Stellenbosch Theological Journal 2026, Vol 12, No 2, 1–42
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2026.v12n2.a12
Online ISSN 2413-9467 | Print ISSN 2413-9459
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An Ubuntu Pentecostal and practical theology analysis of the African poor in post-1994 South Africa

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Abstract

The poor always feature in the Old and New Testaments. In the former, God provided guidelines for the nation of Israel to relate to the poor. In the latter, Jesus re-emphasised these guidelines by echoing Deuteronomy 15:11 in Mark 14:7 when he said to the disciples, "You will always have the poor among you." The poor in South Africa, in the past thirty years, now include African citizens and (il)legal immigrants from various African countries, who see South Africa as a destination for a better life. The presence of the latter due to various socio-economic and political factors in their countries creates a moral dilemma for the South African state and citizens. This challenge makes us ask: How are we supposed to relate to the African poor (African citizens and (il)legal immigrants from various African countries) in the post-1994 South African context? The article employs Ubuntu-Pentecostalism as a framework and the Lekgotla practical theology approach to reflect on how the African poor in post-1994 South Africa are treated. The reflection shows that various government departments and Central Methodist Church clergy displayed values identified in Deuteronomy 15:11 and Mark 14:1-7. These values resonate with those identified in Ubuntu-Pentecostalism.

Keywords

the poor; (il)legal immigrants; ubuntu; Pentecostalism; post-1994 South Africa

Introduction

The Bible teaches us to care for and look after the poor, as noticed in God's instruction to the Israelites to observe the year of debt cancellation. He instructed Moses, in Deuteronomy 15:4, that there should be no poor people

among the nation of Israel. Further provided guidelines for the nation of Israel to care for and look after the poor among them in Deuteronomy 15:7–11.

Many centuries later, when the nation of Israel had settled in the promised land, and after the Babylonian exile, Jesus cited Deuteronomy 15:11 when some of his disciples were outraged that the woman anointed his head with an expensive perfume instead of selling it and giving the proceeds to the poor (Mark 14:1–7). The portion Jesus cited states, "There will always be poor people in the land" (Deuteronomy 15: 11a, NIV).

Unlike the Israelites, where the poor and needy were identified among them, in post-1994 South Africa, various socio-economic and political factors create a moral dilemma for the state and citizens. Post-1994 South Africa is a destination for seeking a better life for all (il)legal immigrants from various African countries.

The statement in Deuteronomy 15:11a, as Jesus mentioned, assists us to ask the question: How are we supposed to relate to the poor (African citizens and (il)legal immigrants from various African countries) in the post-1994 South African context? To answer the question. The article *uses ubuntu Pentecostal hermeneutics (UPH), which is informed by the African-based maize or sorghum grinding process* (Mzondi 2025:35–51*) to engage* Mark 14:1–7 and Deuteronomy 15:11 as the basis for reflecting on how the poor and needy (African citizens and (il)legal immigrants from various African countries) in post-1994 South Africa are treated. The author calls the addressed poor "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa" to show that different government departments and Methodist clergy demonstrate how the poor and needy should be treated in post-1994 South Africa. This necessitates applying an African approach to address this African problem. Hence, the choice to apply Ubuntu-Pentecostalism (Mzondi M 2022) as a framework and the Lekgotla practical theology approach (Mzondi 2022a:4–9) as a research method.

Mzondi M (2022*) conceptualised ubuntu-Pentecostalism. This notion holds that South African Pentecostal was not static but evolved into four different phases beginning with the Pentecostalism of William Seymour that birthed the Apostolic Faith Misson and later that of the Zionist churches and dikereke sa Postola (Apostolic churches); followed by the Pentecostalism*

of the Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Church, Back to God Movement and African Gospel Church; Neo-Pentecostalism and the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God followed after, last was the Pentecostalism of TB Joshua and his followers (Mzondi 2024:2).

The first phase introduced a phenomenon of embracing Ubuntu and Pentecostalism and practising ancestral veneration, while ancestor veneration was discarded in the second, third and fourth phases.

The article applies the second, third and fourth phases as a framework to engage the plight of "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa." The framework promotes five essential Ubuntu values, namely, care, sharing, respect, belief in the divine, and community (Mzondi M 2022:39).

Practical theology, as one of the disciplines of theology, focuses on finding solutions to religious experiences of a community or local church. The article further deliberately employs the Lekgotla practical theology research approach since it addresses an African problem and seeks to provide an African-based solution. The focus of this article is "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa" Lekgotla practical theology approach consists of four steps, namely describing the situation, participation, consensus, and presenting, explained below and forming the article's structure (Mzondi 2022a:4–9). As such,

Description: Local leaders and residents outline, examine, and clarify the problem under review.

Participation: Community members engage in an iterative dialogue, evaluating the problem against historical customs, heritage, and established social conventions.

Consensus: The assembly reaches a collective accord after verifying that the resolution strictly adheres to long-standing cultural principles.

Presentation: The agreed-upon outcome is introduced to the public, sealing the gathering with a plea for divine approval (Mzondi 2022a:7).

Describing the situation *regarding the poor*

This section covers the pre- and post-1994 South African context with a view to providing the article's necessary background. First is the pre-1994 context and then the post-1994 context.

The pre-1994 context

It is important to begin describing the pre-1994 context before describing the post-1994 context. Odendaal (2016:3–473) shows that the pre-1994 context was an era of British and Dutch (Holland/Netherlands) colonial rule (1652-1910). Britain ruled Natal and the Cape colonies. The Dutch descendants later ruled the Transvaal and Orange Free State. In 1910, the British handed colonial rule to the descendants of the Dutch after forming the Union of South Africa. These later oppressed the indigenous people and denied them rights in their land.

The discovery of diamonds in Hopetown (later named Kimberly) in 1867 and gold in 1886 created a new dynamic that required cheap labour in the diamond and gold mines. Consequently, a migrant labour system was allowed in Kimberly (Odendaal 2016:178) and gold mines in Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand (Odendaal 2016:189), and the pass laws were enacted to monitor the movements of the indigenous people, particularly men (Motsamai 2019:22; Medein 2023:948–949; SA History n.d). Later, the Native Land Act of 1913 was introduced, which caused the indigenous people to lose their ancestral land and their livestock. The consequences were poverty, landlessness, overcrowding, and despair (Plaatje 2007:11). In addition, a labour tax from the Grey Act was passed to create conditions for the needed labour force (Odendaal 2016:130).

During these developments, the struggle for political freedom gained momentum during the latter period, when the South African Native National Congress – SANNC, later called the African National Congress (ANC), was formed on January 8, 1912, at the Wesleyan church, Bloemfontein. The initial focus of the convention was land ownership and pass laws.

A few decades later, four laws were enacted to enforce the system of apartheid, after the National Party began to rule South Africa in 1948.

These were the continuation of the Pass Laws, the introduction of the Group Areas Act of 1966, the Population and Registration Act of 1950, and the Promotion of Black Self-Government Act of 1959. The last Act created the following ten Bantustans: KwaZulu, QwaQwa, KwaNdebele, KaNgwane, Lebowa, Gazankulu, Venda, Ciskei, Transkei and Bophuthatswana.

Henceforth, the country was divided into two areas: (a) urban areas consisting of towns and cities, which the apartheid government considered their land with adjacent townships that provided cheap labour for industries in these areas; and (b) rural areas where the large percentage of the poor and needy resided due to historical occupation and the implementation of the Group Areas Act and Promotion of Black Self-Government Act. These laws were used to remove many indigenous people from their historical land and settle them in unfavourable, uneconomic areas incorporated under the ten created Bantu stands. Between 1976 and 1981, five of these, Transkei (1976), Bophuthatswana (1977), Venda (1979), and Ciskei (1981) – later known as the TBVC states – opted to be given political independence from the apartheid government. Worse of all, the apartheid government allocated less funding to these ten areas and more to towns and cities.

Male Africans from the southern African region were recruited to provide cheap labour needed in the gold mines through the migrant labour system (Motsamai 2019:22) and were subjected to the four apartheid laws mentioned above. In addition, the post-1960 21 March 1960 Sharpeville massacre prompted the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the ANC to engage in the armed struggle to gain political freedom. The PAC formed the Azanian People's Liberation Army, which was preceded by Poqo (Pure), while the ANC formed Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) (MK). The apartheid government reacted by engaging its defence force to fight against these military wings of the two liberation movements. Consequently, it became extremely difficult and dangerous for citizens from the neighbouring countries to enter South Africa without using the official border posts, as the defence force patrolled the borders and engaged in attacking the perceived bases of the liberation movements. In addition, the apartheid government installed an electric fence across its borders. Naturally, these developments curtailed illegal emigration in South Africa.

However, some changes in people movement occurred within the country and from neighbouring countries after the Pass laws and Group Areas Act were abolished in 1986 and 1991, respectively, while the Promotion of Black Self-Government Act were abolished after the establishment of a democratic government elected on 27 April 1994.

The post-1994 context

The abolition of the Pass laws and their influx control measures, as well as the Group Areas Act in 1986 and 1991, meant that the indigenous people could now move freely in South Africa without being arrested. Furthermore, the democratic government elected after the 27 April 1994 national elections ensured that this freedom was protected. The establishment of a democratic government also created space for less military conflict in the Southern African region and the integration of the two military wings of the PAC and the ANC and the South African Defence Force. This new army, now called the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), led to a complete reorientation of the army with less emphasis on border control as before. The post-1994 South Africa was no longer at war with countries in the region and began to promote peace and stability on the continent as it became a beacon of hope in war-torn countries. Thus, over the past three decades, the borders of the country have become porous as fewer border patrols have been common.

The post-1994 political freedom also meant that the most industrialised and prosperous country on the continent, which is surrounded by mostly underdeveloped countries, became a desirable destination for them to seek prospects of a better life. Two categories came to South Africa from various African countries. First are the poor and needy citizens from other African countries who wish to seek better prospects in South Africa. These are now part of "the poor of the post-1994 South Africa". Second are those who fled to South Africa because of political and religious persecution in their countries and sought political asylum and refugee status.

Unavoidably, South Africa became a place of hope for both these categories. The post-1994 government categorises immigrants into legal and illegal. The latter consists of those whose legal documents have expired and continue to stay in the country, and those who stay in the country without legal documents (Letshiri and Wotela 2015:2).

The porous borders allowed for easy illegal entry into the country, as many poor and needy citizens from the neighbouring countries and other African countries took, and continue to take, advantage of the absence of army patrols and corrupt Department of Home Affairs officials. Corrupt Department of Home Affairs employees contribute to the endemic problem by asking for or taking bribes from illegal immigrants, issuing false documents ranging from identity documents (IDs), birth certificates and visas.

Undoubtedly, the presence of (il)legal immigrants from various African countries, coupled with the recent 50.2% unemployment statistics among young people (Stats SA 2025), poses a serious moral dilemma for the South African state and citizens. The Human Sciences Research Council (2024:1) mentions that foreign nationals constitute 3% of the 62 million South African population. According to Statista (2025) Zimbabwean make up a large portion of this populatio:

> Zimbabwe emerged as the primary source country in 2022, accounting for 48.5 percent of immigrants. Mozambique and Lesotho followed, contributing 20 percent and nearly 11 percent, respectively.

Participation and consensus

This section shows the participation of the community in addressing the new challenge of addressing "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa." Such a community includes the government departments, parliament, theologians, members of civil society, the South African Human Rights Commission, and politicians. It concludes by showing the consensus reached.

Participation

Caring for the poor

The ANC democratic government introduced various measures to address the plight of the poor and needy in townships and rural areas. Explains that the Mandela administration introduced the *Reconstruction and Development Plan* (RDP), the Mbeki administration introduced *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* (GEAR) and later embraced the *Accelerated*

and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), and the Zuma administration introduced the *New Growth Path* (NGP) plan

To benefit the poor and needy in townships and rural areas, the ANC government, through various departments, introduced free housing, free primary health care, free basic education, free water and electricity, school nutrition scheme, child grant, and now free higher education. The government also introduced an equal old-age pension for senior citizens, people with physical disabilities, and people with visual impairments.

It must be emphasised that various South African theologians criticised the three administrations for neglecting the plight of the poor. The first was critiqued for silencing influential theologians into pollical offices and roles (Maluleke (1997:7)), the second was critiqued for embracing pro-capitalist policies and BEE policies that would lead to unemployment and corruption (Vellem (2013:2; Boesak (2005:163; Vellem 2013:14,17–18) while the last was critiqued for associating with pro-capitalist Pentecostal-Charismatic churches that embraced consumerism (Boesak (2014:1060)

Unfortunately, in the past three decades, national statistics have confirmed the views about ASGISA leading to unemployment and poverty and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies creating the ideal space for corruption. South Africa is the most unequal society in the world (Stats SA 2020), with the poor living in informal settlements with little or no access to basic services (Masiya, Davids & Manga 2019, 34-36).

The Zondo Commission confirmed the views about BEE policies, creating the ideal space for corruption as State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) were used to loot money (Bohler-Muller *et al*., 2022:165,173). The final report of the Zondo Commission painted a picture of serious endemic systemic corruption in the private and public sectors (Bohler-Muller *et al*., 2022:165,173).

(Il)legal immigrants

Panyaza Lesufi's frustration that the "Marry Me" informal settlement in Tshwane consists of over 65% illegal immigrants and that illegal immigrants in the province are accessing free primary health care services and free education without proper documentation, whilst local citizens are required to produce documentation (EWN 2025; SA People 2025). His

frustration reflects a new reality: the poor and needy now consist of South African citizens and illegal immigrants. They both form "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa."

Related to the matter of immigrants, two political parties, Action South Africa (ACTION SA) and the Patriotic Alliance (PA), have been arguing that all illegal immigrants must leave the country and that the government and the private sector should prioritise employing the poor and needy South Africans. During the 2024 national election campaigns, several political parties acknowledged that unemployment, poverty and illegal immigration are serious national problems.

Two civil organisations share the sentiments of Action SA and Patriotic Alliance. First, Operation Dudula – a civil organisation that emerged in Soweto – has been at the forefront of challenging the matter of (il) legal immigrants by advocating for prioritising South Africans in employment and government public services. Second, a Durban-based civil organisation – March and March – has also joined the advocacy of prioritising South Africans, like Operation Dudula. Recently, Parliament condemned the actions of Dudula and emphasised that "foreign nationals arrive in South Africa seeking refuge from hunger and hardship, not by choice." (Parliament 2025).

Such condemnation is against the backdrop of recent information about foreign nationals. Motsamai (2019:34–39) details the unpleasant experiences of illegal immigrants in the workplace. Letsiri and Wotela (2015) agree that illegal immigration is a serious problem. The print and electronic media covered incidents in the agricultural, manufacturing, hospitality, transport and retail sectors employing illegal immigrants and exploiting them by paying them less and for working long hours; in addition, some work in inhumane conditions (Motsamai 2019:24-39). Some inspections from the Department of Employment and Labour confirmed these reports (SA News 2024). The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2016:3) states that:

> Regardless of their undocumented migrant status, such people must still be treated with dignity and respect and fairly and humanely in keeping with our Constitution. Non-nationals, including undocumented migrants, have a reciprocal responsibility to respect

and abide by the laws of South Africa.

The above-mentioned positions of parliament and the South African Human Rights Commission resonate with two biblical teachings, namely, all human beings are created in the image of God (imago Dei) (Gen 1:26) and loving your neighbour as yourself, taught in Christ's story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37). Both emphasise the equality of all human beings, thus rebuking employers who exploit illegal immigrants and make them work in inhumane conditions, thus endangering their lives. The same rebuke applies to all citizens of South Africa who are expected to display an attitude that does not endanger the lives and livelihoods of illegal immigrants.

Furthermore, the two labour federations, Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), have also raised concerns about the high youth unemployment rate and poverty among South Africans (Stats SA 2025). Recently, members of an organisation (March and March) marched in Durban to protest the presence of illegal immigrants (TimesLIVE 2025). The recent arrests of illegal immigrants during Operation *Vala umngodi* and Operation *Shanela* have confirmed that illegal immigration is a serious problem (SA News 2025).

Consensus

The government, members of civil society, theologians and politicians agree that the poor and needy South Africans should be assisted. The government, through some of its departments, extends this assistance to the poor and needy (iI)legal immigrants.

The government departments

Recently, while echoing these sentiments, the Premier of Gauteng Province, Panyaza Lesufi

mentioned that "Everyone knows about our Ubuntu, but our Ubuntu cannot be abused." (EWN 2025). His statement reflects the efforts of the ANC government to address the plight of the poor and needy from other African countries, particularly from the SADC region–Zimbabwe,

Lesotho. eSwatini, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi and Angola, in the spirit of Ubuntu. As mentioned in the introduction, Ubuntu promotes five essential values: namely, care, sharing, respect, belief in the divine and community (Mzondi M2022:39).

Such Ubuntu was emphasised when Cornell and Van Marle (2005:213-215) pointed out that Judge Yvone Mokgoro's judgment in the case of Khosa vs The Minister of Social Development was a good example of considering the plight of illegal immigrants. Years later, the SAHRC (2016:3) emphasised that everyone in the country should be treated with dignity and emphasises that in South Africa everyone has a right to free public health care service (SAHRC 2025) and free primary public education (SAHRC 2019:4). This emphasis follows the 2019 Division of South Africa's High Court (the Eastern Cape Division sitting in Grahamstown) court ruling that, undocumented children have a right to education (see Mahleza and Maake-Malatji 2024).

To that effect, various government departments have been displaying care, sharing, respect, and community to (il) legal immigrants, sharing that "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (*isiNguni*) and "motho ka motho ka batho" (*Sesotho*) – I am because of others. The Department of Home Affairs granted Zimbabweans and other SADC foreign nationals special permits to enter South Africa (Department of Home Affairs 2021). The Department of Health provides free primary health care services to illegal immigrants (Section 27(1) of the SA Constitution), and the Department of Basic Education provides free primary education (Department of Basic Education, 2024). Access to free basic primary education means access to free scholar transport and meals through the school nutrition scheme for the children of illegal immigrants. This access also includes access to the Department of Social Development's free school uniform.

Since 2024 to date (2026), the Department of Home Affairs has been acting to root out crime and corruption (Department of Home Affairs 2024; 2025a; Lourie 2025). It has also put several measures in place to curb illegal immigration by using drones to monitor illegal border crossings and is working on using a biometric system (Department of Home Affairs 2025b), whilst the SANDF is embarking on routine border patrols (Joint Operation Divisions n.d; Parliament 2025).

Letsiri and Wotela's (2015:129) empirical study on illegal immigrants suggests the following solutions: The government should commit to serious and effective enforcement, firmly and fairly deal with illegal immigrants in the country and manage family networks of (il)legal immigrants in the country.

Teixeira (2025) covered a South African Police Service (SAPS) report that addresses the above suggestions in the mining sector:

> Since the commencement of Operation Vala Umgodi in Stilfontein, a total of 1,916 illegal miners have been arrested. The charges brought against those arrested have varied, including illegal mining, illegal immigration, possession of gold-bearing material, and the unlawful possession of explosives. -

On the other hand, as these measures occur, the Premier of Gauteng Province, Panyaza Lesufi, warned the ANC in Gauteng that it must address the issue of illegal immigration (SA People 2025). He also pointed to Ubuntu (SA People 2025). The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Province, Thami Ntuli, echoes the problem of illegal immigrants and accuses the private sector in the province of employing illegal immigrants as a source of cheap labour and is committed to protecting them from being exploited (Ngema 2025). His commitment to protect them displays the Ubuntu that the Premier of Gauteng Province mentioned.

Johannesburg Central Methodist Church minister

Against local government pressure, Bishop Paul Verryn showed his pro-poor stance by caring for the children of Zimbabwean refugees (Chisale 2016). He is an outstanding example of a theologian and Christian leader who epitomised "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (*isiNguni*) and "motho ka motho ka batho" (*Sesotho*) – I am because of others (Hankela 2014). An unwavering practitioner who displayed the biblical teaching caring for the poor and needy as taught in Deuteronomy 15:11 in Mark 14:7 This Johannesburg Central Methodist Church minister displayed care, sharing, respect, and community to poor and needy Zimbabwean refugees while accommodating them in the church building for months, did not yield to pressure from the local Johannesburg municipality (Chisale 2016) and his church (Timeslive 2010).

Ubuntu, as mentioned above, promotes five essential values: care, sharing, respect, belief in the divine and community. The sections showed that the government and the clergy from the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg – Bishop Paul Verryn – displayed them as they addressed the plight of "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa". The above-mentioned clergy display the Ubuntu value of belief in the divine, which refers to belief in the God of the Bible. This belief does not embrace ancestral veneration like the third phase of Ubuntu Pentecostalism (Mzondi 2024:2). However, Lesufi's understanding is different, as it embraces the belief in ancestral veneration.

This phase forms the basis of the next section, presenting, by reflecting on the five Ubuntu values, various government departments and the Central Methodist Church clergy – Bishop Paul Verryn – practised through the following Scriptures: Mark 14:1–7 and Deuteronomy 15:11.

Presenting

The presenting phase is the last step of the Lekgotla research method. The section applies the African-based maize or sorghum grinding process called Ubuntu Pentecostal Hermeneutics (UPH) (Mzondi 2025:35–51) to determine if the above-reached consensus resonates with the biblical teachings. UPH consist of 5 phases:

1. Soaking: Establishing a foundation of biblical authority and spiritual guidance.
2. Pounding: Engaging with the original languages of the Old and New Testaments and comparing with similar use of African languages.
3. Grinding: Analysing the historical and literary contexts of each book and employing similar use in African contexts.
4. Winnowing and Packaging: Sifting through cultural traditions to reject unbiblical Ubuntu practices while affirming those that align with scripture, particularly regarding ancestor veneration.

Mark 14:1–7 and Deuteronomy 15:11 form the basis for reflecting on the above-mentioned actions of various government departments and those of

Bishop Paul Verryn to address the plight of "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa."

The poor

"The poor" is a key phrase in Deuteronomy 15:11 and Mark 14:1–7. The Hebrew word translated as " the poor or the needy or the beggar" in English is אֶבְיוֹן /'ebyôn [eb-yone]', while a similar Greek word is πτωχός/ptōchos [pto-khos'].

In Setswana, the words *modidi*, *motlhoki* or *mohumanegi* communicate similar Hebrew and Greek meanings.

Consequently, the Hebrew, Greek and Setswana languages provide the same meaning for economically disadvantaged individuals in the community.

Mark 14:1–7

Mark 14:1–7 presents an anonymous woman who anointed Jesus' head with an expensive perfume – "an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard" during the passion week at the house of Simon the leper. Jesus sitting position made it possible for her to anoint him while he was having a meal, reclining on a luxury couch (Evans 2001:360; Marcus 2009:255, 933). The narratives are similar in Matthew 26: 8–9 infuriated some disciples (Mt 26: 8–9 mentions them as the disciples) (Culpepper 2007:483). It begins with the leaders' plot to kill Jesus and concludes with Judas' willingness to betray Jesus.

The disciples felt that her actions wasted an amount worth three hundred denarii. She could have sold it and given the proceeds to the poor. However, Jesus responded by protecting the woman's action by saying that the poor will always be among them and that her deed was good work and what she has done will be told where the gospel is preached. Jesus also mentioned that her actions were a preparation for his burial but not a waste of three hundred *denarii*.

The disciples' reference to selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor refers to the Jewish praxis of giving gifts to the poor on the evening of the Passover (Rop 2011:20), and Jesus' reference was not to disregard that praxis but to emphasise that, unlike them, he will not be around on earth. Thus, contrasting their inward-looking motives with her future-

looking actions (Marcus 2009:935). According to Jesus, her actions serve as a memory; an expensive perfume gave him the necessary dignity for his death and burial (Gundry 1993:804). Jesus's words about her actions seem to be pointing to a sign on a gravestone or other memorial instances later pointing to those serving in the gospel (Marcus 2009:942).

Deuteronomy 15:11

Jesus' statement about the poor refers to Deuteronomy 15:11. Although the injunction in Deuteronomy 15:11 is in the context of fellow Israelites, it is preceded by the broader injunction to treat the poor well in view of Israel's past slavery in Egypt and God's divine deliverance. A few verses above, Deuteronomy 15:4, postulates that the absence of the poor among the Israelites is because God will bless them because they adhere to the stipulated practice of debt cancellation (Deut 15:1–2). Surprisingly, this national injunction excludes foreigners (Deut 15:3) because the emphasis was on promoting a caring brotherhood among the Israelites. Foreigners are addressed in the regulation and provision of giving tithes to the Levites and how it should be shared (Deut 26:12). This provides a desired socio-economic outcome, reminding Israelites that God, as a Father, looks after the needs of the poor and marginalised as he did for them in Egypt (Lawler and Salzman 2018:529). Taken together with verse 11, the nation of Israel should also remember that this socio-economic outcome does not mean the poor will cease to exist. Hence, they are instructed to observe debt cancellation among themselves except the foreigner (Schein 2006: 255).

With the above in mind, Deuteronomy 15:1–10 promotes sharing what you have with others, caring for the poor and needy, addressing the needs of the community by cancelling debts and showing compassion. Such care, sharing and addressing the needs of the community demonstrate respecting the dignity of human beings and adhering to the injunctions of God by practising what God instructs. The values of care, sharing, respect and community echo the Ubuntu-Pentecostal values of belief in the divine, care, sharing, respect, and community.

In Mark 14:1–7, Jesus emphasises the praxis of care, sharing, respect and community to his disciples. He cared for the unknown woman by protecting her from attack. This showed that, unlike his disciples, he treated her with dignity and respect. Jesus' reference to Deuteronomy 15:11

promotes the praxis of addressing the needs of the community, in this case the poor, as practised on the eve of the Passover (Rop 2011:20). He strongly mentioned that her action will accompany the preaching of the gospel, which is a transnational phenomenon. Jesus' inference to Deuteronomy 15:11 highlights his high view of the Scriptures, which contain God's instructions. Jesus' display of care, respect, community, and high view of God's instructions resonates with the Ubuntu-Pentecostal values of care, respect, belief in the divine, and community.

Various government departments and a Central Methodist Church clergy

The actions of the various government departments and Bishop Paul Verryn in addressing the plight of "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa" resonate with Christ's teachings about caring and relating with the poor. As mentioned, Christ's response to the disciples' discontent inferred the injunction in Deuteronomy 15:11. His understanding of caring for the poor emulated God's injunction, who will always be present when he has left the earth. Jesus, the founder of a community of transnational followers, now called the universal Church, His body, provides the basis for reflecting on various government departments and Bishop Paul Verryn regarding "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa" – a transnational section of the South African society

Bishop Paul Verryn cared for and provided shelter for the children of victims of xenophobic attacks in the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg. He also shared the church building, electricity and water supply with them, and respected their human dignity by treating them well. On the other hand, various government departments demonstrate care for "the poor and needy in the post-1994 South Africa" by providing:

1. Free health care services,
2. Free electricity[50kw] for the qualified indigent applicants,
3. Free water [50kl] for the qualified indigent applicants,
4. No rates and taxes for the qualified indigent applicants,
5. Free school uniform,

6. Free meals through the school nutrition scheme,
7. Free primary and high education, and now free tertiary education through the NFSAS,
8. Free houses for qualifying applicants,
9. Old age pensions and other forms of social grants.

Although Lesufi (Mokoena 2025) accepts the challenge of mismanagement of illegal immigrants in Gauteng, with primary health care facilities, as an example, such care was enabled by sharing government national financial resources, as envisaged in Deuteronomy 15:1-3, with "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa" to show respect for human dignity and the promote the value of an individual n the community informed by the maxim that "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (*isiNguni*) and "motho ka motho ka batho" (*Sesotho*) – I am because of others. This is what Lesufi call "our Ubuntu," above.

As observed above, Bishop Verryn and various departments displayed the Ubuntu Pentecostal values of care, sharing, respect, belief in the divine and community. The belief in the divine refers to embracing ancestor veneration for Lesufi's Ubuntu, and belief in the God of the Bible only for Bishop Verryn.

Summary

The poor existed in the community of Israel due to socio-economic-political conditions, of being debtors. Another section of the poor considered in this article – "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa" exists due to socio-economic-political conditions in sub-Saharan Africa.

Deuteronomy 15:11 is in the context of debt cancellation only among Israelites. Jesus inference to it in Mark 14:1–7 highlights the poor in a Passover eve context and the post-crucifixion and resurrection context. He also underscores that the woman's action will be remembered where the gospel is preached, a focus on the transnational spread of the gospel, helping to focus the article on "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa." The article then focused on the contexts of the poor among the nation of Israel and in the post-1994 South African context and asked the following

question: How are we supposed to relate to the African poor (African citizens and (il)legal immigrants from various African countries) in the post-1994 South African context?

The focus showed that, in interpreting "the African poor in post-1994 South Africa", various government departments and Bishop Verryn embraced the biblical teaching on treating the poor and needy in the community. This undoubtedly demonstrated the values of care, sharing, respect, community and belief in the divine identified in Deuteronomy 15:11 among the nation of Israel and in Jesus' teachings in Mark 14:1–7. The same are also identifiable in Ubuntu Pentecostalism.

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