

Lament: An integral element of Pentecostal worship



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Pentecostals' songs of exuberant praise are integral to Pentecostal worship, ending in worship songs. Joy and happiness characterise their services. However, these worship practices do not leave room for discounting the reality that suffering is recurring in all believers' lives, ignoring those who suffer marginalising in worship practices. The research questions were: Why do some Pentecostals miss a valid response to the reality of suffering? What does the Bible teach about the constant occurrence of suffering as integral to human life?; What is a suitable theological response to it?; How can Pentecostal worship incorporate lament as a response to suffering? In answering these questions, the research used the Lekgotla practical theology research method proposed by Abraham Mzondi as an explorative approach, related to Richard Osmer's method. It asked four questions: What is happening?; What could have caused the challenge?; What is the recommended approach to resolve the situation?; and What is the theologically and biblically sound recommended process to remedy it? It is based on relevant available literature related to the classical Pentecostal movement. The research concluded that pervasive triumphalism, based on a persistent 'victorious living' mentality, avoids voicing suffering, while lament does not market well. The Pentecostal theology of glory needs to be corrected by the theology of the cross by accommodating the challenges theodicy presents to believers in the hegemonic doxology. A theology of the cross realises that human life oscillates between triumph and lament, and Pentecostal worship should reflect it. Lament is believers' liturgical response to suffering and engaging God within this context. Suggestions to incorporate lament in Pentecostal worship include deliberate songwriting and testimonies about suffering and its consequences.

Contribution: The research addressed the lack of balanced worship practices among Pentecostals who emphasise praising God without discounting the existential suffering some attendees at worship services experience. It contributed to the journal's focus on biblical-theological research with the reformational tradition and its impact on Pentecostalism.

Keywords: Pentecostal; worship; lament; suffering; triumphalism; protest; revenge.

Introduction

Cheerful, exuberant praise and worship characterise Pentecostal worship meetings. Because of its participatory and experiential character, it attracts many people, especially those in other established churches with more subdued singing. Another characteristic is the emphasis on divine intervention during worship exercises, emphasising that God is healing and blessing people emotionally and corporally. Seldom would one hear a negative word without the assurance that God will and can change any situation, bringing light in darkness and deliverance in boundness.¹ This response is sometimes given glibly and cheaply when the mystery of suffering and the doubt and despair it generates, confront the church. The implication is that suffering people must stand on God's promises and trust God for their deliverance. However, when the church ignores that some people's suffering does not end quickly, it excludes them from the body of Christ and the care they are supposed to receive. Pentecostal worship practices always emphasising God's blessings and for all believers it reflects a hegemonic doxology, defined by Walter Brueggemann (2002:25) as a culture of denying persistent suffering. Praise songs focus on God's power to provide for the needs of believers, assuring them of the blessings of health and prosperity. However, it ignores the other side of the coin, leaving no room for expressing the suffering in countless forms many people experience. The worship experience leaves no room for lamenting grief and despair as a pathway to healing and justice.

1. An exception may be some black Pentecostal churches in the global South with a history of political and economic oppression and exploitation, primarily due to the effects of colonialism and slavery. Many spirituals in the black church reflect the blues style, lamenting the challenges presented by the world and looking forward to paradise in a new world where heaven resides on earth. See the classic work of Cone (1972).

As a result, Pentecostalism's hegemonic doxology banishes the anguished sufferer from experiencing the divine presence in the meetings and exiles them from the company of God and the body of Christ (Baglyos 2009:254), because they represent a voice of resistance and defiance that interrupts doxology and asserts an alternative reality consisting of pain and suffering (Brueggemann 2008:223).

In current times, many South Africans experience frustration and despair at their economic woes due to several factors such as the after-effects of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, load shedding, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the displeasure of some of the country's Western allies at the government's apparent support for pariah countries like Russia, Cuba, China, Sudan and others. Socio-economic insecurity threatens their well-being. It presents the following questions:

- How do these present experiences reflect Pentecostal worship practices?
- Are South Africans' despair due to high unemployment, the widening of the Gini coefficient, increasing poverty, the collapse of state medical and municipal services, et cetera, efficiently verbalised in the songs and prayers during worship?
- Suppose Pentecostal worship denies the reality of many South Africans and threatens their wellbeing, does it also endanger the congregation whose wellbeing depends on that of its individual adherents?

The problem is that lament does not market well in contrast to the message of health, wealth and prosperity, as Nicholas Wolterstorff (2001:42) mentions. The persistent 'victorious living' mentality, proclaimed by many Pentecostal churches, especially megachurches, denies that believers may suffer persistently along with others. In the process, they also ignore the fact that one-third of the collection of poems in the Book of Psalms are poems of lament and complaint (Brueggemann 2002:24). Without stating it explicitly, they deny that believers may also suffer from psychological challenges such as depression and anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder or dementia, lose their jobs, face their own or their children's divorce, face the death of a beloved, et cetera. Without intending, they banish anguished sufferers from God's public presence and lose relevance through their indifference to suffering people (Baglyos 2009:254). If this is true, it is submitted that Pentecostal worship practices need urgent pastoral and missiological reconsideration.

Before addressing the challenge, it is necessary to refer shortly to a biblical perspective on suffering and an adequate theological response.

Biblical perspective on lament

The focal point in Pentecostal theology is the 'full gospel' message of Christ as saviour, healer, Spirit-baptiser, sanctifier and coming King (Oliverio 2012:32). That is also the focus of most worship songs among Pentecostals. However, it may be

that it ignores a significant distinctive in Jesus' ministry: his involvement with the disenfranchised, marginalised and suffering people who crossed his path. His involvement alienated him from the religious establishment, which considered him a glutton, drunkard and friend of tax collectors and sinners (Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34). He incarnated the divine attention to human suffering when he associated with the destitute (Ps 102:17), using the words of their prayer before he died on the cross: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Ps 22:1; Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46).

The divine response to Israel's calls during their oppression as enslaved people in Egypt for deliverance, demonstrates God's heart for the suffering (Ex 3:7), illustrating that God sees and knows of the suffering of believers and hears their pleas for help. Furthermore, in the act of awareness, God happens (Baglyos 2009:255). However, even though God knows about people's suffering, they do not always receive deliverance when they pray fervently. Although God is involved in their suffering, that does not necessarily terminate the suffering in all cases. Wright (2020:25) suggests that Jesus' cross illustrated the need to rethink the notions of the kingdom, of God in control reigning sovereignly, with Jesus' suffering and death in mind.

How do believers reconcile their belief in a good and just God with their experiences of suffering? Biblical authors developed several notions of theodicy, especially in the Old Testament. Some relate suffering to retributive justice; others argue that it occurs for educative reasons; some see it as eschatological or a recompense with a full reward for the faithful after death; and others think it is the result of deferral or mystery or as the occasion for a deeper relationship with God. These are the responses most biblical traditions provide (Green 1987:430–41). That biblical authors present various answers that differ, and in some respects, are mutually exclusive, implies that individuals should be left the space to find meaning in their own suffering, using examples provided by biblical authors. Instead of choosing one at the cost of the others, it is probably best to use the broad spectrum of views to explain the various causes of suffering while admitting that, in many cases, finding any solution from a human perspective is impossible.

Theology of suffering

Before verbalising and owning the trauma of suffering and the pain it causes (the ancient Greek word for 'trauma' can be translated as 'wound'), believers need to understand what suffering is theologically by relating it to their belief in God. As argued, many believers do not think it is acceptable to give way to their grief in lament. It may even be that, due to the influence of the booming marketplace on the church, some churches devalue lament because of its lack of marketability, as argued.

A theology of suffering may start in the first creation narrative of Genesis that relates the process of creating different aspects

of the earth and the divine assessment after each creative event: God sees that it is good, repeated in Genesis 1:4, 12, 18, 21, 25 and then concluded with verse 31, 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.' It may be supposed that God also desires the good for human beings. God's purpose in creating humanity was that they would flourish until full of years (Wolterstorff 2001:51). However, something went wrong. Some use the narrative in Genesis 3 to explain what went wrong. Whatever the cause, it is clear that suffering invaded the good creation for some unknown reason and now threatens human well-being. But suffering contradicts the *imago Dei* established in human beings in creation, reflecting the broken and fractured result (Baglyos 2009:258).

At the same time, the Bible is the message that the good God, who created everything to be good, loves human beings and undoes the ravages that evil and suffering cause for them. God also promises that all suffering will terminate with the introduction of the renewal of creation following the return of Christ (Oord 2009:107). Romans 8:21–25 explain that all creation will then be set free from its bondage to decay. In the meantime, it is groaning in labour pains, waiting for deliverance with patience (Wright 2020:39). For that reason, believers may lament their suffering, because their experiences sometimes leave their questions unanswered about why a good and righteous God would allow the members of the divine household to suffer. Lament is crying 'no' to what is bad in light of God's 'yes' to what is good (Baglyos 2009:258). At times, believers may experience that God has forsaken them and may use Jesus' cry of anguish on the cross (Mt 27:46). To bring their anxiety and pain to God in prayer, including protesting against the injustice they experience in their suffering, is lamenting. 'To lament is to risk living with one's deepest questions unanswered' (Wolterstorff 2001:52). It is to acknowledge that divine sovereignty does not imply that everything that happens is as God would like it or that what happens falls outside God's reign, but instead that God is winning in the battle against the brokenness that characterises the world and that God's will be realised at last (Wolterstorff 2001:52).

If suffering is a fact of life for Pentecostal believers, the question is why one seldom finds the practice of lamentation during their worship practices. It is submitted that the reigning Pentecostal theology of glory fails to offset the persistence of the cross in believers' lives, requiring it to be corrected by the theology of the cross, forming one of the reasons why Pentecostals do not lament.

Reasons why some believers do not lament

There are several significant reasons why many Christian believers do not lament. Four will be discussed in more detail. The first reason is the difficulty and sometimes even impossibility of voicing the suffering. Wolterstorff (2001:42) explains that lament is not about or concerning suffering, but the language, voicing or verbalising of suffering. It goes beyond the tears of suffering about a loss to convey the

experience in order to identify and express it in theological terms. At times, the words necessary to express the grief may be unknown or the memories of the loss may be repressed to protect the sufferer from the intense pain, because naming it may become too painful and risky. It may also be that the memories may be hidden so deeply because of the accompanying shame and embarrassment that would result when it is voiced that it is not worth the risk. But without expressing the suffering, it is impossible to lament and own the suffering and pain, which is a condition for healing and justice. Disowning denies that it forms part of one's narrative identity; to delete it or prevent it from becoming a part of the narrative. Instead of attempting to forget it, putting it behind one and getting on with life, it is necessary to complain about the suffering that has been verbalised in order to become able to turn it into a cry unto God (Wolterstorff 2001:43):

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest (Ps 22:1–2). (p. 43)

Johan Serfontein (2021:4) explains that the language of lament is both deep in the sense that it comes from the dark trenches of depression and wide in the sense that it represents the collective voice of the community.

The cry to God consists firstly, of a cry for deliverance, sometimes based on the promises God made in the Bible or previous personal experiences of divine redemption in response to prayer; secondly, of a cry that voices the shattering of meaning, because the suffering reflects on God's promises of deliverance, based on God's goodness and justice. Lastly, the cry to God consists of an expression of the endurance of faith based on faith in God's faithfulness as explained by Wolterstorff (2001):

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame (vv. 3–5).

So, Lord, I trust you to deliver me as well, even though I do not see it. (p. 44)

The second response to suffering is the theological perspective that if God exists, ordains everything that happens and is all-powerful, then there is nothing humans can do about suffering. Because God foresees everything deterministically, humans cannot undo what God has decided. Their future is written; God has become a kind of fate (Ellul 1981:102).

The third reason is the triumphalism resulting from the 'victorious living' mentality discussed above, that pervaded large parts of Pentecostalism and the Evangelical movement. It denies believers the privilege of voicing their pain and suffering, because the dominant narrative of silence accepts that good things happen to good people. Also, when bad things happen, the reason must be that good people have become involved in bad things. Therefore, those who suffer should repent and claim their victory over suffering. Although triumphalism pervaded large segments of the

Pentecostal (and neo-Pentecostal) movement, due to the influence of health, wealth and prosperity theology, theological arguments may also underlie their lack of awareness of voicing suffering. These theological opinions are also diverse and will be discussed next.

The fourth reason is that believers, for theological reasons, do not permit themselves the luxury of lamenting their suffering, due to the influence of prominent and influential theologians' teaching through the ages (Wolterstorff 2001:45–48). A few trends are noticeable. The first is the theory that it does not make sense to cry to God to deliver one from suffering, as God cannot intervene within the causal order of things. God set everything in motion, but is impotent to intervene in the micro-management of things. For instance, John Macquarrie (1977:255–256) argues that God's creative process involves the risk of the divine self-giving to creation that imposes a self-limitation on God and affects divine omnipotence directly. In giving the divine self, God places the divine self in jeopardy. The risk is that God may be dissolved in nothing. The God who manifests the divine self in the crucified Christ, placed the divine self at the mercy of the world. God's love is the divine self-giving and letting-be. This also forms the origin of evil, the slipping back into nothing, a reversal and defeat of the creative process. For a free, self-developing creation with its own integrity, it is necessary that God cannot micro-manage it to eliminate any risk of evil or suffering. Does this mean that creation *inherently* limits God's power, or does it mean that this is a kind of voluntary self-limitation on God's part? Process theology takes the former position that God's control over creation is limited as a matter of metaphysical necessity (Lee 2015). The other position is that it is God's nature to limit the divine self (give up, [*kenosis*]) voluntarily, as argued by Jürgen Moltmann (Cassidy-Deketelaere 2022:129). This act of letting-be inherently precluded a deterministic micro-managing of creation by God; that would be a kind of divine self-contradiction.

Augustine formulated the second trend, teaching that the things of the earth are to be used but not enjoyed. Human enjoyment is to be limited to God and God alone. In addition, grief over losses is the mark or sign of a sinful orientation of life, of disloyalty to God. Therefore, instead of lamenting, believers should rather confess their sins.

John Calvin formulated the third trend, which differs from Augustine's evaluation of the enjoyment of things. He argues that the beautiful aspects of nature are to be appreciated for their utility in feeding humans as well as their 'comeliness'. They are the works of God. While Augustine argued that we should look away from them and see the Creator, Calvin (1960 [1536]:3.8.10) viewed them as works and gifts to be appreciated and enjoyed, as they are a delight, turning the human heart to God. Furthermore, when humans experience grief and suffering to which human life is necessarily subject, their experiences are exercises whereby God wants to bring them to repentance or humility, or warns them to be cautious and attentive to temptations (Calvin 1960:3.8.10). In other words,

God is the ultimate agent of suffering and grief, and it is for humans' good that God causes them to suffer. God is, as it were, the leading cause of suffering. Suffering is the manifestation of the goodness of God who created the world as a vast reformatory. Hence, Calvin (1960 [1536]:3.8.11) advises that the appropriate attitude towards suffering is patience, forbearance and gratitude for the privilege of being in God's school, which is busy forming the human character. The implication is clear that believers do not cry out for deliverance in their suffering, because they understand why they suffer – God sent it for their good; God is to be found in their suffering.

These trends require the theological underpinnings of suffering that describe worship in terms of the reality of human experience, consisting of the poles of triumph and lament as the two sides of one coin.

Worship oscillating between triumph and lament

Stephen Torr (2013:2) remarks that most Pentecostals struggle to come to terms critically with the matter of suffering adequately. Therefore, Pentecostal triumphalism, resulting from a 'victorious living' mentality, must be addressed and rearticulated. The only way to do so is by acknowledging that human life on earth consists of the oscillation between triumph and lament by projecting it into the church's worship practices. It is necessary to do so, because people who cannot address God honestly from the fullness of their experience, including their suffering and grief, cannot praise God fully (Baglyos 2009:262).

During a period of severe depression, the present author experienced Pentecostal worship negatively with its denial that believers participate in the brokenness that characterises the world. During one worship service, the worship leader remarked that if any believers experience depressive thoughts, they should entrust it to God, because it is God's will that no one should ever suffer from depression. However, if the ideas persist, the believer should recognise that it is because of unconfessed sin in their lives. Without realising that some believers need to grieve rather than rejoice, the worship event did not instil hope in participating believers who experienced suffering.

The way to generate hope from despair is to involve lamentation as an integral part of worship, and the hope worth offering to believers follows faithful perseverance through struggles and not by escapism that ignores hardships. Romans 8:16–17 explains this: The divine Spirit bears witness within us that we are children and heirs of God because we suffer with Christ so that we may also be glorified with him. 'God is not a god of power over weakness but the God of power in weakness' (Gorman 2009:33). In Colossians 1:24, Paul states that he is happy that he may suffer, referring to his hardships and troubles in his work as apostle on behalf of the church – Christ's body – because, in this way, he helps to complete the suffering [*thlipsis*] which must be endured in the way Christ suffered (Bratcher & Nida 1993:37).

Steven Félix-Jäger (2022:131) defines triumphalism as the excessive celebration of one's achievements, portraying an attitude of superiority. It establishes a hegemonic ideology of silence that disempowers one to speak honestly about suffering and grief (Brueggemann 2002:25) by using the language found in the biblical lament and revenge psalms. Triumphalism encourages believers to live a victorious Christian life by declaring victory over sin, strongholds and attacks of the enemy, scarcity, illness and other challenges, based on the presumption that God desires Christians always to live abundantly. It ignores the mouth that voices pain and suffering that does not cease despite prayer to the God who hears. In the process, harsh reality may become reduced and oversimplified to present a black-and-white background that leaves no room for any negative confessions (Courey 2015:6). Then, when tragedy faces Pentecostal believers, they are forced to either reinterpret what happened to them, because it does not accord with what they believed in their narrative of triumph or deny reality in a wholesale manner that might lead to potential psychological imbalances. It can be stated with truth that such a culture of denying has invaded parts of the Pentecostal movement. For that reason, David Courey encourages Pentecostals to develop a more robust theology of the cross that looks at victory through suffering, reflecting a biblical perspective (Oord 2009:107). Martin Luther (1961 [1517]:503) argues that the 'theologian of glory' calls the bad good and the good bad, while the 'theologian of the cross' says what a thing is. Without ignoring the universal outpouring of the Spirit as their guiding motif, Pentecostals need to understand Christ's cross was necessary before believers could have experienced Spirit baptism. Their worship services celebrate the coming divine reign; however, they may have forgotten that the reign that has already appeared, will only be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ (Courey 2015:213). Christian life oscillates between the cross and the arrival of final deliverance in the renewal of creation. While they celebrate the victory, believers still experience suffering that invites them to move from a place of orientation, through the disorientation of suffering, to a place of resurrection or a new creation, in the words of Torr (2013:185).

While triumphalism disregards or ignores the hardships of life, a perspective of the cross chooses hope in the face of despair, because believers accept that their lives are oscillating between lament and triumph as a foreshadowing of the final oscillation between death and resurrection. In the words of a proverb Pentecostals love to use, there is no crown without the cross. Therefore, the hope of renewal through cruciform living is the only antidote to triumphalism (Félix-Jäger 2020:133).

Soon-Chan Rah (2015:21) asks whether Pentecostals can lament, given the preponderance of triumphalism in their worship. He defines lament as believers' liturgical response when they experience suffering and simultaneously engage God within this context. Lament embraces a situation of chaos and disorder that do not cohere with God's good creation and verbalises the sorrow or grief to God in song or poetic

expression (Brueggemann 1984:20). It is the cry for God to intervene when it seems one's world is coming to an end.

Brueggemann (2001:46) explains that lament benefits the wider society, because it can also serve to call out the sins and injustices that cause suffering to persons or groups of people. He states that Israel learnt from their experience that silence kills, because it makes life unbearably hard. Believers need opportunities to express their own grief and despair, but also acknowledge the despair characterising other people's lives due to systemic injustices. In South Africa during the apartheid years, the black church lamented as a means to verbalise their experience of oppression and discrimination, calling on believers to act accordingly (Molobi 2014), while most white churches ignored the oppression. Lament then has the potential to energise new hope to redefine the situation a person or community find themselves in (Brueggemann 2001:67). It can also open the eyes of the privileged to the hopeless situation underprivileged people might find themselves in. Believers in middle-class suburbs, attending church and hearing the dominant white narrative all the time, need to hear about the needs of millions of South Africans living in poverty; StatsSA (2022a) states that approximately half (49.2%) of the adult South African population are living below the upper bound poverty line; six out of ten children (62.1%) are multidimensionally poor; and a total of 13.8 million people (25%) are experiencing food poverty (StatsSA 2022b). The practice of lament will allow the church to face the dark parts of historical reality honestly, do something constructively about it and offer a relevant witness to the world about the reality of sin and injustice (Rah 2015:47). These injustices can and should be addressed effectively before the world regains its belief in the church's prophetic voice. The dominant voices need to write and recount the events that led to the injustices done to the disenfranchised who have suffered the injustices to fully engage with the roots of sin. In the meantime, believers dream of a world of justice.

The challenge is that the 'haves', in their triumphalist materialistic abundance, can scarcely think themselves into the hopeless situation of the 'have-nots' (Rah 2015:23), leading to their complacency despite the clear signs of poverty and inequality surrounding them. Therefore, while expressing their gratitude for the blessings they have received from God, the church needs to turn believers' attention to the plight of the have-nots, reminding them of the care the church, as the body of Christ, should take for believers in need. Exuberant worship does not exclude the acknowledgement of real needs and challenges that define some people's lives, but should be balanced by periods of soul-seeking and prayer for those in need.

At times, believers may even find the revenge psalms in the Book of Psalms helpful to verbalise their feelings against the perpetrators of the injustices that oppress groups of people. They would not feel guilty for praying these revenge psalms, thinking that it does not reflect the Christian ordinance to love all people, because their lament will eventually end in the act

of trusting God. Westermann (1980; 1981:265) classifies laments as the move from plea to praise, resolved by and corresponding with the song of thanksgiving, because the lament has been resolved when the articulation of hurt and anger ends in submission to God and eventual relinquishment.

Considerations in incorporating lament into Pentecostal worship

The conclusion is that Pentecostals need to be given theological permission to lament when they suffer. Also, worship practices should incorporate the voices of the victims of suffering, along with those of people praising God for divine blessings. Suffering should be given the dignity of language (Serfontein 2021:5). It requires a theological reconsideration of suffering that will subvert the hegemonic ideology of silence. It will create room for people feeling abandoned by God to voice their experiences in the language their Master used on the cross as the only possible access point to the realisation of Easter on the day the new creation will be introduced (Brueggemann 2001:25). What can Pentecostals do to incorporate lament into their worship practices?

The church has the pastoral task of caring for suffering people, assisting them in expressing some aspect of their anguish or dismay from what they are suffering. In this way, the church becomes the representative of the God that may be experienced as absent. It implies that caregivers engage in the sacred conversation that eventually becomes prayer and consolation. Baglyos (2009:259) correctly perceives that the real horror of any suffering is not just the torment and agony, but the realisation that suffering may happen within a boundless void of indifference. Pastoral carers have the opportunity and privilege to help articulate the lament by embodying divine empathy and illustrating the church's care for the sufferer. They become partners in protest against the possibility that God might be indifferent by stating the truth that suffering does not occur within a boundless void of indifference as their and the congregation's involvement with it demonstrates.

However, how do we incorporate lament into worship? Ruth Duck (2013) suggests that the Bible shows how. The lament psalms and the book dedicated to lamentation about the Babylonian exile, Lamentations, name the lamentable situation honestly and poignantly before asking for God's intervention, because laments are acts of *chutzpah* that dare to protest by reminding God of divine obligations based on previous commitments (Brueggemann 2002:25). Lament is the language of those who ignore their schooling in the ideology of silence and courageously evoke a divine response, even in protest against perceived divine injustice. It is an active, intentional alternative to God that seems silent or unconcerned. It verbalises the struggle of the believer to hold onto faith when confronted by the terrifying silence that accompanies the suffering as a condition for eventually creatively and poetically re-experiencing the world under a different set of metaphors (Brueggemann 1984:24).

In addition, Pentecostal songwriters, equipped with adequate theological skills, need to verbalise in their songs the theodicy

that confronts all believers at some time or another to enrich corporate worship expression by using defiant language that can fill the void left by loss (Serfontein 2021:4). The lament, protest and revenge psalms lend them excellently to be reworked into contemporary songs that express some believers' need for lamentation. Other biblical texts like the Book of Lamentations can also be effectively utilised to voice utter hopelessness and desperation (Serfontein 2021:1). The Book of Lamentations employs acrostics extensively in an attempt to express more completely and exhaustively the grief Jewish exiles experienced. This way, believers also learn the language needed to deal with suffering. Such songwriters also need to be exposed to the theology of the cross that reflects the reality of suffering and pain. Lamenting enables believers to endure suffering that perdures, even while living in the shadow of death (Baglyos 2009:263).

There is also ample room for songwriters to write and perform their own poems of lament that reconstruct the trauma story and reintegrate the experience of trauma in the context of belief and ordinary life. Laments will then facilitate a collective identity around suffering, providing a new narrative that enables sufferers to express their protest against pain in prayer as a condition for a provisional resolution and finding meaning in the painful experiences. Although not all laments have a fairy-tale ending, their value is that they help readers voice their trauma, connect with the more extensive community of believers and persist in believing in God despite the negative experiences of suffering.

Testimonies of God's answers to prayer form an integral element of many Pentecostal worship services. Suppose the movement plans to incorporate lament into its worship services. In that case, believers must also be encouraged to honestly and courageously share their suffering and disappointment with the silent and absent God. Testimonies can accommodate others who feel abandoned by God, enabling them to hold onto faith despite the meaninglessness of their suffering. Authentic worship that accommodates all people cannot help but reflect the oscillation that people experience between triumph and lament.

Conclusion

The lamentation is seldom an acceptable worship song during Pentecostal worship. It was argued that some reasons for avoiding the voicing of suffering are the pervasive triumphalism based on a persistent 'victorious living' mentality proclaimed by many Pentecostal churches. Lament does not market well in churches where the effective proclamation of their message is high on the agenda, in contrast to the market values of the message of health, wealth and prosperity. The influences of some prominent theologians are a second reason why Pentecostals deny that believers should not pray that their suffering be removed. However, the Pentecostal theology of glory fails to offset the persistence of the cross of suffering in believers' lives, requiring it to be corrected by the theology of the cross. The challenge is that

the hegemonic doxology of praise at the cost of silencing anguished sufferers, banishes them from experiencing the divine presence in worship meetings and silences a third of the biblical psalms that contain personal and collective laments concerned with how believers can reconcile their belief in a good and just God with their experiences of suffering. A theology of the cross acknowledges the reality that human life oscillates between triumph and lament, requiring Pentecostal worship to reflect this oscillation. Lament is the liturgical response when believers experience incomprehensible and meaningless suffering and simultaneously engage God within this context. In considering the incorporation of lament in Pentecostal worship, several suggestions were made, such as the church's pastoral care for sufferers, testimonies about others' experiences of suffering that can encourage the victims of suffering and songwriters who translate the biblical language of lament into contemporary hymns that verbalise their experience and restore their faith, contributing to their healing.

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