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Dates
Received: May 25, 2026
Revised: June 15, 2026
Accepted: July 5, 2026
Published: September 2026

How to cite
Kapp, T. (2026) 'Reproducing whiteness: Prophets for profit, prosperity cults, and Big Religion in South Africa', *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 39(1). 22 pages. https://doi.org/10.17159/jsr.v39i1.4674

Article includes
☒ Peer review
☐ Supplementary material

Data availability
☒ Open data set
☒ All data included
☐ On request from author/s
☐ Not available
☐ Not applicable

Editor
Dr. Tristán Kapp

Funding
South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) supported by the Lund Missionssällskap and National Research Foundation of South Africa (Grant no. 118854).

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Reproducing Whiteness: Prophets for Profit, Prosperity Cults, and Big Religion in South Africa

Abstract
This research investigates the emergence of Megacostalism in post-apartheid South Africa, focusing on how white Pentecostal Charismatic and Evangelical megachurches utilize prosperity theology to maintain racial and economic hierarchies. The author argues that these institutions function as 'Big Religion' – corporatized 'non-places', blending Charismatic authority and anti-intellectualism with prosperity theology to exploit financially vulnerable congregants towards material wealth. Through case studies of prominent ministries like *inter alia* Rhema, CRC, and CFCI, the paper illustrates how the pursuit of material wealth is sacralized as divine favor, effectively sanctifying systemic inequality through institutions of whiteness. Furthermore, the paper highlights a significant lack of institutional accountability and critical scholarship, recognizing how these powerful religious organizations often resist state-led efforts to curtail the commercialization of religion via regulation. Ultimately, the study suggests that these mafiarized movements of deviant religion act as coercive cultic systems that preserve colonial and apartheid-era whiteness, as well as white privilege, under the guise of sanctified success.

Keywords: Christianity, prosperity theology, mega-churches, big religion, South Africa, whiteness, cults, Pentecostalism

Introduction
Post-apartheid South Africa continues to grapple with widespread unemployment, political corruption, and deepening poverty – conditions that have intensified longstanding economic inequalities (Francis and Webster, 2019, pp. 789-791; Arndt *et al*., 2020, pp. 16-22; Van Papendorp, Packirisamy and Masike, 2024, pp. 1-4). In contrast, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Evangelical (PCE) megachurches have demonstrated notable opulence, while white classical Pentecostalist (celebrity) pastors have largely escaped sustained critical scrutiny in both public and academic discourse (Nel, 2024, pp. 1-2 of 7). Central to many of these movements is the promotion of a 'health and wealth' theology, in which financial prosperity is framed as a visible sign of divine favor, and practices such as tithing and 'sowing' are presented as mechanisms for material return (Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 2023; Jacobs, 2016, pp. 202-212; Barron, 2022, pp. 88-94).

This phenomenon is commonly associated with PCE Christianity, a rapidly expanding religious formation that links spiritual legitimacy to material success (Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 3-4 of 16). However, scholarship on prosperity theology in post-apartheid South Africa has almost exclusively focused on African Independent and black Pentecostal-Charismatic churches (cf. Falkof, 2025), particularly in predominantly megachurch contexts where the intersections of religion, race, privilege, and economic prosperity remain under-examined in contemporary scholarship (Niemandt, 2017, pp. 204-206; Andrew, 2021, pp. 13-17; Adamo, 2021; Barron, 2022, pp. 88-100; Resane, 2022; Mkhize, 2024; Pillay and Orogun, 2024, pp. 87-89). This has resulted in absent critical approaches to the racialized institutional dynamics (i.e. whiteness) through which classical white Pentecostalism operates (cf. Johnston, 2008, pp. 10-23). The research therefore aims to address this epistemic gap, examining white classical Pentecostal megachurches in South Africa.

The study presents Megacostalism as reflective of Benjamin Zeller's 'Big Religion' complemented by the prosperity theology frameworks of Asonzeh Ukah and Maria Frahm-Arp, Janja Lalich's Weberian Charismatic authority 'cults', and Christi van der Westhuizen's capitalist logics of whiteness *vis-à-vis* white privilege. This is bolstered by John Searle's status function monopolies, David Chidester's 'deviant religion', and George Sanders' corporatized non-places, through utilizing available sources in the public domain, including empirical data provided by the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic communities (CRL) Rights Commission on the commercialization and abuse of people's belief systems (Kibuuka, Van Aardt and Tustin, 2016, pp. i-vi; Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 4-10), including statistics from the *World Megachurches* project (Bird, 2026), combined with other new media sources, as well as South African scholarly research such as Nel (2012; 2016; 2018; 2024); Kgatle (2022; 2024b); Dube and Zondi (2019); Frahm-Arp (2018); Niemandt (2017); Resane (2022; 2024); and Falkof (2025). Ultimately, the research contends that prosperity gospel serves as a structural tool for reproducing whiteness and colonial-era hierarchies.

Three prominent case studies, i.e., Ray McCauley (Rhema Bible Church), At Boshoff (Christian Revival Church), and Theo Wolmarans (Christian Family Church International) are exemplified. These examples (with a few other brief contextual mentions) are referenced as institutionalized systems of whiteness, Megacostalism, and the colonial socio-economic legacies of PCE religion in post-apartheid South Africa. The article approaches these ministries as institutional formations of material wealth, embedded within broader socio-economic and historical contested spaces. Therefore, they are conceptualized via 'Big Religion' (Zeller, 2011) or 'Megacostalism' (Kgatle, 2024b), characterized by modern American large-scale church buildings, coercive authority, mafiarization, and the commodification (corporatization) of belief (Sanders, 2014, pp. 72-74). This analysis concludes with particular attention to how prosperity discourse is articulated to legitimize material excess, and how whiteness functions as enabler for this theology in post-apartheid South Africa (cf. Kgatle, 2024b).

Cult or Deviant Religion? Navigating a 'Cinderella Term'

PCE or 'megacostal' churches operate not only as a coercive religious cult, remaining attentive to the term's historical and contemporary use (cf. Richardson, 1993, pp. 348-355; 1978, pp. 29-31; Chidester, 2003, p. xx; Tuhirirwe and Bweyale, 2025, pp. 59-63), but also as institutionalized corporate religious economy through which financial monopolies and political and symbolic authority are solidified. By engaging analytically with the contested category of cults, the article adopts the term descriptively to qualify contemporary high-control religious formations as examples of deviant religion in South Africa (cf. Coates, 2015, pp. 106-109) where Charismatic authority, economic extraction (via the prosperity gospel), and whiteness converge in a historic socio-economically unequal country.

Cults have remained controversial in religion studies since its conceptualization by Ernst Troeltsch in 1931 (cf. Richardson, 1993; Newcombe, 2014). Consequently, it has also received little attention in the South African religious context (cf. Scharnick-Udemans, 2022, p. 25; Dube, Nkoane and Hlalele, 2017, pp. 330-331). Instead, it has been a 'Cinderella term' (cf. Richardson, 1978, pp. 29-31) being consistently overlooked, or substituted with euphemisms such as 'sect', 'church', or 'denomination' (Tuhirirwe and Bweyale, 2025, pp. 59-63). Despite cults being theoretically contested across disciplines (cf. Polák, 2023, pp. 5-11), the concept remains a necessary diagnostic reference within post-apartheid religious scholarship, particularly for analyzing potentially harmful (yet

influential) religious groups in South Africa, such as Megacostalism (Rosedale and Langone, 2015; Fleischmann, Ferreira and Muller, 2021, pp. 2-3).

Chidester (2003, p. xx) echoes this describing a cult as a 'deviant social organisation masquerading as religion; the opposite of legitimate religion – evil, dangerous, mind-controlling, brainwashing, financially exploitative, and politically subversive'. While Chidester aims to separate such groups from legitimate forms of religion, his definition relevantly describes the practices suggested by Settler (2018, pp. 37-38). Settler explains how Pentecostal churches in post-apartheid South Africa commodify sacred objects via material religion (cf. Strijdom, 2014, pp. 4-5 of 14; 2024, pp. 8-10 of 14). Anointing oils, blessed water, calendars, and handkerchiefs are sold alongside church branded merchandise at inflated prices (Settler, 2018, pp. 43-49). Scharnick-Udemans (2022, pp. 24-26), a former student of Chidester's, offers a sharper critique proposing that the neglect in rigorous academic inquiry on *de facto* cults, stem from South Africa's 'Christonormative – and predominantly white, male-dominated religious scholarship' (cf. Wepener and Nell, 2021). This imbalance has permitted media and 'anti-cult' activists – rather than diverse academic expertise – to dominate public perceptions of cultic phenomena in South Africa (Scharnick-Udemans, 2022, pp. 24-26), therefore necessitating serious engagement within South African religion scholarship.

Historically the term 'cult' (from the Latin *cultus*/*colo-colere*) simply referred to 'religious worship' (Tuhirirwe and Bweyale, 2025, pp. 53-54). Yet modern definitions include unorthodox or manipulative groups centered on devotion to a leader, idea, or purpose (Rosedale and Langone, 2015; cf. Richardson, 1993; Newcombe, 2014). Janja Lalich (2004) and the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) conceptualize cults as coercive systems – religious, ideological, or familial – organized around a transcendent belief structure and Charismatic authority in the Weberian sense[1] (Lalich, 2004, pp. 78-79; cf. Corvaglia, 2025, pp. 3-6). These groups often depend on 'affective bonds' that encourage absolute commitment, creating environments susceptible to corruption, self-insulating systems of belief, and co-dependency (Lalich, 2004, pp. 3-7; 2025; cf. Corvaglia, 2025, pp. 5-7).

However, contemporary definitions note that cults are not homogenous and exist from benign to destructive. Its impact is relative to context and individual experiences and should therefore be treated with nuances such as 'liberal' and 'conservative' (cf. Rosedale and Langone, 2015; Newcombe, 2014). While not all employ deliberate thought reform, many cults exercise behavioral, psychological, or economic control that results in manipulation and demonstrable harm (Tuhirirwe and Bweyale, 2025, pp. 54-59). Sangwa and Mutabazi (2025, pp. 6-10) also identify similar dynamics in PCE churches (cf. Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 7-11 of 16), noting their use of branding, institutional control, aggressive marketing strategies (e.g., televised worship, faith branding, celebrity/paparazzi pastors), financial exploitation through tithes and product sales (Van Eck, Renkin and Ntakirutimana, 2016, pp. 2-3 of 8; Settler, 2018, pp. 43-44), notwithstanding doctrinal motifs such as prosperity theology (Heuser, 2020), and weak institutional accountability (cf. Kibuuka *et al*., 2016, pp. ix-xii; Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 18-21) as representative of cults (cf. Bornman, 2021, pp. 234-236). The investigation of Sangwa and Mutabazi similarly reveals that commercialization has infused churches with commercialized corporatization (Sanders, 2014, pp. 73-75). Therefore this has also heightened financialization, corruption, and ethical risks in churches (Sangwa and Mutabazi, 2025, p. 10; cf. Tuhirirwe and Bweyale, 2025, pp. 58-59).

'Big Religion' and Whiteness: White Classical Pentecostalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa

'Big Religion' was coined by Benjamin Zeller as analogous to 'Big Science', describing the institutionalization, professionalization, and centralization of religion within modern societies (Zeller, 2011, p. 330; cf. Sanders, 2014, pp. 73-75). Drawing on the historian Richard Hofstadter's analysis of postwar American anti-intellectualism (Hofstadter, 1964, pp. 5-6, 12-13), Zeller contextualizes 'Big Religion' within the populist McCarthy Protestant and Jeffersonian-era Christianity, that privileged the 'common sense' of the individual over scholarly authority (Zeller, 2011, p. 329; cf. Hofstadter, 1964, pp. 34-36), where both locate this phenomenon in the mid-20th-century expansion of American

[1] Weber (1978, pp. 1112-1117) argues that the power of Charismatic authority rests upon the belief in heroes and revelation and that all subsequent manifestations (regardless of their nature) are dependent on the persuasion of the masses accepting these manifestations, leading to a rationalization in which the faithful adapt to or accept the subsequent external manifestations without question.

Pentecostalism: Mass crusades, capital-intensive (mega)church constructions, and the celebrity evangelism of figures like Billy Graham, who blurred the lines between faith, finance, and politics (Zeller, 2011, pp. 330-331; cf. Evans, 2017). Zeller's framework offers a relevant lens for understanding the contemporary persistence of 'Big Religion' in post-apartheid South Africa, where similar patterns of anti-intellectualism are evident within 'white classical Pentecostalism' (Nel, 2016, pp. 2-4 of 9; 2024, pp. 1-3 of 7; cf. Resane, 2024, pp. 6-7).

In South Africa this notably manifests in white classical Pentecostalism (Nel, 2024, pp. 3-4 of 7) or what Kgatle calls 'Mega-Costalism' or 'Megacostalism' (Kgatle, 2024b, pp. 2-3 of 6; 2024a, pp. 4-5 of 6). Christianity has maintained social, cultural, political, and economic dominance in South Africa since colonialism and apartheid (Dubarry, 2021, pp. 5-7; cf. Vosloo, 2015, pp. 1-3; Shingange, 2024), despite certain Pentecostals occasionally participating in interfaith solidarity and anti-apartheid activism during segregation (Atabongwoung, Lütz and Austin, 2023, pp. 3-5). The post-apartheid separation of church and state (Ullrich, 2024) has not dissolved Christianity's historic societal hegemony (Vosloo, 2023, pp. 4-6 of 6; cf. Scharnick-Udemans, 2022, pp. 24-25). Instead, its enduring socio-economic and political entanglements continue to solidify its control over status functions (cf. De Freitas, 2018, pp. 45-48; Scharnick-Udemans, 2017, pp. 259-265; Kapp, 2026b).

Therefore, the Critical Whiteness Theory exists, involving critical engagement with whiteness as locus of power, privilege, and socio-economic status, perpetuating 'white privilege' (cf. DiTomaso, 2024, pp. 7-11; Hunter and Van der Westhuizen, 2022, pp. 45-46). White privilege is inherent to the extent of white classical Pentecostalists' monopoly (Nel, 2024, pp. 3-4 of 7) over status functions (Searle, 2017, pp. 1465-1466; Caton, 2019, pp. 4-7). In the prominent PCE megacostal churches discussed here, with prominent white leadership in South African Christianity with wealthy lifestyles, despite enduring broader economic disparities, this is especially observable (cf. Bird and Thumma, 2020, pp. 4, 12-13; cf. Van Der Riet and Verwoerd, 2022, pp. 2-4 of 9). Whiteness becomes a socially constructed system that interprets physiological differences (such as race and gender) and assigns them (unequal) human value. Despite positioning itself as a locus of power and privilege from which social norms and rewards are determined (Hunter and Van der Westhuizen, 2022, pp. 36-38), Van der Westhuizen notes that whiteness is not fixed or natural, but continuously renegotiated through institutional processes concerning race that dictate, reorganize, and hierarchize humanity (Van der Westhuizen, 2026, pp. 4-6).

Megacostalism (cf. Kgatle, 2024b, pp. 1-2 of 6) or 'classically white Pentecostal churches' (cf. Nel, 2024, pp. 4-5 of 7) lie at the heart of this, by presenting themselves as superhuman moral custodians of prosocial behavior through corporatized material and symbolic culture (Sanders, 2014, pp. 73-76)[2]. Its perceived moral authority derives less from its actions and more from social assumptions about its religious leaders' perceived socio-economic status (Mitkidis and Levy, 2016, pp. 159-160). Megacostalism therefore transforms religion into a deviant corporate institution perpetuating façades of divine moral credibility, while operating as institutions of coercive control and financial extortion (Tuhirirwe and Bweyale, 2025, pp. 58-59; Sangwa and Mutabazi, 2025, pp. 6-9; cf. Mitkidis and Levy, 2016, pp. 159-163). This in turn legitimizes pastors' lifestyles of material excess and privilege, which they frame as 'divine favor' to their flocks (Nel, 2024, pp. 3-4 of 7; Kgatle, 2024b, pp. 2-4 of 6).

This hierarchy is empirical of whiteness, especially when juxtaposing 'Big Religion' (Zeller, 2011, pp. 329-331) with classical white Megacostalism in South Africa as corporatized moral enterprise. It monopolizes what Searle (2017, pp. 1465-1466) calls, 'status functions': Money, political access, and moral legitimacy (Niemandt, 2017, pp. 214-215; Caton, 2019, pp. 4-7). When utilizing prosperity theology, spirit, and prophecy as coercive mechanisms for financial extraction, moral authority, and social influence, capital and power serve as key status function monopolies (Van Wyk, 2019; Caton, 2019, pp. 12-14; cf. Williams, 2022, pp. 4-5 of 8), embodying Max Weber's criticism of Charismatic authority (Weber, 1978, pp. 1111-1115), including the hierarchical and organizational nature of whiteness.

[2] This notion is traceable to sociologist Emile Durkheim's systems-theory approach (cf. Strijdom, 2024, pp. 4-6 of 14; Settler, 2018, pp. 41-43).

CRL Rights Commission vs. Celebrity Pastors: Commercialization of Religion

In 2008 the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) examined the swift proliferation of PCE churches in post-apartheid South Africa (Schlemmer *et al*., 2012, pp. 68-71, 77). Frahm-Arp has similarly noted this surge in 2018, in a study on Johannesburg churches demonstrating their rapid growth (cf. Frahm-Arp, 2018, p. 1 of 16). Despite paradoxically being in economically contested communities (Van Eck *et al*., 2016), they supposedly foster entrepreneurship and financial discipline through tithing, encouraging political involvement and social support (cf. Niemandt, 2017, pp. 206-208; Mitole, 2019, pp. 1-3). Unfortunately, their influence on socio-economic conditions are mostly detrimental (cf. Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 3-5 of 16; Williams, 2022, pp. 5-6 of 8; Kgatle, 2024a, pp. 2-4 of 6). As many scholars note, the demonstrable benefits remain elusive (Williams, 2022, pp. 3-6 of 8; Nel, 2024, p. 6 of 7; Niemandt, 2017, pp. 216-217) because economic empowerment has seldomly been at the forefront of the PCE prosperity gospel agenda.

Mashau and Kgatle criticize it as 'the gospel of affluence, greed, paradoxically placed, highly commercialised, and sensationalised' (Mashau and Kgatle, 2019, pp. 4-6 of 8). This reflects Megacostalism as a product of enduring whiteness in South Africa which has consistently elicited both public (ThabisoAflame, 2011) and scholarly criticism (Van Eck *et al*., 2016; Niemandt, 2017; Kapp, 2026b) due to 'celebrity/paparazzi pastors' (cf. News24, 2011) amassing wealth at the expense of economically vulnerable taxpayers (cf. Mitole, 2019, pp. 4-5; Mashau and Kgatle, 2019, pp. 1-2 of 8; Kgatle, 2024b, p. 6 of 6).

Consequently, from 2016 to 2017 the CRL Commission initiated a mixed methods pilot study to document the prevalence of abuse and commercialization of people's belief systems, involving 905 participants from diverse religious and non-religious/spiritual backgrounds (cf. Kibuuka *et al*., 2016, pp. 1-4). They exposed a widespread problem of controversies in South Africa (highlighted by the media) regarding exploitative Christian practices (cf. Falkof, 2025, pp. 89-91), including, but not limited to fraud and human rights abuses, money laundering, and financial exploitation from pastors (Scharnick-Udemans, 2022, pp. 24-25; cf. Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 18-21). The study notably aimed to fulfil a comprehensive mandate that would ideally lead to the regulation of unlawful activities, acknowledging the 'emerging phenomenon of operating churches as businesses' (Kibuuka *et al*., 2016, p. 106).

The Commission presents that church leaders (pastors) usually perceive themselves as superior to those they serve, leading to the coercive exploitation of congregants (Kibuuka *et al*., 2016, pp. 106-107; cf. Maluleke and Nepomuceno, 2019; Qiki and Howes; 2021, pp. 1-2 of 10). Mashau and Kgatle equally remark that Africa is home to some of the richest Christian pastors who, because of their visible accumulation of wealth and status, enhance the perceived power and divine favor they ostensibly hold (Mashau and Kgatle, 2019, pp. 3-4 of 8). The investigation further reveals that commercialization may also occur when religious leaders collaborate with politicians (cf. Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 4-5 of 16) such as providing counsel before elections (Kibuuka *et al*., 2016, p. 107; cf. Balcomb, 2024b). An example of this can be observed in the historic relationship between the apartheid government and *KwaSizabantu Faith Mission*[3] cult[4] (cf. Bornman, 2021, pp. 160-161).

Following the CRL Commission's report on the pilot in 2017, former deputy chairperson of the Commission, Professor David Luka Mosoma notes, '[W]hile numerous religious organisations cooperated, some resisted and declined to participate' (Maluleke and Nepomuceno, 2019). The Commission remained 'appalled' [*sic.*] by the degree to which ordinary citizens were being exploited psychologically, spiritually, and financially by religious leaders (Maluleke and Nepomuceno, 2019; cf. Dube and Zondi, 2019, pp. 40-41). Mosoma urged the South African government to more effectively address the exploitation and commercialization of religion via a proposed system of self-regulation that depends on a peer-review mechanism[5]. Furthering that though these institutions possess rights, they also necessitate accountability for the benefit of their congregants (Maluleke and Nepomuceno, 2019).

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[3] Under apartheid, KwaSizabantu leadership monitored the families of ANC activists and provided information to the National Party's Security Branch and Military Intelligence (News24, n.d.a).

[4] KwaSizabantu, one of the biggest mission stations on the continent, finds itself at the center of claims of cultism, allegations which first emerged two decades ago (News24, n.d.b).

[5] The Commission has since appointed a Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee for this purpose (Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee, 2025).

Dube and Zondi (2019, pp. 40-42) echo Mosoma's concern by distinctly categorizing this emerging phenomenon in South African PCE churches as 'mafiarised religion', conceptualizing the exploitation and infringement of human rights masquerading as religion, akin to Chidester's 'deviant religion' (Chidester, 2003, p. xx). Dube and Zondi defend 'mafia' as appropriate, due to churches and their preachers ostensibly exhibiting a criminal intent typically observed in organized crime syndicates (Dube and Zondi, 2019, pp. 42-44).

White Megachurches: An epistemic Lacuna in South African Critical Religion Scholarship

The characterization of PCE churches as 'mafiarized' is especially relevant as it connects to the issue of churches employing the prosperity gospel and coercive authority to exacerbate poverty (Dube and Zondi, 2019, pp. 45-46). An example of this is exemplified by Gavin Watson and Bosasa (cf. Levy, 2021), where daily prayer meetings, holy communion, and the presence of self-styled 'prophets' were intertwined with the company's white-collar crime dealings (Basson, 2019). Watson used prayer and scripture to legitimize his authority, rewarding loyalists and controlling staff, while simultaneously funding Charismatic Christian pastors and ministries off-the-books to expand political and business networks (Pauw, 2019).

However, the majority critical scholars on this issue mainly highlight African Independent Christian PCE denominations (cf. Niemandt, 2017, pp. 209-212; Masenya and Malesela, 2018, pp. 634-638; Mitole, 2019, pp. 3-4; Adamo, 2021, pp. 2-7; Kgatle, Thinane and Kaunda, 2023, pp. 5-12; Falkof, 2025). This creates a considerable *lacuna* in post-apartheid scholarship regarding the commercialization of religion's inimical relationship to whiteness and white privilege in contemporary South African Megacostalism.

Marius Nel (2024, p. 3 of 7) and Israel Olofinjala (2021, p. 6) identify this epistemic gap in their usage of 'white classic Pentecostals'[6], when considering the statistical reality that 71% of economic wealth in South Africa is held by the white minority (10% of the population; Mkhize, 2024, pp. 2-3 of 8; cf. Thorne, 2022, pp. 22-25; Makgetla, 2020, pp. 17-23; Chelwa, Maboshe and Hamilton, 2024, pp. 429-432), in addition to the nation's history of European colonialism and racial segregation during apartheid, including its ties to 'Euro-Christianity' or Reformed Calvinism (cf. Meyfarth, 2023, pp. 3-4 of 9; Kapp, 2026a). It is crucial to recognize PCE Megacostalism in South Africa as a neo-colonial remnant of whiteness (cf. Niemandt, 2017, pp. 208-209; Dyani-Mhango, 2024; Kgatle, 2024b, pp. 2-3 of 6). According to Niemandt (2017, pp. 203-204),

> [t]he legacy of the 16th century European colonisation of Africa and the continuation of colonialisation by means of neoliberal economic globalisation…are still shaping Africa. The persistence of coloniality as a power of entanglement by multiple global hierarchies of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic, and racial forms of domination continues to influence life and ideas in Africa.

The Gospel according to Pentecostalism: Megachurches and 'Paparazzi' Pastors

Despite being characterized by its predilection for evangelizing impoverished contexts and populations (cf. Nel, 2024, pp. 2-3 of 7), the economic middle-class and affluent upper-class South Africans are equally susceptible to the allure of a theology of material excess within Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Evangelical Christianity (Abraham, 2021, pp. 42-45). This places the complex discussion of PCE Megacostalism in South Africa within a unique socio-economic context (Lephoko, 2024, p. 2 of 7; cf. Dubarry, 2021, pp. 5-10).

A Framework for Regulation: The Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee (2016-2026)

In April 2025 the CRL Commission issued a preliminary draft self-regulatory framework (cf. Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee, 2025) in response to its 2017 Report on the commercialization of religion and the abuse of people's belief systems (Banda, 2019, pp. 2-7 of 11; cf. Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 19-25). Among its key recommendations was the creation of a 'peer-review committee'

[6] These were Western Pentecostal missionaries and pastors (later evolving into the Charismatic movement from the 60s) who were the major players in the Pentecostal movement (cf. Olofinjala, 2021, p. 6; Nel, 2024, pp. 2-3 of 7).

(Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 30-31) to address misconduct and abuses by certain religious leaders (Mkholo and Mukhavhuli, 2025a, p. 1; cf. Falkof, 2025, pp. 89-91). The report notes substantive *prima facie* evidence of the commercialization of religion (Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 31-33) and that the Commission had recommended a proposed framework for facilitating this committee acting under the government mandate outlined in s.22(1)(a) of the CRL Act 19 of 2002 which authorizes the Commission to form committees comprising members, staff, or other external, non-governmental individuals to support its functions (Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 34-47). In April 2025 the Commission announced a proposal for a Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee, responsible for carrying out the preparatory work required for setting up the peer-review council for the Christian sector (Mkholo and Mukhavhuli, 2025b, pp. 1-2).

Predictably some of the most prominent voices offering initial push-back (cf. Seeletsa, 2025; Banda, 2019, pp. 7-10 of 11; Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 27-30) were those of churches, including 'white classical Pentecostals' (Nel, 2024, p. 3 of 7; cf. Kgatle, 2024b, pp. 3-5 of 6). Notable early critics from the megacostal sphere were Bert Pretorius, senior pastor at 3C Church and president of the South African Community of Faith-based Fraternals and Federations (SACOFF), as well as Joshua McCauley of Rhema Bible Church, son of the late Ray McCauley (Xaba, 2025; Dlamini, 2025). However, similarly in October 2025, the Commission announced that the *ad hoc* committee (eventually introduced at Rhema Bible Church) would be comprised of Christian religious leaders from various umbrella organizations including mainline African independent and PCE (mega)churches[7] (Mkholo and Mukhavhuli, 2025a, pp. 1-3), members who are notably problematic if independent oversight is the goal[8].

Megachurch Definitions and Typologies

Defining a megachurch (in a narrow sense) is uncomplicated, as it quite simply predates back to the American 'Megachurch Phenomenon' of the late 20th century (Eagle, 2020): Trans-denominational churches, usually within the Pentecostal tradition, characterized by their substantial architectural scale, large congregations, and significant annual membership growth (Cartledge *et al*., 2019, pp. 44-49; cf. Hunt, 2020). The term 'mega' comes from the Greek μέγας (*megas*), signifying 'huge' or 'powerful' in relation to substantial quantity (Strong, 1997, p. 297; Resane, 2022, p. 2; cf. Kgatle, 2024a, pp. 2-3 of 6). Moreover, another notable characteristic is a median regular attendance commencing at around 2,000 congregants per week (Resane, 2022, pp. 2-3 of 9; cf. Pruisken, 2023, pp. 169-170). These churches often revolve around a singular Charismatic evangelical leader, not only believed to bestow sacred salvation or benefits upon the congregation associated with the prosperity gospel (Melton, 2020, pp. 78-81), but embodying the characteristics of a spiritual, profit-oriented entrepreneur, with the ability to perform miracles which affirm their legitimacy (Ukah, 2020, p. 331). Outside the exponential growth of the megacostal movement, little has changed since the 20th century.

These American-style churches have also infiltrated and monopolized the contemporary African religious space via miracle crusades, conferences, digital media, and zealous church planting philosophies (Williams, 2022, pp. 3-4 of 8; Melton, 2020, p. 78). Ukah (2020, pp. 332-337) categorizes megachurches in South Africa into four typologies: 1) Prosperity Megachurches; 2) Healing and Deliverance Megachurches; 3) Personal Empowerment and Apostolic Teaching; and 4) Prophetic-Healing Megachurches. The most prevalent among these are the Prosperity Megachurches alongside Healing and Deliverance Megachurches (Ukah, 2020, pp. 332-334). According to Sanders, as non-places, corporatized megachurches (which model themselves after consumer capitalism) are the consequence of contemporary capitalism's ongoing colonization of everyday life (Sanders, 2014, pp. 72-79).

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[7] Among its members are: Council of African Independent Churches (CAIC), Ebuhleni Nazareth Baptist Church, Gauteng Nazareth Baptist Church, Ginyezinye Nazareth Baptist Church, Moral Regeneration Movement, Rhema Bible Church, South African Council of Churches, St Engenas Zion Christian Church, The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, The Great Commission, Thembezinhle Nazareth Baptist Church, and the Zion Christian Church (Mkholo and Mukhavhuli, 2025b, p. 2).

[8] The current Section 22 Ad Hoc Committee as it stands is arguably akin to entrusting professional bank robbers to design bank security systems (cf. Mkholo, 2026).

Remarks about the Prosperity Gospel

Frahm-Arp (2018, pp. 7-11 of 16) echoes Ukah and Sanders, identifying three clusters of prosperity theology: 1) Abilities Prosperity, which Williams (2022, p. 4 of 8) calls 'Christian entitlement', for example the Rivers Megachurch (Olivier, 2025) that focuses on individual Christians who, if they adhere to the Bible and work hard, will succeed in whatever they do (Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 7-8 of 16); 2) Progress Prosperity which Kgatle (2024b, pp. 2-3 of 6) identifies as the 'missional ecclesial imagination', focuses on community development via cell groups (CRC Home cells or Unite180 uGroups) as core pillars and promoting an entrepreneurial doctrine (Boshoff, 2004; 2008) blending family, business, and biblical knowledge (cf. Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 8-9 of 16); finally, 3) Miracle Prosperity also focusing on the individual, but places emphasis on 'miraculous health and wealth' theology being prominent in the Encounter Church (Du Preez, 2025b), similar to Mashau and Kgatle (2019, pp. 3-4 of 8) observing the 'name-it, claim it' doctrine, where spiritual maturity is reflected through material prosperity, such as, 'the heavens have opened' (Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 10-11 of 16; cf. Naudé and Du Plessis, 2018, pp. 84-85; Du Preez, 2025a).

Megacostalism Gone Wild: Cases of White South African Classical Pentecostals

There are many prominent examples of megacostal churches in South Africa (Kgatle, 2024a, pp. 2-3 of 6), categorized under 'white classical Pentecostals' (Nel, 2024, p. 4 of 7). First, arguably the largest megachurch in the country is Rhema Bible Church in Johannesburg, boasting with approximately 45,000 members (cf. Balcomb, 2024b), founded and led by the late Raynor 'Ray' McCauley (1949-2024). McCauley was influenced by the historic North American Word of Faith Movement (WFM) and established a Bible Training Centre in 1979 late-apartheid South Africa. He can be considered as one of the 'fathers' of white (South African) classical Pentecostalism (Cartledge *et al*., 2019, pp. 61-62; cf. Niemandt, 2017, pp. 207-208). In addition to McCauley, there is also the New Covenant Ministries, located in Bryanston, Johannesburg, under leadership of Paul Hannington (Thompson, 1998, pp. 124-125; 2004, pp. 138-139), followed by Hatfield Christian Church in Pretoria, led by Louis Kotzé (cf. Schrieber, 2020; cf. De Wit and Theron, 2007, pp. 93-94), and the Durban Christian Centre in KwaZulu-Natal (Thompson, 2004, pp. 134-139), overseen by Fred and Nellie Roberts (James, 2007, pp. 36-40), all of which are prominent examples of Ukah's Miracle Prosperity megacostal churches (Ukah, 2020, pp. 332-334; cf. Thompson, 1997, p. 60).

According to Bird (2026), in his project documenting the rise of global megachurches (est. 1991), another example of PCE megacostal churches note CRC Christian Revival Church, boasting with round about 20,000 to 32,000 members throughout Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Cape Town, and Johannesburg, under the leadership of At Boshoff (cf. Van Eck *et al*., 2016, pp. 1-3 of 8; cf. Kgatle, 2024a, p. 2 of 6). Another example is Doxa Deo, founded by Alan Platt and affiliated with the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) which has a total of roughly 30,000 members with churches throughout South Africa (Kgatle, 2024a, p. 2 of 6).

Moreleta Park NG Gemeente, the only Dutch Reformed church listed and notorious for LGBTQ+ discrimination (cf. Van der Vyver, 2011, pp. 10-14) can be described as another good example of a white corporate megachurch (cf. Bird and Thumma, 2020, pp. 12-13) in Pretoria (Koenig-Visagie and Van Eden, 2013, pp. 1-4 of 12; Sanders 2014, pp. 71-75), with 15,000 members, formerly led by Dirkie van der Spuy and now by his son, Teodor. Despite being one of the largest churches in the region, this congregation is situated adjacent to Plastic View township[9] in Pretoria East, which about 800 to 3,000 black residents call home (Mashika, 2019, pp. 54-55; cf. De Beer, 2025, p. 292). Additional examples include Rivers Church in Sandton, Johannesburg, led by André Roebert (Zvikaramba and Lippke, 2026), which boasts with about 12,000 members (Whittles, 2017; Bird, 2026, pp. 1-3; 2016; Malan and Flanegan, 2016, pp. 6-7), Christian Family Church International (CFCI), led by Theo and Beverly Wolmarans (CFCI, 2021), and Encounter Christian Church (ECC) in Centurion, Cape Town, Ballito, and Krugersdorp, established by prophets Leon and Estee du Preez (EC, 2024); furthermore, 3C Church, a.k.a Capital City Church International, situated in Pretoria East (Inavate, 2022), and the controversial Hillsong South Africa church with campuses throughout the country (Rosebank Killarney Gazette, 2015; Pijoos, 2018; cf. Hillsong Africa, 2024; Kapp, 2026b).

[9] These were areas designated under apartheid legislation for exclusive occupation by people classified as non-white (cf. Lester *et al*., 2009).

Lastly, Unite180 was established in 2013 by David Grobler (MBA, University of Stellenbosch; cf. Grobler, 2015) and his wife Chanelle with local and international locations and state-of-the-art technology in their church campuses (cf. DWR Distribution, 2021; Grobler, 2015; Sangwa and Mutabazi, 2025, pp. 6-10). Unite180 resembles a unique mix in Progress Prosperity focused on its over 800 uGroups with approximately 2,000 student members called 'Uniters' (cf. JOY!, 2025), and large-scale infrastructure, combining standard classical white Pentecostalism with Ability Prosperity 'entrepreneurial leadership academies' and spiritual prophecy which signify Miracle Prosperity (Nel, 2024, pp. 2-3 of 7). They are following in the footsteps of the aforementioned examples with their dedication to 'spirit and power' (JOY!, 2024; cf. Van Eck *et al*., 2016, pp. 2-3 of 8; Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 10-11 of 16).

All of these PCE megacostal churches have things in common: Massive (but racially diverse) congregation sizes, multiple campuses (sometimes even international), typical white male bodybuilder 'celebrity pastors' (Bird and Thumma, 2020, pp. 13-15; Kobo, 2019, pp. 1-2 of 7; Koenig-Visagie and Van Eeden, 2013, pp. 1-4 of 12) and economic exploitation via a form of prosperity gospel (Kibuuka *et al*., 2016, p. 121; Frahm-Arp, 2018, pp. 7-11 of 16; Heuser, 2020). Unfortunately, due to a lack of publicly accessible data outside of the public domain, the exact particulars of these churches' finances, congregations, and demographics are impossible to ascertain. What is known is that the aforementioned white PCE megachurch pastors operate as public figures and are regarded as the spiritual patriarchs of divine favor (cf. Koenig-Visagie, 2013, pp. 3-6 of 12) with lavish lifestyles in a country fraught with economic inequity and racial inequality (Francis and Webster, 2019, pp. 792-794). Below follows a more detailed discussion on selected case studies.

Raynor 'Ray' McCauley (Rhema Bible Church)

A seminal figure in South African religious history[10], Ray McCauley, founder of Rhema Bible Church in Randburg, is widely credited with introducing the Health, Wealth, and Faith (prosperity gospel) movement to South Africa (Thompson, 2004, pp. 135-136). Established in 1979 amid the apartheid regime, Rhema attracted a notably diverse congregation during an era defined by segregation and white minority rule (Balcomb, 2024b; cf. Niemandt, 2017, pp. 207-208). While McCauley is credited with fostering racial inclusivity at a time of systemic division, Rhema being among the few multiracial churches of its kind (Chipkin and Leatt, 2011, pp. 45-46; cf. Oosthuizen, 2013, pp. 88-92) has long been marred by controversies surrounding the late McCauley's excessive wealth.

Characterized as one of South Africa's most affluent 'celebrity pastors', reports estimated the late McCauley's net worth at over R580 million (Mukotekwa, 2023; Mashau and Kgatle, 2019, pp. 1-2 of 8). Describing him as a 'shrewd businessman' maintaining a 'millionaire's lifestyle', with a reported net income of R68 million per annum (O'Hara, 2024), McCauley's prominence was rooted in the WFM, having graduated from Kenneth Hagin's Rhema Bible Training Centre in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Heathcote, 2011, p. 7). Financially his church exemplified the prosperity model it preached. In addition to R60.5 million in annual tithes and offerings, the church held assets valued at over R33.5 million, promoting justifications that 'God provides financial blessings and physical well-being' (Nzwili, 2024; cf. Davis, 2024). According to Balcomb (2024a), McCauley drew a monthly salary exceeding R100,000, with Rhema's annual turnover surpassing R100 million. His personal wealth was further reflected in his luxury residence in Umhlanga Rocks, KwaZulu-Natal, neighboring that of controversial billionaire mining magnate Harry Oppenheimer (Balcomb, 2024a).

McCauley's influence extended beyond the pulpit into South African politics: He developed close ties with former South African president Jacob Zuma, the then leader of the ANC and now of the MK Party (Oosthuizen, 2013, pp. 93-95; cf. Schulz-Herzenberg and Southall, 2024). During Zuma's presidency, McCauley founded the National Interfaith Leadership Council (NILC), popularly dubbed 'Zuma's God Squad' (Maluleke, 2015, p. 37; cf. Lephakga, 2024, p. 15), often leveraging ANC communication platforms to engage with the media (Rossouw, 2009; cf. Van Wyk, 2019). Urbaniak and Khorommbi (2020, p. 61) including Frahm-Arp (2018, pp. 4-6 of 16) observe that, while apartheid's 'state theology' had once legitimized oppression through Christian nationalism (cf. Maluleke, 2015, pp. 35-36), a new dynamic emerged in post-apartheid South Africa, where political elites aligned

[10] South African punk/folk rock band, Satanic Dagga Orgy (2014) even made a song called 'Pastor Ray (P-Rizzle)' satirizing McCauley and featuring it on their 2014 EP, The Iron Prawn.

themselves with PCE megachurches. Within this context, Zuma's relationship with McCauley exemplified the merging of church and state, with Rhema offering a moral platform for the ANC's post-1994 narrative of authority and divine mandate (Urbaniak and Khorommbi, 2020, pp. 68-71).

McCauley thus demonstrated how major religious enterprises utilized whiteness disguised as moral branding, to maintain a monopoly over status functions in post-apartheid South Africa (Heathcote, 2011, pp. 1-2; Searle, 2017, pp. 1465-1466). Despite these controversies, his passing on October 8, 2024 was met with widespread national and international tributes. He was hailed by the BBC Africa as 'South Africa's "high priest"' (BBC Africa, 2024) who popularized the prosperity gospel and the WFM in South Africa. He also received posthumous accolades from prominent American televangelists such as Creflo Dollar and T.D. Jakes, as well as from the AFM and numerous political dignitaries (Khumalo, 2024, p. 1; cf. Ngcobo, 2024a; 2024b).

At Boshoff (Christian Revival Church)

Another pivotal figure in South Africa's white megacostal landscape is Adam Johannes Jakobus 'At' Boshoff, founder of the Christian Revival Church (CRC). Boshoff closely aligns both himself and the CRC with the teachings of his mentor, Ray McCauley (Goodreads, 2024; cf. Petje, 2024). According to Briefly (a popular South African news outlet), Boshoff, a member of the South African Defence Force (SADF) from 1982 to 1984 and his now ex-wife Nyretta (cf. Cantrell, 2026), first established a church in 1988 in Ladybrand, Eastern Free State (Apindi, 2026). Their success there led to CRC Bloemfontein between 1993 and 1994, which expanded rapidly to encompass some 90 congregations across South Africa, as well as international branches in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Ukraine, and Germany (Apindi, 2026; cf. Goodreads, 2024; Malan and Flanegan, 2016, p. 42).

According to Boshoff's author biography on Goodreads, CRC's membership grew from an initial 180 congregants to over 30,000 within 15 years, hosting more than 500,000 visitors to date and maintaining a membership base of around 53,000 (Goodreads, 2024; cf. Maritz, 2016, p. vi). Van Eck *et al*. (2016, p. 3), as well as Maritz and Stoker (2016) note that CRC follows a familiar megachurch growth pattern, expanding from a modest local assembly in 1994 to a vast international ministry. They also highlight the church's geographical and socio-economic positioning, situated between major shopping centers and within walking distance of the Hatherly landfill near Onderstepoort, Pretoria (Van Eck *et al*., 2016, pp. 2-4 of 8).

Adjacent to the affluent Silver Lakes Estate, CRC stands as part of Pretoria's white upper-class suburban developments, marketed with slogans such as 'feel like royalty stepping into another world' (Van Eck *et al*., 2016, pp. 2-3 of 8). Yet, it is situated only a few kilometers from the Mamelodi township, established in 1953 under the apartheid-era Native Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945 (Van Eck *et al*., 2016, p. 2 of 8; cf. Ralinala, 2002, p. 203). This juxtaposition positions CRC Pretoria (much like Moreleta Park) at the nexus of a privileged white suburban enclave *vis-à-vis* an impoverished black township. The church's architectural grandeur underscores this contrast: Its auditorium, built at a debt-free cost, exceeds R200 million, seating 7,000 people while featuring an 8064 mm × 4608 mm LED screen and a state-of-the-art sound system. Promotional materials often present the pastors, particularly Boshoff, as media personalities styled in boutique fashion (Bester, 2014, p. 29; cf. Van Eck *et al*., 2016, p. 3 of 8).

Van Eck *et al*. note that CRC deliberately targets the affluent, while symbolically incorporating the poor, to project an image of inclusivity and prosperity. The visibility of poverty, in this context, functions as a performative device: '[T]he wealthy must be seen so that the poor can be bussed in' (Van Eck *et al*., 2016, pp. 3-4 of 8), reinforcing prosperity as both spiritual and material aspiration (cf. Ukah, 2020, pp. 332-337; Williams, 2022, pp. 2-3 of 8). This marketing strategy aligns with Boshoff's doctrine, particularly his 2010 sermons on 'The Law of Attraction' in which he claimed that the 'spiritual law of attraction is a powerful principle in the Word of God', positioning material success as a biblically endorsed Christian ideal (cf. Maritz, 2016, p. 16; Maritz and Stoker, 2016). Van Eck *et al*. (2016, p. 7 of 8) captures this ethos succinctly: 'Individuals invited to the enclosed CRC are those capable of reciprocation. They are not merely encouraged but reminded of their obligation to contribute generously to the church; otherwise, they will not receive God's blessings. Participation in this *quid pro quo* system is essential'.

This critique extends beyond academia. South African comedian and filmmaker Leon Schuster publicly denounced CRC in Rapport after posting on Facebook about being denied access to the restroom during a service until after tithes were collected, writing: 'First give your tithe, then you may use the restroom' (Eybers, 2024). The incident prompted widespread criticism, including from Australian Christian YouTuber, iThinkBiblically (Corneloup, 2024), who condemned Boshoff's prosperity teachings as 'unbiblical' (Corneloup, 2024). In response, Boshoff doubled down in subsequent sermons, asserting that 'under grace, God possesses everything', arguing that early Christians gave beyond mere tithes, selling property and donating proceeds to the apostles (Eybers, 2024). Boshoff dismissed critics for recounting this, stating, 'The church does not require your financial contributions…simply remain silent' [sic.] (Boshoff, 2024; cf. Corneloup, 2024).

Theo Wolmarans (Christian Family Church)

The third example is the Christian Family Church International (CFCI), founded in 1979 by Theo Wolmarans and his wife Beverly. Wolmarans obtained a Doctorate in Theology (DTh) from the School of Bible Theology Seminary and University (SBTSU) in California (cf. SBTSU, 2008). SBTSU is neither federally recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, nor by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), or by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), rendering Wolmarans' qualification unaccredited in South African higher education – a recurring phenomenon amongst Pentecostals in South Africa boasting illegitimate titles (Resane, 2024, pp. 3-7).

Yet, Wolmarans identifies CFCI as 'one of the largest churches of its kind in Southern Africa' (Wolmarans, 2024; cf. Malan and Flanegan, 2016, p. 42), recognizing more than 1,400 affiliated congregations (Wolmarans 2024). He also claims affiliation with over 500 associated ministries via the AFM[11]. Heathcote (2011, pp. 7-8) identifies both Wolmarans and McCauley as pivotal figures for introducing the WFM to the South African religious landscape. Wolmarans asserts that since 1979, over 2,000 individuals joined CFCI within its first few years (Wolmarans, 2024). Although based primarily in San Antonio, Texas, the Wolmarans couple frequently travel to South Africa to oversee their Johannesburg congregation. Wolmarans provides 'apostolic oversight' (cf. Ukah, 2020, pp. 332-333) to more than 500 global CFCI branches and over 50 affiliated Bible colleges (CFCI, 2020). In 2017 CFCI was among several religious organizations that publicly opposed the 'CRL Rights Commission's Report on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems' in 2016 (Graham, 2017, pp. 1-8; cf. Mkhwanazi-Xaluva and Mafadza, 2017, pp. 18-21; Lephakga, 2024, pp. 7-11).

South Africa hosts one of the most lucrative and politically well-connected ecosystems of Charismatic Christian ministries in the global South (Frahm-Arp, 2015, pp. 116-120; Forster, 2024), operating across borders with minimal financial integrity or regulation, and in multiple cases, sustaining legal conflict/collusion with state institutions (Dube and Zondi, 2019, pp. 40-42). While 'paparazzi' pastors accumulate mass wealth, the costs of their regulation deliberations, failed litigation attempts, tithes, and tax-free institutional 'non-places'[12] are quietly sponsored by South African taxpayers (Dube, 2018, pp. 4-6; cf. Sanders, 2014, pp. 78-83). These are not random inconsequential references, they are but the publicly documented tip of the socio-economic iceberg, combined with South Africa's already controversial local church ecosystem (Mkholo and Mukhavhuli, 2025, pp. 1-3). Megacostal pastors are financially insulated, politically connected, and socially invincible 'prophets for profit' with severe aversion to remorse and accountability. Scholars have suggested this in the past: 'If you want to be rich and not pay taxes, build a church' (cf. Coetzer, 2020).

Conclusion

This study has argued that the rise of classically white Pentecostal megachurches in post-apartheid South Africa constitutes a distinct socio-religious formation of whiteness, conceptualized as Megacostalism. Rather than a theological deviation, it represents a contemporary expression of South African 'Big Religion': A corporatized and commercialized religious economy in which Charismatic authority, capitalist enterprise, and moral legitimacy converge. As illustrated through cases such as the

[11] This is an organization established in 1908 by American missionaries (Nel, 2012; 2018, pp. 5-7; cf. Mofokeng and Madise, 2019).

[12] By drawing on the theory of the non-place, Sanders (2014, pp. 71-83) displays how consumer capitalism and Protestant Christianity continue to maintain a strong relationship.

Rhema Bible Church, CRC, and CFCI, these non-places function as analytical cult formations, structured around Weberian charisma, sustained through corporatized spiritual hierarchies, and embedded within systems of whiteness.

Within this framework, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is reconstituted as a form of 'mafiarized religiosity', where moral authority becomes coercive, belief is commoditized, and dependency is economized. Pastoral authority operates as a mediator of spiritual and material status, while practices of moral branding and 'spiritual entrepreneurship' align faith with economic participation and corporatized identity. Religion thus becomes a mechanism for the accumulation of wealth and consolidation of power, alongside the production of psychological and spiritual dependency. Central to this system is whiteness as a structural and socio-cultural formation. It operates not merely as racial identity, but as a locus of authority and legitimacy, reproduced through institutional practices, theological narratives, and the monopolization of status functions. Megacostalism thereby translates historically entrenched hierarchies into a post-apartheid religious economy. Addressing this requires a critical reorientation in religious scholarship toward decolonial, interdisciplinary, and regulatory approaches capable of interrogating the political economy of 'Big Religion'.

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