not the custodians of *knowledge and power. Another important attribute is the background of the* particular poster. The background of the particular poster depicts a visual illustration of '*Outer Space'.* This has connotations with heaven and the spiritual world. This particular illustration is pertinent and effective because in the cognitive realm the heavenly is always regarded as something that is located upward within extra-terrestrial vicinity. Machin and Mayr (2012) remind us that cultural symbols import when analysing a text. These are images, objects and specimens that speak back to the culture and identification of that particular organization. The bottom left corner of the above poster depicts the cultural symbol of the particular organization. This is the emblem of *End Time Disciple Ministries.* This particular symbol connects with group identify and belonging. It is the exclusive representational symbol which represents, embodies and encapsulates the ethos of the church. The other striking aspect of this particular visual text is the *tone*. The poster employed bright and appealing colours. These colours are used to draw attention and visually attract the people. Colours that are striking and bright exert a high level of salience and entreating. The striking colours are also relevant in the project of *'youth appeal'*. In order to be relevant and consumable to the youth market modern conventions of youthful appeal must be adhered to. *End Time Disciples Ministries* has a youthful appeal in the way they

represent themselves and their events online. Beyond the visual choices on the poster, linguistic choices are also important. The linguistic information informs us about the particular event, as well as the details about the event. The interesting aspect though is how *Prophet Penuel* is represented linguistically. The poster personalises *Prophet Penuel* by using his name in bold. The poster also refers to Penuel as *'Prophet'* which according to Machin and Mayr (2012) is defined as *functionalization.* This is when the individual is referred to by what they do. This *functionalization* is importance because it gives *Prophet Penuel* a sense of worth and affirmation validating his gifting and charisma

The poster also foregrounds the name of the church *End Time Disciple Ministries* as well as the advertised event *Night Prayer of God's Approval*. This signifies significance and importance. Hence the words are amplified and foregrounded. The bible verse is also an important lexical selection never left out in any of the poster representation of Neo-Pentecostals. It serves to authenticate the religiosity of the function and event by citing a relevant bible citation. More importantly it seeks to give the scriptural basis or theme for the particular gathering. The Neo-Pentecostal poster is a fundamental object of online impression management where an impression is displayed about a particular event in order to attract the on looking audiences. It is also an arena that represents the dramaturgical front region of a particular play or performance.

4.2.3) REPRESENTATIONS OF RITUALISTIC CHURCH PERFORMANCES: *Prophecy, Preaching and Testimony.*

Sunday Service

 # prophecy

Sthabato Mawiwe* form ext 3 received a prophecy from the men of God. He told her that God will cancel all of her debts , the woman that she has debts. The man of God further told her that she is prayerful and that she should pray for men of God. The woman recieved the prophecy and the man of God ministered to her.



Figure 12: Prophet Penuel delivers a prophecy.

The above prophecy represents *Prophet Penuel* as having the solutions to life's problems. He is represented as someone who is able to administor blessings and prosperity and solve all financial impediments. He exerts a prosperity rhetoric and discourse of power over life. The above status update is an representation of a prophecy that *Prophet Penuel* delivered to a woman named *Sthabato Mawiwe*.* In the above text *Prophet Penuel* is represented as the dominant figure. He selectively framed as looking down on *Sthabato Mawewe** who assumes a very docile and submissive dimenor. The above status adresses the specific names of the person receiving the prophecy. Machin and Mayr (2012) calls this lexical choice as *specification.* This discursive lexical choice creates an atmosphere of intimacy. The above prophecy that is represented represents *Prophet Penuel* informing the woman that God will cancel all her debts. This prophecy resonates with the idea of financial breakthrough and solutions. This is directly linked to the Neo-Pentecostal discoures

of properity and sucess. *Prophet Penuel* is represented as an agent able to solve the socio-ecomic tensions that *Sthabato Mawiwe** is encountering. *Prophet Penuel* is represented as someone who not only is able to know the past and the future of people but is able to know and solve the current financial problems that people find themselves held hostage in the present. *Prophet Penuel* provides a proposition without a way forward. *Prophet Penuel* gives people false hope with feasible means of achieving those proposed hopes. This thematic of hope proved to be prominent in the literature section of the paper. The message of hope, prosperity and success is a message deeply entrenched in the Neo-Pentecostal ethos. It is a message that is the overiding discourse employed to lift up the spirit of those who are disenchanted, perplexed within harsh capatalistic world. The below cited preaching also advances the prosperity discourse.

THE WORD OF GOD

Money is upon you, Partners are coming to you! Many opportunities are opened for you are not a failure! Your future is bright; you going to receive your blessings, Your school fees are paid by God himself. You will never suffer again! You will never be sick unless God has allowed it and through it you will be blessed. You will pass with distinctions, you will speak and it will become!

This is the day that the Lord has made for you .You will not use strategies again! Your testimony is big-None can be compared to yours through Christ who strengthen me let Him strengthen you! Your accounts are paid, your Debts are cancelled! Poverty is going away-Riches are coming in your way. Your life will not be the same again, you are millionaire! I see you extending your homes and buying cars- you will be a Bank yourself. Blessing belongs to God- To release them we use the power of the tongue. When we are sick –we confess healings, receive the Favour from the Lord! Poverty is gone-you have money and you are rich, you will change cars-clothes like never before and you are moving forward!

Figure 13: Prophet Penuel's Prosperity Preaching.

The above extracted sermon of *End Time Disciple Ministries* projects a prosperity discourse. The above extraction is a sample of a declarative Sunday preaching that was posted on the *End Time Disciples Ministries* page. The Facebook page is inundated with sermons by *Prophet Penuel* that often takes on a register of inspiration, motivation, rebuke and prophetic direction. The preaching selected is a sample of an inspirational sermon that has been transcribed, summarized and posted on the Facebook page. The above sermon has an overarching prosperity

discourse. The message is not so much about God, but about the individual appropriation of material things from God. As stipulated in the literature review. Fundamentally, the preaching is about how the individual can acquire blessings and transcend difficulty and struggle. If we were to dissect the first sentence it speaks a great deal to that affect.

Money is upon you, Partners are coming to you*!*

The first word of this particular represented preaching is *Money*. The critical questions to ponder would be: Why did the page administrators choose the word Money? What are the connotations that are associated with this particular word, especially within Neo-Pentecostal forums? What does it mean to have money? What does it mean to not have money? The subject of money is very central within the Neo-Pentecostal prosperity discursive project. Money has got connotations with *power, progress, success, access and status*. Those who have money are deemed powerful those who do not are categorized less successful and relegated to lower strata. Money is a utensil of othering and excluding and a central instrument for navigating and transcending different spaces of belonging. There are certain domains and situations that one will be policed and prohibited because of money.

Money within the Neo-Pentecostal spaces decodes to prosperity and blessings. Blessings and prosperity are signified and fundamentally rooted in the acquisition of money- to be blessed is decoded as having money. The church performance discursively means that blessings and prosperity are upon the church member through the use of the word money. Another critical appendage of the blessing is marriage and the attainment of romantic relations and love. *Prophet Penuel* is not only able to bestow money *(blessing, prosperity and success*) upon an individual but also marriage. The Prophet is represented as having the agency to bestow blessings therefore representationally framed as having bio-power. If he has power to bless it can be deductively inferred that he has the power to curse.

Many opportunities are opened for you are not a failure!

The above is another extract from the sermon. The question to ponder on would be is: Why did the author of the text (administrators) select the word *opportunities* amongst many other lexical selections that could have been chosen? It can be

argued that the word resonates with ideas of hope and possibilities. The word is expedient if the discursive goal is to uplift, motivate and inspire someone who has become hopeless and debilitated through failure and grave adversities. This lexical selection is very useful since South Africa is a space where a majority of people are suffering and are economically insecure. The above message gives hope that the prospects for better things is eminent and that the congregants are not failures. The above statement is a statement of hope and possibility. The statement also projects the idea of affirmation of identity by suggesting that the congregant is not a failure. He is giving people hope and a surety of self.

Prophet Penuel then further suggests that people's futures are bright, which is used to give hope and belief for greater prospects. He further reiterates the idea of money and access by saying that the people will receive their blessings. He further pushes the boundaries by suggesting that their school fees are paid. This gives the congregants a sense of hope, belief and false surety. In such statements Prophet Penuel is exerting a ruthless form of bio- power. He uses his authority to give hopes about people's futures which can be equated as hopes about people's lives. He further stresses this bio-power in the below statement.

You will never suffer again!

The above statement is a dangerous one. It is a statement that has a discourse of false hope. The above statement is a statement that sparks and ignites *false consciousness* and *false belief*. *Prophet Penuel* gives the congregants who receive and assimilate what he is saying the assurance that they will *never* suffer. These are very powerful and gripping words to a person who has been downcast and excluded materially and economically. It gives an impression of a breakthrough and a way out. A way out in a society where the poor are marginalized excluded and dehumanized daily. The above statement presented by *Prophet Penuel* presents an *abracadabra approach* to the sensitive issues frustrating people lurking within abject poverty. He essentially misleads, manipulates and informs people falsely. Through hegemonic power he is able to disseminate these ideas without reserve because they are received with enthusiasm by those receiving them.

You will never be sick unless God has allowed it and through it you will be blessed

Furthermore, the above extracted statement testifies to the insights raised in the literature review pertaining to the prosperity discourse. Prosperity is not only about monetary blessing and advance. True prosperity must transcend to the physicality and health of the person. This is testified by the utterance made by *Prophet Penuel* suggesting that they will never be sick, unless God has allowed it to be so. He further advances the rhetoric of blessings when he says that God allows one to be sick because through that sickness they will be blessed. This is the logic of the prosperity teaching. Hardships, adversities and struggles are interpreted as the stepping stones towards success and progress and monetary progress.

You will pass with distinctions, you will speak and it will become

The progress that *Prophet Penuel* is talking transcends even to the academic domain. The Prophet declares that they (referring to students) will pass with distinctions, which connotes that, they will achieve excellence not mediocrity. They will not just scrap through but will achieve that which supersedes the ordinary. This prosperity as espoused in the literature review is gained through speech. Speaking forth what you want is the key that unlocks great things in one's life. This utterance is utter false consciousness and misinformation because it dismisses the idea of meritocracy. It rather projects a magical and instantaneous path towards the acquisition of success.

This is the day that the Lord has made for you .You will not use strategies again!

The above statement gives a sense of victory, overcoming and hope. It resonates with change and the urgency of the Almighty to the situation of the congregant who are reading and receiving the represented preaching. The extract also shows that *Prophet Penuel* continuously validates and authenticates that which he says by inciting hopes and citing God as means of legitimizing his words. This is depicted in the use of *"you will not use strategies again". Prophet Penuel* frames his lexical choices in such a way as to inspire hopes to the congregants listening to him. His language is declarative which connotes surety, command, authority, dominion, leadership and power.

Your testimony is big-None can be compared to yours through Christ who strengthen me let Him strengthen you! Your accounts are paid, your Debts are cancelled!

The above extract, as is the case with the aforementioned extracts are utterances of faith. *Prophet Penuel* by faith claims that the congregants have an incomparable testimony. This statement is a statement of faith because most if not all of the congregants probably have not tangibly experienced the *'testimony'* that *Prophet Penuel* is talking about. He makes a declarative statement of faith which suggest that the debts of the people are paid. This particular statement raises and entices false hope. This is the prosperity teaching in its most lethal orientation. You cannot be deemed prosperous whilst having debt. Financial freedom is the central ethic of the prosperity teaching. Faith propounds the prosperity rationale rigorously because he does not tell the congregants how they will acquire this prosperity that they are custodians of. How will opportunities come their way? How will their futures become bright? How are they going to receive blessings? How will they achieve academic excellence? How will their accounts be paid? How will poverty be wished away? These are some of the questions that *Prophet Penuel* does not provide any means to answering. It is evident that faith is a fundamental element in the prosperity message logic.

Poverty is going away-Riches are coming in your way. Your life will not be the same again, you are millionaire! I see you extending your homes and buying cars- you will be a Bank yourself.

In the above extract *Prophet Penuel* gives the congregation more promises. He declares that *poverty is going away and riches are coming*. This statements resonates with the idea that their lives are about to transform because riches (money/blessings) are coming their way. *Prophet Penuel* emphasises this transition and transformation by stating that congregant's lives will never be the same. He even states that *'you are a millionaire'*. *Prophet Penuel* emphasises the expansion of material gain by saying that he sees the congregants extending their homes and buying cars. The prosperity teaching fetishizes the material. Exorbitant material advanced is decoded as prosperity.

Blessing belongs to God- To release them we use the power of the tongue. When we are sick –we confess healings, receive the Favour from the Lord! Poverty is gone-you have money and you are rich, you will change cars-clothes like never before and you are moving forward

The last dynamic that is thrown into the equation is the idea of *positive confession. Prophet Penuel* suggests that the blessings and prosperity are only released through the power of the tongue. This means that in order to appropriate blessings/money you need to speak out. One needs to confess that which is positive to receive that which is positive. Confessing the right annihilates the wrong. Confessing the positive

crucifies the negative. Confessing healing eradicates sickness. This is the idea of most Neo-Pentecostal ministers- logic of positive confession. Neumann (1981:1) defines *positive confession* as the presupposition that all Christians are healthy and materially rich. Any Christian in need of health or wealth s/he needs to confess positively. The backlash of these confessions is that they birth forth false expectations, hopes and desires which somewhat validates the age old Marxian claim that religion is the sigh of an oppressed people. The next section will address the subject of testimony which is a critical ritualistic church performance amongst Neo-Pentecostals.

Sunday Service
#Testimony
Ms Judith Gumede also came to testify about the goodness of the Lord in her life and family. She was worried about her child as she was unemployed and did not have fees for school. She started attending church at End Times Disciples ministries this year, the man of God prayed with her and few weeks after; her child was called for a learnership.
She also testified about the miracle that happened in one of the whole night prayers at End Times Disciples Ministries concerning her other child. As the man of God was declaring cars, she received the declaration and believed it. A few days after the service, she received a call from His son to say that he has bought a car.
The woman concluded her testimony by saying that we must never look down on the disciples because when one of her family members was sick, they prayed for her and she was healed. She would like to thank God for all he is doing through his spiritual father Prophet Penuel.
To God Be The Glory

Figure 14: Representation of Church Testimony.

The *testimony* is a utensil of front region performance and selective impression management. The art of testifying requires one to present a triumphant, militant and successful front before the masses. Testimonies comprise of narratives that are projected to give thanksgiving and praises to God regarding answered prayers, healings, and financial breakthroughs. Testimonies are performed publically so that collectives can be encouraged and have their faith uplifted and consolidated. During a testimony an individual is obliged to stand up before the whole congregation and give thanks pertaining any personal victory that he/she has attained. Testimonies are fundamentally a blueprint to confirm and affirm that the work of the miraculous and extraordinary is manifesting in the Church. This particular section gives an analyses of single testimony delivered on a Sunday service in the *End Time Disciples Ministries*. The above testimony is a recollection of a real life testimony which have been transcribed and posted on the Facebook page by the page administrators. The

above testimony was that of *Judith Gumede**.* In the first sentence of the narration of her testimony she foregrounds an important prerequisite of a legitimate testimony.

A legitimate testimony must entail the discourse of triumph and hope. This is evident when Judith says that she wants to testify about the ***'Goodness of the Lord in her life'***. Testimonies must always possess a discourse of hope and aspiration. The discourse of hope is evident when *Judith Gumede** highlights that she was worried that her child was not employed but the man of God prayed for her and she was called for a *learnership. Judith Gumede** further states in her testimony that when *Prophet Penuel* was declaring cars *(positive confession),* a few days later her son called her too tell her that she had bought a car. This utterance projects a discourse of financial breakthrough and prosperity discourse. *Judith** also adds that people should not look down on the congregants of *End Time Disciples Ministries* because they prayed for her family members and she was healed. She ends the testimony by thanking God for what He is doing through *Prophet Penuel*. Testimony is a protracted project of infusing hope and breakthrough in the lives of the congregants. But, as we see with *Judith Gumede** the testimonies are often presentations that profusely exert impression management and a front region performance where all that is good, pleasing is expressed and that is distasteful is omitted even if it is the truthful. It is a clear forum of front region presentation and robust impression management, where the miraculous, the sublime and the supernatural in vocalized as a means of confirmation.

Conclusion

Three themes emerged in the online representations of church performances of *End Time Disciple Ministries* Facebook page. The representations of church performance was convoluted with discourses of bio-power, cultural violence, ideological power, patriarchy, violence, manipulation, exploitation, belonging and outright hegemonic practices. The self-representations of *End Time Disciple Ministries* showed *Prophet Penuel* as cunningly employing what Goffmann (1959) labels as impression management. The final theme of ritualistic church performances projected discourses of doctrine (prosperity gospel) and discourses of that showed that *Prophet Penuel* has power over life. The online representation in their entirety represented showed that exploitative power is alive and rife within the Neo-

Pentecostal Church spaces. Those who have influence are able to coerce, curtail and trample underfoot the rights of those socially, economically and spiritually in poor.

CHAPTER 5

The Audience Responses to the Online Representations of *End Time Disciple Ministries* Church Performances.

The Scope of the Audience Responses

The audience member responses to the representations of the online church performances analysed in *Chapter 4* took on a multi-faceted and multi-directional outlook. The significant bulks of the engagements were extrapolated from the representations of bizarre church performances because that is where the significant audience interests resided. Multiple discourses, ideologies and inter-subjectivities were in contestation amongst the audience responses. The audience responses that were extracted from the research data were divided into twelve key themes. The themes that prevailed consistently were these: 4.1) *Satanism and African Medicine*; 4.2) *Manipulation, Exploitation and Lack of Knowledge;* 4.3) *Discourse of Deliverance* 4.4) *Desperation and Blackness*; 4.5) *It is the last days and Jesus is coming back*; 4.6) *Biblical Immaturity*; 4.7) *Xenophobic Discourse*; 4.8) *The Critique of the Christian faith*; 4.9) *Sexual Innuendos and Personal Attacks*; 4.10) *Insults and Rebukes*; 4.11) *Comedy and Satire*; 4.12) *Leave Prophet Penuel alone*. These themes were the prevalent thematic discourses that prevailed as a rationale to understanding the online representations on the page. The analysis of the themes that prevailed was used to answer the subsidiary research question: ***How do audiences respond to the online representations of neo-Pentecostal churches?***

5.1) *Satanism and African Medicine*

Mandla Dumakude *Which God is you talking about? What this Pastor is doing is Satanic, Voetsek!*

Jabu Mavimbela *Dis is works of devil, I command dis snake to be burned by Holy ghosts fire, dis is one Satanism false pastors and i declare him to be to dwell in deep hell by fire by force by thunder In Jesus name I pray Amen!..*

George Ozumbe *This is not a miracle any native doctor can perform this tricks. I have seen it done. Nothing new, what is surprising is that so call pastors are holding a bible in one hand a using native medicine in the other and we as Africans are doing away with those powers that our ancestors and native healers had and following church preachers who have harnessed this powers and proclaiming them as coming from God*

The above comments were a response to the ridiculous 'snake eating' church performance exhibited on the Facebook page. A majority of the Facebook audience members were aggravated and infuriated by the bizarre church performances exhibited on the page. Many held to the view that the bizarre church performances represented were absurd and out rightly criminal. A prevalent discourse employed to interpret the visual scenery was the discourse of Satanism. The Facebook audience held to the view that the happenings of the church exerted a diabolical and anti-Christian domineer which needed urgent reprimand. The above extrapolated comments provide evidence to that regard. *Mandla Dumakude** reacts emotively and interrogates the source of the miracles performed by *Prophet Penuel*. Furthermore, he swears at *Prophet Penuel* labelling him as satanic. *Jabu Mavimbela** pronounces her dissatisfaction through a prayer. In her prayer she commands both the snake and *Prophet Penuel* to be condemned to hells fire (a symbol of condemnation). Her discursive submission reveals that she is a Christian woman angered by *Prophet Penuel's* acts. She calls *Prophet Penuel 'Satanism false pastors'* which fundamentally diagnoses and identifies him as devilish and fake.

*George Ozumbe** introduces a very fundamental and central discourse into the equation. He postulates the discourse that Pastors are hypocritical because they act as though they have *broken away from the past* (born again) yet they still use African medicine to solicit power, later on they claim those powers are from God. Ozumbe* scrutinizes the authenticity, originality and sincerity of Neo-Pentecostal pastors in Africa. The discourse of Satanism and African medicine is used to disregard *Prophet Penuel* and his practices. The discourse of African medicine is deployed to bring into question the '*break with the past'* rational of which most Neo-Pentecostals are said to be loyal. The Satanism discourse challenges the practices however the later discourse of African medicine challenges the very nomenclature and identity of Neo-Pentecostals as a sect.

5.2) Manipulation, Exploitation and the Lack of knowledge

> Mondli Ndebele *Na wao!!! Even some of the dare-devil Nigerian pastors who over the years have perfected the art of Pentecostal miracle manipulation and all the accompanying jiggery pokery have never fed anyone with snakes neither have they made their congregation eat...*
>
> Joseph Dumado *Why are they doing this to people? They are takin advantage on us coz we need help from God*
>
> Sipho Gumede *badukisiwe abantu ngenxa yokuswela ulwazi*
>
> Mpofu Thabang *My people have perished bekaz of lack of wisdom! Jah*
>
> Mokoena Tonia *Lack of knowledge... siza Moy aka Jehovha*

The discourse of *manipulation, exploitation and lack of knowledge* proved to be a common audience response on the page. The practices exhibited by *Prophet Penuel* were deemed highly manipulative exploitative towards the socially helpless and dilapidated peoples. Those who held to this conviction cited that lack of knowledge was the reason why people were manipulated and exploited by *Prophet Penuel*. Had the people been biblically informed, so to say, they would have had the capacity to decipher between the legitimate and the illegitimate. The above comments support this claim. *Mondli Ndebele** comments on the high level of manipulation amongst Neo-Pentecostals of Nigerian descent, he laments that none have ever gone to the extreme ends of making another human being eat a live snake. In this submission he tries to emphasize the point that *Prophet Penuel* has taken manipulation of people to greater dimensions.

*Joseph Dumado** makes the claim that people are exploited, commoditized and used because they are in need of divine assistance. Hence, they are susceptible to grotesque acts of ritual practice because of such vulnerability and want. The other three commenters *Sipho Gumede*, Mpofu Thabang* and Mokoena Tonia** reiterate the suggestion that the reason why people are exploitation is sheer lack of knowledge. The insinuation is that they (congregants) are the agents of their own fate. The discourses of manipulation, exploitation and lack of knowledge speak back to the ideal raised in the onset of this dissertation which suggested that those who have power have knowledge; those who have knowledge have power. *Prophet Penuel* is able subjugate and coerce congregants because he has knowledge which invariably means that he has power over them.

5.3) Discourse of Deliverance

> Mindlos Kunene *lol ds boy is taking chances at list he keeps us entertained nd I dnt blame him blame ds ignorant people who go to his church to seek deliverance*

The discourse of deliverance proved to be a relevant audience response. The rationale behind the discourse was premised on the argument that those who subscribe to *Prophet Penuel's* church need to be unshackled from spiritual bondage. Deliverance is a very important subject amongst people of Neo-Pentecostal affinity. Deliverance can be understood as being healed of sickness, bondages of the past, monetary lack and other hindrances that inhibit the general progress of an individual. Deliverance resonates with ideas of transcending an oppressed situation towards a position of victory. Desperation and seeking make people flock to the deliverance churches like *End Time Disciples Ministries* for the appropriate of better things which are believed to be acquired through *Prophet Penuel*. Deliverance is a very important and central subject within Neo-Pentecostal spaces because it one of the signs that suggest that an individual has totally broken with the past. *Mindlos Kunene** states that people go to *Prophet Penuel's* church to seek deliverance and escape from diverse problems. People are used and abused by *Prophet Penuel* because they do not know better and are engulfed by the cloud of ignorance. *Prophet Penuel* perpetually and violently exerts power over them because of this limitation. The discourse of deliverance is a central and critical point that is raised by the Facebook page member cited above.

5.4) Desperation and Blackness

> Themba Khumalo *Ooo nkosi yam bawo thethelela kulendawo saphela isizwe esimnyama*
>
> Synthia Gogela *People are desperate for healing to the point of eating a snake?? Prayer is the way, communicating with our mighty God. He's the God of all, he hears our prayers and know our thoughts before we even do anything. He is a jealous God. We go through life…*

The discourse of desperation and blackness emerge as another central audience response on the page. The discourse of desperation is based on the premise that people who attend *End Time Disciple Ministries* are desperate for the miraculous and the supernatural. This desperation leads to unbecoming and dehumanizing acts. *Synthia Gogela** makes the claim that people are desperate for healing and connecting with God to the point that they eat live snakes. The woman who was represented as eating a snake was interpreted as desperate; desperate to connect

with God. This comment foregrounds the insights in the literature review which informed us that Neo-Pentecostalism are founded on experientialism (the quest for experiencing God). Furthermore, *Themba Khumalo** foregrounds a very critical dynamic of race. His comment when translated reads such: *'Lord God have mercy, for the black race is being devoured'*. In this statement he exposes that he sees black people as being the most susceptible to bizarre church rituals and performances. This is because black people especially in the South African situation are the people who are most victims to unjust operations because of their economic want and social condition.

5.5) It is the last days and Jesus is coming back

> Tony Nyirenda *Hii this is the last days why SA people eating grass clothes etc in the name God that Paster he don't deserve to be alive please let us all rebuke those spirit even others are selling things in the Church oil sands etc may God open our eyes in JESUS*
>
> Thoko Makathini *jehova jesus sala sewubuya uzolanda bantwana bakho*

The eschatological discourse was a prominent audience response to the bizarre representations of church performances on the page. The eschatological discourse is predicated on the theological postulation that Jesus Christ's second coming is soon eminent. This eminence is understood to be evermore closer due to the escalation of global evil. *Tony Nyirenda** asserts this view by claiming that the reason why people are eating snakes in South Africa is because it is the last days and Jesus is about to come back. He says the selling of oil and sand and other religious objects is a clear sign of the end times. The eschatological justification suggests that it is the end times fundamentally because wrongdoing is increasing. *Thoko Makathini's** when translated reads thus*: "Jesus come back and fetch your children".* The underlying discourse of this particular comment is that Jesus must come fetch those who are his legitimate people. The deeds performed by *Prophet Penuel* are a spiritual campus and reflection to the second coming of Jesus. This is the rationale of those who subscribe to the eschatological argument to respond to the bizarre practices on the page.

5.6) Biblical Immaturity

> Collin Mkhize *Word of God...says we will Do even greater things than Jesus did whilst on Earth...Buh the eating of Snakes is Astray.*
>
> Maxwell Langa *Devil cannot eat snake. Stop saying it devil, it this 'pastor'. Who is using Scripture wrongly. Therefore we can conclude that he is used by the devil.*
>
> Adelina Thembisile *lol wow actual the pastor himself needs salvation no robertson spice but the salvation and deliverance of God unlike using the word of God in wrongful purposes.....in fact these people should read their bibles rather than being followers*

The biblical immaturity of *Prophet Penuel* featured greatly in the audience responses as a rationale to prove why and how he manipulates people. *Collins Mkhize** makes the claim that believers will do greater works as per the precepts of the bible. However, nowhere in the bible does it say that those greater works is the eating of snakes. The eating of snakes is a total misappropriation of scripture. *Maxwell Langa** claims that *Prophet Penuel* is using scripture wrongly therefore he is an agent of the devil. *Adelina Thembisile** says that the pastor needs deliverance because he is fundamentally thwarting and manipulating scripture. *Adelina** advices the congregants to read their bibles as opposed to being uninformed congregants. This particular submission correlates to the contents emphasised in the literature review that informed us that modern Pentecostalism rely significantly on experientialism rather than theological loyalty. The literature informs us that new Pentecostals often misappropriate scripture to detrimental ends to suit their own agendas and ends.

5.7) Xenophobic Discourse

> *Edwardo Fundiswa I blame South African Government. Y can't thy take action towards such men of God. If it was a 4rena thy can even kill him. stupid pipo. am angry. y do u treat 4renas with true gospel of Jesus like thieves but u leave a fake S.Africans prophet. God will purnish this country like what he did to sodom and Gommorah*

Xenophobia is a rife problem in South Africa. Foreign nationals have been on the harsh receiving end of South Africans in recent times. The key reason for such attacks has been the argument that foreign nationals are notoriously criminal and they unjustly appropriate jobs from poor South Africans. *Edward Fundiswa** claims that the South African government is to blame for they have failed to take action towards ‘men of God’ like *Prophet Penuel*. He says that had the man of God been a foreign national he would have been reprimanded and disciplined severely. He claims that the issue is being brushed under the carpet because *Prophet Penuel* is a

South African. He further states that foreigners with the authentic gospel are rejected yet fake and dodgy prophets are condoned. He further states that this inconsistency will cause God to punish South Africa like he did Sodom and Gomorrah who are the epitome. This discourse seeks to project the argument that South African people should show consistence with regards to how they critique wrongdoing and not project partiality.

5.8) The Critique of the Christianity faith

> Arthur Wembezi *OMW… what is this world coming to. Other religions are laughing at Christianity due to our lack of knowledge of our Bible*

The criticising of the Christian faith proved to be a pertinent audience response. *Arthur Wembezi** claims that other religions are laughing at Christianity because of the lack of knowledge amongst Christians. This particular comment clearly differentiates between the *us and them*. There are clear signs of an in-group/out group dichotomy, Christians versus other religions. *Arthur Wembezi** locates himself within the in-group. We see this by his lexical choice, when describing why other religions are laughing at Christianity he says that it is because of '*our lack of knowledge'.* It is apparent that he identifies and associates with the religion of Christianity. *Arthur Wembezi** critiques the predicament of Christianity and what it has become. This is all the more interesting because he is also a Christian. It can be said that *Arthur Wembezi** introspectively critiques himself. *Arthur Wembezi** foregrounds the discourse that suggests that Christianity has drifted away from core knowledge of the bible. This lack of knowledge is in essence debilitation of power. Those who know more of the bible exert hegemonic power on those who have a minimal knowledge of scripture. This is because those who have little knowledge of the bible allow those who have more knowledge of the bible to control them because they do not know better. Therefore, the lack of knowledge is a personal disempowerment and surrender towards subjugation, control and manipulation. The knowledge of the bible in the hands of people like *Prophet Penuel* becomes a tool to disempower and subjugate the ill-informed.

5.9) Sexual Innuendos' and Personal Attack

Fandlu Roberts She looks possessed... sies maan!!!! nxa!!!

Deborah Wilkins She looks like a snake herself. May GOD deliver U

Beauty Mabandla *The girl is so possest already i can see her eyes God hve marcy*

Omega Mamabolo *Clearly u can see that the girl is used to all kind of snake's in her mouth*

Donny Don *next thing the women are gona open up and swallow his cum I tell ya!*

The Facebook membership also employed sexual innuendoes and personal attacks as responses to the bizarre church performances exhibited on the page. The sexual innuendos and personal attacks were forwarded and directed more especially to the woman represented on the bizarre church performances. *Fandlu Roberts** and *Deborah Wilkins** claim that the woman who is represented eating snake is possessed, demonically. This implies that she is influenced by some form of diabolical spirit. *Omega Mamabolo** insultingly wrote that the girl is used to all kinds of snakes in her mouth. This statement discursively insinuates that the woman is sexually loose and is well accustomed to oral sex. The snake in this instance connotes a penis. *Donny Don** further insults the woman by suggesting that she is going to open up to and swallow *Prophet Penuel's* cum. This implies that *Prophet Penuel* is going to end up performing oral sex on the congregants and they will swallow his cum (sperm). These are some of the violent and patriarchal comments on the Facebook page which had the objective to humiliate and objectify the woman who were subject.

5.10) Insults and Rebukes

Zamani Khoza *Can we get an address to this church so we can burn it down together with this Evil boy known as their pastor!*

Manana Pearl *God's power? dont anger God with such, His hand shall punish you who lead His sheeps astray..South Africa we need to pray.*

Olusang Mbiti Wayongo *SOUTH AFRICANS, OPEN YOUR EYES Seriously speaking,it beats my imagination how you guys can be so gullible and stupid to believe this mother-fucker you call ur prophet,are ynu guys high on cheap weed?or u guys are just pulling some stunts,you guys should open ur eyes to reality and where the hell is the government of your country to do something abt this....phew*

The Facebook audiences employed insults and rebukes to respond to the representational work on the Facebook page. These insults and rebukes were

directed at *Prophet Penuel*. A Facebook member *Zamani Khoza** threatened to burn the church down as a means of expressing his anger. The Facebook member further belittles *Prophet Penuel* and calls him a boy (an insult that attacks *Prophet Penuel's* manhood). *Manana Pearl** claimed that God would punish *Prophet Penuel* because he is misleading people. Another radical audience member *Olusang Mbiti Wayongo** rebuked the lack of vigilance on the part of the South African government advising that the government should intervene. He violently asserts that the South African government is '*gullible and stupid'* to believe a mother-fucker like *Prophet Penuel*. Personal attacks and insults were geared to delegitimize *Prophet Penuel* and discredit him.

5.11) Comedy and Satire

> Gertrude Mandolo *Siesness. Man of God, at least braii-nyana the meat. I mean Robertson spice is not even that expensive.*
>
> Malondi Moyo *Has the rand gone weaker than a zim dollar that southafricans eat snakes for chocolate?? Jah hav mercy!*
>
> Nozie Ngoma *Soon it will be pastor's masipa changed to chocolate*

Satirical and comical responses were prominent discursive response to bizarre church performances. The snake eating performance and other bizarre performances represented on the Facebook page were the ones that received great attention. In reference to the snake eating performance *Gertrude Mandolo** satirises the man of God (Prophet Penuel) saying that he should have at least *'braai-ed'* the meat' (snake). *Malondie Moyo** pokes fun at the South African currency claiming that it has plummeted to the point where people are eating snakes for chocolate. *Nozie Ngoma** says that soon the Pastors Masipa *(shit/faeces)* will be changed to chocolate. These particular Facebook members tried to find humour in the most inhumane and dehumanizing practices commissioned by *Prophet Penuel*. The comedy and the humour were used to trivialize the happenings of *End Time Disciples Ministries.* Moreover, as specified in the literature review Facebook exhibits the function of playfulness, joviality and light-spiritedness. The literature reviewed also bears testament that Facebook for many is a platform where the lucid self is performed and enacted to create a particular impression.

5.12) Leave Prophet Penuel Alone

> Peter Zondi *These people that crirtize you man of God, they dont know everytime they say something bad Holy Father God is giving Spiritual Promotion. Scripture in the Bible Psalms 105:15 Touch not my anointed once and do my Prophets no harm.*
>
> Anthony Zungu *Those who criticize you they don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ let them hala they are blasphemous I don't know if they know the meaning.*

The final and important discourse discovered was that which protected the interests of *Prophet Penuel* regardless of the injustices he performed. *Peter Zondi** exhibits this discourse when he says that every time people criticise him it signifies that God is giving him spiritual promotion. The logic used by the audience members is that tribulation leads to elevation. He seeks to provide an upbeat attitude about *Prophet Penuel's* atrocities. Furthermore, he says that it is unjust to criticise a servant of god by citing the verse bible verse: *Psalm 105:15 Touch not my anointed and do my prophets no harm.* This scripture within Neo-Pentecostal circles is interpreted as meaning that prophets, leaders and pastoral figures of the church are exempt from critique regardless of what they do. This portion of bible scripture is often used as a scriptural justification to deflect, ignore and reject any confrontations whenever the prophet is involved in reckless behaviour. *Anthony Zungu** goes to the ultimate extreme stating that those who criticize *Prophet Penuel* do not have a relationship with Jesus. By this he means that those who criticize Prophet Penuel are not born again. Therefore, they are not authentic Christians. *Anthony Zungu** equates the criticising of *Prophet Penuel* as blasphemous in principle. These two Facebook members exert an ethic which implies a regulation of expression. Those who are out-rightly critical of *Prophet Penuel* are deemed to not have a relationship with God. Furthermore, those who critic *Prophet Penuel* fundamentally go against biblical loyalty.

Conclusion

This particular chapter sought to present the general scope of the discourses that the prevailed as audience responses to the church performances represented on the Facebook page. The chapter extrapolated twelve fundamental themes which proved to be the central discourses that encapsulated the entire audience responses to the online church performances that were analysed in *Chapter 4.* The next section will reflect on the holistic findings of the study, sketching out the key areas of

importance. It must be noted that the above findings from *Chapter 4 and 5* are by no means generalizable because a more wholesome and more thorough analysis would have been aided by an ethnographical study. The findings are powerful yet limited because no human contact was conducted. It would have been wholesome and relevant to conduct human contact, as juxtaposition, to the finding but the findings were limited to the ambits of the research which needed to be focused.

CHAPTER 6

Reflection and Conclusion

The social media is the research hub of the future. The intricacies and complexities of social life are now entrenched and archived within these very important social utilities. The key discoveries of this research affirmed the truth that major scholarship should be invested in the realm of new/social media because it is a critical haven of extrapolating social data for the advancement of social theory and deep social inquiries. The objective of this study was to demystify the discursive, ideological investments of language (visual and lexical) within the Facebook page *End Time Disciples Ministries.* The key argument foregrounded was that new/social media is an avenue of robust, lethal and volatile space for representing church performances of a bizarre and outrageous nature. *Prophets Penuel's End Time Disciple Ministries* proved to be an exceptional prototype of religious vis-à-vis Neo-Pentecostal exceptionality and extremity. The research questions for this study wanted to uncover two things. Firstly, to understand how *End Time Disciple Ministries* represent their church performances on Facebook? Secondly, the objective was to explore how these church performances represented online are interpreted by the Facebook audience members.

The online church performances on *End Time Disciple Ministries* cultivated interesting insights. There are three key themes that prevailed with regards to the representational work on Facebook page. The first theme that was prominent was the representation of bizarre Neo-Pentecostal church performance. These performances entailed congregants being made to eat snakes, weaves, ants and pieces of cloth. The church performances also depicted *Prophet Penuel* physically standing and walking on congregants. The analysis discovered that the congregants are coerced and abused through *Prophet Penuel's* exhibitions of (bio) power, cultural violence and a patriarchy within the congregation. The analyses also uncovered that *Prophet Penuel* deployed ideological power to maintain a strong hold on the congregants in order to subjugate them through employing their own consent. The striking element about these representations was that the dehumanizing, demeaning and sub-humanizing church practices were demonstrated and exhibited through and

on the bodies of women. This validates the fact that the institutional ethos of the church in question was that which tramples underfoot any sense of humanity towards woman, let alone their individual rights.

The second theme of online church performances depicted *End Time Disciple Ministries* entailed the online representation of that showed *Prophet Penuel* egotistically represents himself and his church events and functions. In these representations it was apparent that *Prophet Penuel* employed a rigorous front stage presentation. *Prophet Penuel* represented himself as all-powerful and the chief custodian of divine power. He did this by violently critiquing his nemesis who sought to delegitimize and critique his bizarre demonstrations. The third and final theme was that of ritualistic church performances. These are the church performances that ritualistically transpire within Neo-Pentecostal church spaces. The analysed performances included representations of *preaching, prophecy and testimonies* which proved to be the common ritualistic performances that frequently appeared on the page. The discourses that prevailed within these ritualistic performances were that of prosperity, positive confession, hope, and discourses on the transcendence towards a better life prospects and possibilities. The ritualistic performances showed that some Neo-Pentecostal spaces in (South) Africa exert bio-power; cultural violence and hegemony of the highest quality in order to subjugate coerce and control their constituencies. They do this through the sermons they preach, the prophecies they pronounce and the testimonies ignited within their sacred demarcations of power, namely the church vicinities.

The second research question sought to explore how the audiences responded to the aforementioned online church representations. The bulk of the audience comments were directed at the bizarre church performances represented on the page. It was from that particular thematic that the bulk of the audience comments were extrapolated. The audience responses were divided in twelve central themes. Some of the audience members interpreted the bizarre church performances as acts of Satanism. This was because of the apparent diabolic nature of the represented church performances which entailed bizarre and crude natures and activities. Other audience members blamed the church members for not possessing thorough knowledge of the bible which necessitated their mistreat. Hence, they were exploited and manipulated. There was also the common assertion that the audience members

were desperate for the miraculous and the supernatural, therefore abundantly susceptible to being deceived, abused and subjugated to nonsensical and dubious church performances. Other audience members racialised the bizarre happenings and felt that it was consistently black people who always receive the rough end of the stick as far as such exploitative religious groups are concerned. Furthermore, audience members also felt that bizarre happenings represented on the Facebook page were a sign of the second coming of Jesus Christ, which is revealed through the escalation of evil. Others blamed the congregation's poor biblical rootedness which made them subject to exploitation. The audience members also highlighted the discourses of xenophobic prejudice. Some argued that had the bizarre acts been performed by a non-South African prophet it would have been highly condemned but because it was performed by a South African Prophet it was condoned. The bulk of the comments exerted by the audience were projected as vilifying the Christian faith through insults and rebukes directed at *Prophet Peneul*. Other audience members chose to embrace the light-hearted side, making fun of all the bizarre happenings represented on the page. The most shocking inclination of the audience comments were those that valorised *Prophet Penuel* and unreservedly tried to protect his interests at all costs.

By way of conclusion, it must be noted that the state of affairs with regards to Neo-Pentecostalism in South Africa leaves a lot to be desired. It places into question the state of religion in South Africa and the continent at large. The obscene, the extreme and the exceptional are becoming weirder and more perplexing by the day. Reality in these churches is becoming stranger and wilder than fiction itself. At the very moment I pen this conclusion two Neo-Pentecostal prophets have been reprimanded for outrageous ritual practices in South Africa. One has received national attention for pouring boiling water on the hands of the congregants as a signifier of faith. Another has received national attention for making congregants '*turn'* into sheep and further made them to perform dehumanizing and demeaning animalistic acts. It seems the problem is escalating to detrimental lengths. Sadly though, such acts of high treason are trivialized and no concrete measures are channelled towards the perpetrators. However, recently, the gross human rights violations instigated by these church leaders have attracted government intervention prompting the South African government to launch a commission.

The (Cultural, Religious and Linguistic) CRL Rights Commission, as it is called, has launched investigations into the activities of Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa. The chairperson of the commission, Thoko Xaluva has proposed regulation to stop people like *Prophet Penuel.* The CRL Commission has launched investigative inquiries into the holistic ritual practices of Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa. The inquiries also include probes into the organizational registration and financial standing of these places of worship. These inquiries found that some of these churches are not registered. However, the proposition of the regulation of the religious sector has been questioned pertaining its feasibility and constitutionality (Pollitt, 2015). Key Christian organizations like the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the National Interfaith Council of South Africa have outwardly condemned the happenings at *End Time Disciple Ministries* arguing that such scandalous activities are dangerous and harmful to society because of its potential commercialisation of faith and putting religion in South Africa into disrepute. The calls for regulation have been dismissed because it has been argued that the churches that need regulating are non-regulatable because they operate informally, sometimes out of tents and open fields. Moreover, the deeper question would be, how do we regulate beliefs and convictions? Regulation would inevitably thwart the constitutional right of freedom of thought, association and religion. Regulation of the religious sector as a whole is not a solution since even Christians themselves shun the practices performed by *Prophet Penuel* as fundamentally unchristian.

The problem with the commission though is the remedial action, if any, that can be taken to kerb the exploitative practices by select Neo-Pentecostals churches in South Africa. By-and-large the commission is diagnostic and not prescriptive, failing dismally to provide viable solutions to remedy the scourge. But many doubt the feasibility of this proposition because it could punch severely at the constitutional foundations of South Africa. Nonetheless, no one is oblivious to the fact that serious undertakings and punitive measures need to be channelled towards specifically the bizarre Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa in the age of social media- an era of the democratization of knowledge, virtual violence and power. It goes without saying that it is this type of religion, expressed through bizarre practices that Marx was talking about when he asserted that religion is the *opium of the masses*- a clear *indice* of our unhealthy, poverty stricken and fundamentally broken society.

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