

Psychosocial Theology: An Emerging Perspective from Contemporary Research

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Abstract

This article explores Psychosocial Theology¹ as an emerging interdisciplinary framework that integrates theological reflection, psychology, and social sciences to address contemporary social challenges. Rooted in practical theology and empirical research, Psychosocial Theology provides a systematic and action-oriented response to issues such as social inequality, trauma, suffering, and mental health. By examining historical, theological developments, psychological insights, and sociological theories, this article highlights how faith-based approaches can contribute to structural transformation and holistic well-being. Through case studies and empirical analysis, the article demonstrates the relevance of Psychosocial Theology in engaging with modern crises, advocating for a theology that is both intellectually rigorous and practically effective. Addressing critiques from various theological traditions, the discussion underscores the need for an integrated, research-based approach that ensures theology remains both contextually relevant and socially transformative. Ultimately, this article positions Psychosocial Theology as a crucial field for the future of theological scholarship and faith-based social engagement.

Keywords: Psychosocial Theology, Psychological Theories, Social Transformation, Interdisciplinary Inquiry, Empirical Research

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Defining Psychosocial Theology

The interdisciplinary² field of psychosocial theology carefully blends theological research with psychological and sociological paradigms to examine the complex interaction among faith, mental health,

¹ Pinaki Burman, 'Theology Develops from Psychological Reality, as Comprehending Religion Depends on Human Experiences, Melded by Psychological Suffering and Societal Suffering. Traditional Theology Often Starts with Doctrine, but Psychosocial Theology Begins with Lived Experiences, Particularly Those of Marginalized and Suffering Communities. Psychological Theories on Trauma, Resilience, and Identity Help Uncover How People Process Suffering, While Sociological Insights into Power Structures and Inequality Reveal the Systems That Distort Human Dignity. Together, These Perspectives Inform a Theology That Acknowledges Emotional, Social, and Spiritual Struggles as Sites of Divine Revelation. This Approach Transforms Theology into a Tool for Healing and Justice—Empowering Churches to Address Mental Health, Challenge Systemic Oppression, and Offer Holistic Care. Psychosocial Theology, Therefore, Becomes Not Only an Intellectual Framework but Also a Living, Loving, and Justice-Driven Faith Reflecting Christ's Mission to the Broken and Downtrodden.' (n.d.).

² 'The Term "Interdisciplinary" Describes a Strategy That Integrates Techniques, Opinions, and Concepts from Two or More Academic Fields to Examine a Subject, Address a Problem, or Produce New Knowledge. Interdisciplinary Work Integrates Knowledge Rather than Remaining within the Confines of a Single Discipline. For Instance, It Combines the Fields of Psychology, Sociology, and Theology to Better Understand Human Beings in a Spiritual Context. This Method Emphasizes Collaboration and Seeks to Develop a More Thorough, Detailed Knowledge than a Single Discipline Could on Its Own.' (n.d.).

and social structures. This approach seeks to advance both individual transformation and the interrogation of systemic injustices by engaging theological discourse with empirical research, social theories, and psychological philosophies. Psychosocial theology's synthesis provides a sophisticated, professionally advanced, and praxis-oriented approach that enhances theological knowledge and facilitates constructive solutions to modern psychosocial³ problems.

It is extremely important to make a distinction between the developing framework of psychosocial theology discussed in the present article and Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory. Based on developmental psychology, Erikson's theory mainly examines how an individual's identity is formed throughout several life stages, emphasizing the relationship between social environment and personal development.⁴ On the other hand, psychosocial theology is a unique interdisciplinary theological perspective that looks at the intersections of social institutions, psychological resilience, and faith to address systemic injustices, human dignity, and spiritual development.

Although the word "psychosocial" acknowledges the interaction between the social and psychological domains, it is used in this context within a theological framework that goes beyond Erikson's developmental focus. To create a new, autonomous construct, this work draws on theological traditions, sociological theories, and psychological insights. It aims to engage both academic debate and practical application in the goal of pastoral care and social reform. Erikson's work is neither duplicated nor appropriated in this context; rather, the usage of "Psychosocial Theology" is an original conceptual development that draws from a variety of academic disciplines. It addresses current societal challenges utilizing an integrated lens that respects rather than misuses pre-existing psychological theories, making it a distinctive theological contribution.

1.2 The need for a theology that integrates psychological and social dimensions

Theology must interact with the lived reality of people and communities in modern society; it cannot be limited to merely ecclesial problems or enigmatic concepts. Faith is not just a spiritual subject; it is also intricately associated with social circumstances and psychological health. Addressing the complexity of the human experience requires a theology that incorporates psychological and social components, such as psychosocial theology, especially in situations of trauma, marginalization, and structural injustice.

Traditional theological frameworks frequently ignore systematic oppressions, emotional traumas, and mental health challenges that influence people's lives in favour of individual salvation, moral instruction, or doctrinal purity. Theological understanding of how religion affects human behaviour, resilience, and identity development is aided by psychological findings. Sociological positions, on the other hand, enable theology to acknowledge how culture, power relations, and economic inequality affect religious practices and beliefs. By combining these fields, theology may address issues of ethical duty and larger societal change in addition to individual spirituality.

In the case of pastoral care, when spiritual counselling alone might not be enough to treat ingrained psychological trauma or social alienation, such an integrated approach is especially pertinent. Additionally, it offers a strong theological response to problems like political oppression, mental health crises, and poverty, guaranteeing that theology stays involved in practical conflicts. By combining theology with psychology and sociology, psychosocial theology provides a framework for both structural advocacy and

³ 'The Definition of Psychosocial: The Term "Psychosocial" Describes How Social and Psychological Elements Interact to Influence Human Behaviour, Development, and Well-Being. It Includes how a Person's Social Surroundings—including Their Family, Community, Culture, and Societal Structures—Have an Impact on Their Opinions, Emotions, and Psychological State. This Phrase Is Frequently Used to Explain How Social Experiences Impact Psychological Health and Vice Versa.' (n.d.).

⁴ William Crain, *Theories of Development: Concepts and Applications*, 6th edition (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2010), 289–314.

personal healing, transforming faith into a transformational force in both society and individual life. Thus, constructing a theological discourse that is more holistic, justice-oriented, and contextually relevant in today's society requires the development of a theology that incorporates psychological and social aspects. This should not be a purely intellectual pursuit but rather an actionable theology that inspires practice and promotes genuine transformation.

The rising demand for a theological framework that incorporates sociological and psychological insights to address contemporary societal challenges is reflected in the development of psychosocial theology. This Theology is a methodical, research-based exploration of psychosocial elements. This article introduces psychosocial theology as a unique theological paradigm that has developed through interdisciplinary exploration and empirical study. This paradigm, which was created because of my research, highlights how theological reflection based on empirical facts may enhance faith-based solutions, social justice, and psychological well-being. This study adds something special to Practical Theology and broadens its methodological and practical applications by integrating the disciplines of theological science and psychosocial sciences.

1.3 Relevance in contemporary theological and social discourse

Theology needs to change to be relevant in both academic and practical contexts at a time of psychological pain, social inequity, and changing religious landscapes. Even though they are fundamental, traditional theological methods sometimes do not address the real-life struggles that people and communities face in their daily lives. Psychosocial Theology, which combines psychology, sociology, and theology, fills this vacuum by offering a framework that is socially transformational and pertinent to the setting. It is impractical for modern theology to completely ignore the structural inequities, cultural vicissitudes, and mental health epidemics that are affecting both faith communities and society at large. A growing understanding of anxiety, sadness, and trauma necessitates a theological response that recognizes the relationship between psychological health and religion. In the same vein, rising societal inequalities—whether related to poverty, prejudice, or political repression—call for a theological response that goes beyond personal spirituality to promote systemic justice and social reconciliation.

A theological approach that recognizes the relationship between religion and psychological health is necessary in light of the growing understanding of trauma, depression, and anxiety. A theological engagement that goes beyond personal spirituality to promote structural justice and collective healing is also necessary, considering the widening societal divides, whether they be related to poverty, prejudice, or political oppression. Theology is frequently seen in contemporary discourse as being unrelated to urgent human problems. By actively addressing the lived realities of oppressed groups and providing a comprehensive vision of healing and transformation, psychosocial theology, on the other hand, opposes this premise. This strategy is also in line with current diversity and theological discussions, which prioritize pragmatic solutions over doctrinal differences. Psychosocial Theology bridges the gap between theory and practice by combining social ethics, pastoral care, and psychological insights. This enables theology to participate actively in social transformation, mental health advocacy, and public debate. Its significance stems from its capacity to understand theology in the context of human experiences, guaranteeing that theological contemplation continues to be a driving force for both personal growth and social change in the complicated reality of today.

1.4 From “Theo-Psychosocial Model” to “Psychosocial Theology”: A Necessary Refinement

My doctoral research, in which I first developed the Theo-Psychosocial Model⁵ to examine the relationship between theology, psychology, and social structures, which naturally contributed to the development of Psychosocial Theology. The concept aimed to explain how people go through catastrophes because of their ego’s interactions with their surroundings, which cause anguish and fragmentation. On the other hand, societal regeneration happens when the environment is transformed by divine interaction, and healing happens when the ego meets God, restoring the shattered self. Although this approach successfully addressed faith-based healing and personal development, I quickly concluded that a more comprehensive framework was required to address systemic issues of marginalization, oppression, and injustice in addition to individual recuperation. As my research progressed, I moved beyond the Theo-Psychosocial Model to develop Psychosocial Theology, a more all-encompassing theological framework that incorporates social ethics, psychology, sociology, economics, politics, and anthropology into theological discourse. To move from a pastoral approach that is concentrated on the person to one that considers structural and systemic elements impacting human suffering and transformation, this change was crucial. Building on the Theo-Psychosocial Model’s fundamental findings, Psychosocial Theology broadens its focus to encompass a critical examination of political and economic systems, power dynamics, and interdisciplinary approaches. Psychosocial theology aims to comprehend how theological perspectives both influence and are influenced by social reality, in contrast to the model, which focuses on how divine intervention heals social relationships and personal identity. To create a theological framework that not only addresses human suffering but also promotes social transformation, it is essential to incorporate principles from postcolonial philosophy, feminist theology, political theology, and liberation theology. Positioning itself within Practical Theology, Psychosocial Theology embraces it as its foundational paradigm while offering an innovative perspective on the interaction of social reality, psychological insights, and theological inquiry. As part of Practical Theology, Psychosocial Theology expands its

⁵ Pinaki Burman, ‘Psychosocial Impact on Girl Children Begging on the Streets of Kolkata: A Theological Response’ (Prayagraj, India, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences, 2024), 340–43, <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/577590>.

purview to examine the psychosocial aspects of religion, psychological identity, and social transformation. It is rooted in the theological traditions of the Reformed⁶, Lutheran⁷, Wesleyan⁸, and Ecumenical⁹ thought. As a result of this development, the Theo-Psychosocial Model is now a crucial aspect of Psychosocial Theology, especially when it comes to identity reconstruction, pastoral care, trauma recovery, and spiritual formation. With its established approach to comprehending the relationship between theology and social systems and psychological health, the model offers a useful application for the larger theological discourse. Nevertheless, Psychosocial Theology expands this approach to the meso- and macro-levels, addressing social policies, institutional structures, and global crises. In contrast, the model concentrates on the micro-level of personal development. This reform guarantees that theological reflection addresses justice, advocacy, and structural change in addition to personal redemption and healing. My research continues to bridge the gap between the social sciences and theology by shifting from the Theo-Psychosocial Model to Psychosocial Theology. It establishes that theological reflection can actively contribute to addressing social injustices, mental health crises, and ethical quandaries in modern society. In a time when theological thinking must adapt to complex global circumstances, this change is essential to ensure that theology is relevant, interdisciplinary, and socially involved. By incorporating and extending the Theo-Psychosocial Model into a broader theological discourse, Psychosocial Theology does not reject it; rather, it offers a critical framework for theological and psychosocial study as well as useful tools for pastoral interaction.

1.5 Ontological and Epistemological Standpoints of Psychosocial Theology

The ontological foundation of psychosocial theology holds that human life is fundamentally relational and influenced by the dynamic social, psychological, and spiritual interaction. This way of thinking contends that religion and theology cannot be comprehended independently of the lived realities of people and communities, in contrast to traditional theological perspectives that frequently isolate the divine from human experience. The human condition is a profoundly psychosocial reality where social structures, mental health, and emotional well-being intersect with religious concepts. It is not only a spiritual

⁶ 'The Reformed Tradition, Which Was Especially Impacted by John Calvin, Places a Strong Emphasis on the Sovereignty of God over Societal Institutions and All Facets of Life. The Concept of Covenantal Relationships—Where Religion Is Both Community and Personal—Is Upheld in This Tradition. The Idea That Humans Were Made in God's Image, or Imago Dei, Serves as a Crucial Basis for Addressing Issues of Social Justice, Human Dignity, and Structural Injustices—All of Which Are Central to Psychosocial Theology. Furthermore, the Reformed Focus on God's Providence and Societal Change Is Consistent with Resolving Systemic Injustices via Psychosocial Participation Informed by Religion.' (n.d.).

⁷ 'Martin Luther's Differentiation between the Law and the Gospel Offers Psychosocial Theology a Crucial Theological Perspective. While the Gospel Provides Healing and Reconciliation through Christ, the Law Convicts People and Societies of Sin, Revealing Brokenness in Interpersonal Relationships and Societal Systems. Additionally, Luther's Theology of the Cross Recognizes Pain and Brokenness, Which Is Essential to Psychosocial Theology's Understanding of Trauma, Resiliency, and Human Struggle. The Theological Connection with Mental Health and Overall Well-Being Is Further Supported by the Lutheran Emphasis on Change Led by Grace.' (n.d.).

⁸ 'John Wesley's Theology Is the Foundation of the Wesleyan Tradition, Which Places a Strong Emphasis on Social and Personal Virtue. The Psychosocial Aspects of Faith Are Strongly Aligned with Wesley's Vision of Comprehensive Salvation, Which Encompasses Spiritual, Emotional, and Bodily Well-Being. Within Psychosocial Theology, His Focus on Practical Divinity and Interaction with Underserved Populations Offers a Theological Justification for Tackling Structural Injustices, Mental Health Crises, and Pastoral Care. The Integration of Theology with Sociological and Psychological Findings Is Further Supported by the Wesleyan Commitment to Social Justice and Ethical Action.' (n.d.).

⁹ 'The Ecumenical Movement Offers a Wide Theological Worldview That Prioritizes Social Change, Interfaith Understanding, and Christian Communion. The Ecumenical Tradition Emphasizes the Church's Responsibility in Addressing Global Issues, Including Poverty, Injustice, and Oppression. It Is Influenced by Liberation Theologies and the World Council of Churches. By Encouraging Interdisciplinary Participation and Promoting a Theology That Is Both Academic and Practical in Discussing Today's Social Challenges, Psychosocial Theology Gains from This Legacy.' (n.d.).

endeavour. This ontology contends that theological knowledge must be grounded in real-world struggles, especially among oppressed people, and opposes dualistic divisions between the holy and the secular. Psychosocial theology emphasizes that faith must be lived and practised in ways that interact with social justice, mental health, and human development because it views reality as transformative rather than static. As human circumstances change due to cultural, political, and economic shifts, theological concepts also alter. According to this ontology, theology ought to address human suffering and resiliency in concrete ways in addition to reflecting divine truth.

From an epistemological standpoint, Psychosocial Theology integrates theological thought with scientific study, embracing an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge generation. Doctrinal formulations, systematic theology, and biblical interpretation have frequently been the main sources of knowledge for traditional theological epistemologies. However, by adding psychological theories, sociological understandings, and qualitative research techniques, psychosocial theology broadens this framework. This method guarantees that theology will continue to be useful and relevant to modern problems like trauma, social inequity, mental health, etc. For theological contemplation, empirical research—such as ethnographic studies, interviews, and case analyses—becomes an essential instrument, guaranteeing that theological knowledge is based on actual experiences rather than theoretical conjecture. By acknowledging the voices of underrepresented communities and those impacted by social injustices, lived experience itself turns into a valid theological source. Psychosocial Theology portrays theology as a field that actively engages with human conflicts by fusing social science and psychological approaches, challenging the notion that theology is only a speculative subject. This epistemology goes beyond conventional revelatory models and integrates action-oriented, contextual, and useful knowledge. It seeks to produce insights that result in real social change rather than constructing religious concepts in a vacuum. Because of this, psychosocial theology is a dynamic and adaptable field that is firmly rooted in both theological research and direct involvement with contemporary problems.

Psychosocial Theology provides a more comprehensive understanding of religion in modern culture by fusing theological concepts with sociological and psychological frameworks. It recognizes that religious discourse must address the complicated realities of human suffering, resiliency, and transformation in addition to interpreting sacred scriptures. Psychosocial Theology is a distinctive complement to the area of Practical Theology because of its ontological and epistemological standpoint, which emphasizes the need for theological knowledge to be both socially relevant and intellectually robust. By using this method, theology develops into a vibrant and changing field that consistently incorporates fresh perspectives from multiple fields while staying true to its foundational principles of compassion and faith.

2. HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 Biblical Foundation of Psychosocial Theology

Psychosocial theology emphasizes comprehensive human flourishing that combines social reform and personal healing, and it is based on the biblical notion that people are formed by both their social circumstances and psychological experiences. The foundation of this paradigm is the Imago Dei teaching (Genesis 1:26-27), which maintains that human dignity is a divinely bestowed quality and is not dependent on social standing or psychological health. This fundamental fact reaffirms each person's intrinsic value and fights against social dehumanization and internalized injustice. Human uniqueness is further highlighted in Psalm 139:13-14, which provides theological support for pastoral care that promotes

emotional healing and self-acceptance, particularly for people who have experienced trauma or marginalization.

Psychosocial theology addresses the Scripture's deep concern for social justice in addition to individual identity. This theology is rooted in the prophetic tradition of Isaiah 1:17 exhortation to "seek justice" and protect the oppressed, which forces believers to address structural injustices. Jesus' mission (Luke 4:18-19), in which He announces emancipation for the downtrodden, is the highest manifestation of this prophetic ethos. This mandate underlines the psychosocial aspect of His ministry, addressing both structural reform and personal healing. Furthermore, as seen in Matthew 11:28-30, where He offers rest for the weary, Jesus continuously attended to people's emotional needs, providing an example of faith-driven emotional resilience. This simultaneous restoration of dignity and well-being is best illustrated in Mark 5:34 when Jesus heals a woman who has been marginalized by a chronic disease. This shows how healing in psychosocial theology must treat the person's inner self as well as their social reintegration. The Bible also emphasizes how important community is for building fortitude and harmony. A fundamental principle of psychosocial theology, the early church's extreme economic sharing and mutual care are depicted in Acts 2:44-45. This community model combines individual and communal well-being. Paul's depiction of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 also emphasizes interdependence and advances a theology based on empathy and shared responsibility, which challenges individualistic approaches to spiritual development and mental health. Lastly, transformation is viewed by psychosocial theology as a comprehensive process that alters both social structures and people's thoughts. The idea that theological contemplation may reframe skewed self-perceptions and promote psychological healing and resilience is validated by Romans 12:2, which calls for the renewing of the mind. Paul's description of Christians as a "new creation," found in 2 Corinthians 5:17, completes this picture by encapsulating the psychosocial focus on social and personal renewal. These scriptures together provide a thorough biblical foundation to support psychosocial theology, presenting social justice, emotional healing, individual dignity, community solidarity, and transformational renewal as interrelated aspects of a theology that reflects the life and work of Jesus Christ. It promotes a conception of faith that tackles psychological pain and structural injustice in addition to spiritual challenges, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of human development.

2.2 The Doctrine of Sin and Salvation in Psychosocial Theology

Psychosocial Theology addresses the principles of sin and salvation by combining biblical truth with an awareness of human psychology and social reality. It sees sin as a force ingrained in societal institutions that uphold injustice, dehumanization, and emotional pain, in addition to being a personal moral failing. According to this theology, sin distorts human identity, or the *Imago Dei*, and causes people to internalize feelings of guilt, self-loathing, and despair, especially in the case of the marginalized. Beyond the individual, sin also takes on structural forms that strengthen social exclusion, injustice, and oppression. To address this dual reality, psychosocial theology affirms that, in its purest form, redemption entails both social change and personal healing.

In a personal sense, salvation is defined as the restoration of human dignity and mental regeneration (Romans 12:2), in which people are freed from the emotional scars of sin, such as guilt, dread, and despair, and discover wholeness in Christ. This compassionate healing is most illustrated by Jesus' dealings with the damaged and ostracized, like the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11), who receives both forgiveness and release from societal judgment. Psychosocial theology emphasizes how redemption offers a new identity based on grace and love rather than guilt, addressing the psychological weight of sin. According to

Psychosocial Theology, redemption at the societal level entails destroying the “powers and principalities” Paul refers to in Ephesians 6:12—sinful systems that firmly establish poverty, marginalization, and inequality. It is reminiscent of Jesus’s declaration in Luke 4:18-19 that bringing the oppressed to freedom and sharing the gospel with the impoverished are essential components of redemption. As a result, this theology advocates for a transformational praxis in which followers of Christ take up social campaigning and community development as a means of repairing the damaged structures that sustain suffering.

In conclusion, psychosocial theology maintains that sin breaks the social fabric and the human soul and that redemption, which is made possible by Christ, comprehensively restores this brokenness. It highlights that to fully represent God’s kingdom on earth, genuine redemption must enable people to recover their dignity and communities to work for justice.

2.3 The evolution of theology in response to social crises

Theology has always responded to societal crises by amending its ethical frameworks, pastoral practices, and teachings to meet the pressing challenges of the era. The evolution of theological imagining has been intricately linked to social reality, from the early Christian reactions to Roman persecution to theological encounters with systematic injustice today. Augustine’s *City of God* (426 CE), in which he reinterpreted the collapse of Rome as a theological lesson on the division between the earthly and heavenly cities, is among the first examples of theology responding to crises. According to Augustine’s *City of God*, Christians were able to maintain their trust in divine providence despite the fall of the empire because of this doctrinal change.¹⁰ Similarly, the *Summa Theologica* by Thomas Aquinas (1265-1274) is regarded as one of the most important texts in Christian theology. It methodically examines human purpose, ethics, the essence of God, and the interplay between reason and religion. By developing a framework that considers both spiritual and earthly truths, Aquinas aimed to reconcile Christian theology with Aristotelian philosophy. His writings continue to be fundamental to theological philosophy and provide insightful information for the growth of psychosocial theology, especially in figuring out how social structures, human psychology, and divine truths interact. Faith and reason, according to Aquinas, are complementary rather than antagonistic. Humans are embodied souls, single beings with both spiritual and physical aspects. This dual nature suggests that for overall well-being, both the soul (theology) and the mind (psychology) need to be nurtured. According to Aquinas, an interdisciplinary approach is justified by the complementary nature of faith and reason. The integration of theology with psychology, sociology, and ethics is known as psychosocial theology, and it is consistent with Thomas Aquinas’ concept that human knowledge includes both scientific research and divine revelation. Aquinas’ virtues—particularly faith, hope, and charity—offer a moral foundation for Psychosocial Theology’s focus on spiritual development and resilience. Aquinas’s dedication to justice and the common good is consistent with psychosocial theology’s support of marginalized communities.¹¹ In conclusion, Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* provides Psychosocial Theology with more than simply a historical foundation; it also acts as a framework for combining social justice, psychology, and religion. His well-rounded approach to morality, human nature, reason, and the common good strengthens the theological underpinnings required to handle the complexity of today’s psychosocial problems.

Theology has been essential to social change movements in the contemporary period. In reaction to clerical corruption, Martin Luther and John Calvin spearheaded the Reformation (16th century), which changed

¹⁰ Saint Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, Reprint edition (London; New York: Penguin Classics, 2003).

¹¹ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, New edition (New York: Ave Maria Press, 1948).

Christian doctrine to place more emphasis on grace, personal conscience, and social ethics (Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*).¹² Theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez (*A Theology of Liberation*, 1971) pioneered Liberation Theology in the 20th century, which combined Christian teaching with Marxist^{13,14} Social analysis to address the injustice and poverty in Latin America. The preferred choice for the poor and the need for active participation in social justice was highlighted by this theological paradigm.¹⁵ To ensure that its theological investigation and activity remain dedicated to the achievement of human dignity, social justice, and holistic well-being rather than identifying with any political agenda, psychosocial theology purposefully maintains a distance from partisan political ideology. It emphasizes a grassroots-oriented engagement with the psychological difficulties of underprivileged populations rather than turning into an elite perspective isolated from actual reality. The voices and experiences of those who face systemic injustice and social exclusion are given priority in this method, which guarantees that the theology stays accessible and culturally grounded. Psychosocial Theology aims to empower rather than impose by emphasizing the interaction of social structures, psychological resilience, and religion. This promotes a transformational praxis that arises from within oppressed populations rather than being dictated by privileged, outsider perspectives.¹⁶ Psychosocial theology, without being associated with any one political party. This strategy aligns with Jürgen Moltmann's Political Theology, which maintains that "hope must confront the suffering of the present" and that theology must address suffering in the actual world.¹⁷ Additionally, it is reminiscent of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*, in which he highlights the need for the church to speak up for the downtrodden rather than be quiet in the face of injustice.¹⁸ According to Cone's Black Theology, which was created during the American civil rights struggle, "God is on the side of the oppressed" and reinterpreted Christian theology through the prism of racial justice.¹⁹ By promoting gender equity and an inclusive theological vision, feminist and womanist theologians like Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Delores S. Williams contested patriarchal theological frameworks.^{20,21}

¹² Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, trans. Mark D. Tranvik, 7.2.2008 edition (Fortress Pr, 2008).

¹³ Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, 2nd edition (Cambridge New York Melbourne Madrid Cape Town: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ 'Marxist Social Analysis, Especially Its Criticism of Structural Inequality and Class Oppression, Served as a Major Theoretical Influence for the Movement. Although Liberation Theology Did Not Fully Embrace Marxism, It Caused a Great Deal of Conflict within the Church Because of Its Use of Ideas like Class Struggle and the Critique of Global Capitalism.' (n.d.).

¹⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Orbis Books, 1988).

¹⁶ Pinaki Burman, 'Despite Psychosocial Theology's Deliberate Distance from Political Affiliations, Its Fundamental Principles Are Inherently Consistent with Moral Systems That Prioritise Social Justice, Human Dignity, and the Welfare of Everyone. Psychosocial Theology Is Philosophically Close to Progressive and Centrist Ideals, as It Is Based on the Conviction That Faith Must Address Both Individual Healing and Systemic Transformation. It Advocates for the Empowerment of Marginalized Communities, the Dismantling of Oppressive Structures, and the Pursuit of Equitable Social Relations. But Christian Conviction, Not Political Allegiance, Is What Motivates This Convergence. It Goes beyond Left-Right Differences, Recognizing the Moral Need of Individuals to Pursue Holistic Flourishing While Holding Systems Accountable When They Prolong Suffering. This Impartial Position Guarantees That Psychosocial Theology Will Continue to Be a Transformational and Inclusive Force That Promotes Social Renewal and Human Resilience without Giving in to Political Pressures.' (Bangalore, Karnataka, India, 17 March 2025).

¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress Pr, 2007).

¹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

¹⁹ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Orbis Books, 1997).

²⁰ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 2nd edition (London: SCM Press, 1996).

²¹ Delores S. Williams and Katie G. Cannon, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013).

Presenting a theology of creation that stresses God's continuing interaction with the world—not as a remote, detached creator, but as one who actively supports and participates in creation's life and suffering—is the central thesis of Jürgen Moltmann's *God in Creation*. Moltmann goes beyond conventional creation theories that concentrate solely on God's first act of creation. Rather, he presents an ecological and Trinitarian view of creation, stressing both God's transcendence (being outside of creation) and God's immanence (presence inside creation).²²

Recognizing the central tenet of psychosocial theology is crucial: God is not only present in the spiritual realm but also actively participates in the social and psychological facets of human existence. Moltmann's doctrine of Shekinah, or God's residing presence, is similar to Psychosocial Theology's understanding of God's role in social systems, human development, and human suffering. He suggests that while God consciously "withdraws" (tzimtzum) to give creation its autonomy, He yet maintains a close relationship with it and strives for its restoration and healing. Building on this, psychosocial theology affirms that God is present in the intricate interactions between the human psyche and social environment, not as an outside observer but rather as a healing and transformational force. Psychosocial theology presents God's involvement as both personal and systemic, healing both internal wounds and societal institutions. This is especially pertinent in situations including psychological breakdown,²³ marginalization, and social injustice.

2.3 Contributions of psychology and sociology to theological studies

A thorough synthesis of 33 psychological and social theories organized into 16 different frameworks led to the establishment of psychosocial theology. An empirically and theologically based solution to today's social issues, especially those that impact disadvantaged populations, is based on this interdisciplinary approach. Though grounded in its fields, each theory offers significant insights that, when taken as a whole, allow for a more profound and complex comprehension of human behaviour, development, and social systems. These insights are crucial for building a theology that is both constructive and transformational.

A basis for comprehending how people develop cognitively, emotionally, and socially is provided by the developmental theories examined, including Cognitive Development, Moral Development, and Psychosocial Development. Erik Erikson's psychosocial phases and Jean Piaget's cognitive stages emphasize how moral reasoning and identity change throughout time, particularly when faced with hardship. Psychoanalytic theories that examine the unconscious factors influencing human motivation and behaviour, such as Freud's Grand Theory of psychoanalysis, are a good complement to these. These psychological insights work together to create a theology that transcends abstract doctrinal thought and enters the lived reality of faith communities, acknowledging human fragility, pain, and the search for meaning.

By placing human behaviour inside larger social systems, sociological theories enhance this framework even further. Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber's classical perspectives provide important insights into how social structures, power relationships, and shared ideologies influence both individual and collective experiences. Marx's criticism of class conflict, Durkheim's focus on social cohesiveness, and Weber's examination of the relationship between religion and social change all combine to create a

²² Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. M. M (London: SCM Press, 1985).

²³ 'Causes of Psychological Breakdowns Can Be Triggered by Various Factors, Including: Major Life Changes or Stressors, Burnout or Prolonged Stress, Traumatic Events, Underlying Mental Health Conditions (e.g., Anxiety, Depression), Lack of Support or Coping Mechanisms.' (n.d.).

theology that addresses structural injustice rather than spiritualizing suffering. By addressing the structural injustices and ideological pressures that perpetuate marginalization, mid-range and macro-sociological theories such as Merton's Strain Theory, Conflict Theory, and Critical Theory expand on this analysis and are crucial for creating a theology based on advocacy and equality.

The psychosocial analysis is further nuanced by social psychology and interactionist opinions. The I and the Me (Mead) and Looking-Glass Self (Cooley) theories highlight the relational aspect of human life by shedding light on how people create their sense of self via social interactions and perceptions. Theories such as System Justification, Social Dominance, and Social Exchange emphasize how social norms and power structures shape behaviour and perpetuate inequality. These realizations are essential to creating a theology that upholds human dignity and opposes social injustice. Significantly, humanistic psychology connects spiritual formation with psychological growth through the Self-Actualization Theory (Maslow) and human development theory. The theological perspective of psychosocial theology, which acknowledges that religion, identity, and moral growth are not static but rather are formed by dynamic engagement with personal, social, and spiritual realities, is focused on the transforming power of human experiences.

The study design, methodology, and data analysis of psychosocial theology are informed by this thorough theoretical synthesis, which ensures that theological reflection is always empirically supported and sensitive to practical situations. Beyond conventional doctrinal methods, psychosocial theology fosters an active, context-sensitive theology that tackles both individual development and institutional transformation by combining distinct psychological and sociological frameworks. By placing a higher priority on the lived experiences of oppressed populations, it opposes elitist interpretations and makes sure that theology stays grounded in human suffering, resiliency, and hope. This embodies a faith that does more than just analyse the world; it also aims at ameliorating it.

3. THE INTERDISCIPLINARY NATURE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL THEOLOGY

3.1 Engagement with psychological theories on trauma, identity, and resilience

Understanding that people are moulded by their psychological and social circumstances alongside their spiritual journeys, psychosocial theology delves thoroughly into psychological perspectives on trauma, identity, and resilience. According to psychologists like Judith Herman and Bessel van der Kolk, trauma harms a person's sense of self, safety, and connection to the outside world. Identity is shattered, trapping people in vicious cycles of helplessness, humiliation, and terror. This rupture affects the person's internal world as well as their connections with others outside of it, making it more than just an emotional wound. This complexity is recognized by psychosocial theology, which aims to treat trauma as a comprehensive, lived experience that calls for spiritual, emotional, and social healing rather than only as a psychiatric disorder.

A crucial aspect of Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, identity, is also essential to this theology. Erikson emphasizes how societal contexts and individual experiences shape identity development, which is consistent with Christian views on human dignity and value. Building on this, psychosocial theology holds that a person's identity is shaped by their relationship with God and their religious community in addition to their psychological growth. This theology provides an alternative narrative for individuals who experience systematic oppression: one that restores dignity and value based on Christ's transformative inclusion of the disadvantaged (Luke 4:18-19) and the divine image (Genesis 1:26-27) rather than social acceptance. This theological paradigm gives resilience—often defined as the

capacity to “bounce back” from adversity—a deeper significance. This is supported by psychosocial theology, which contends that resilience is about turning adversity into a source of strength and new purpose rather than just suffering it. By referencing verses like Romans 5:3-4, which describe how suffering breeds endurance, character, and hope, it makes the connection between spiritual persistence and psychological resilience.

Furthermore, resilience is reframed by psychosocial theology as a collective process as opposed to a strictly individual one. It emphasizes the function of promoting healing by drawing on trauma-informed treatment methods. In the same way that early Christian communities shared resources and burdens (Acts 2:44-45), contemporary religious communities are expected to be healing spaces that validate the suffering of those who have experienced trauma, confront harmful societal institutions, and foster hope. This casts resilience as a collective process of empowerment and healing, challenging the prevalent, individualistic definition. In the end, Psychosocial Theology provides a potent, comprehensive strategy for human flourishing through its involvement with trauma, identity, and resilience. It acknowledges the scars of the past while imagining a healing, resilient future, bridging the gap between psychology and theology. This comprehensive approach, which supports the mind, body, and spirit, is a crucial and revolutionary reaction in a society characterized by growing mental health crises, structural inequity, and social disintegration.

3.2 Sociological perspectives on structural inequality, power dynamics, and social transformation

The sociological facts that influence human experience, especially power relations, structural inequity, and the potential for social change, cannot be disregarded by psychosocial theology. Sociological approaches are in line with these themes, which provide a rich prism through which one can examine the theological response to the suffering of oppressed populations as well as their actual struggles. The term “structural inequality” describes the deeply ingrained differences in rights, opportunities, and resources that result from institutional systems, such as political institutions, economic systems, and cultural norms, as opposed to personal shortcomings. To maintain class distinctions and restrict upward mobility, sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu²⁴ draw attention to the unequal distribution of social capital (networks and connections) and cultural capital (education, skills, and behaviours). Recognizing this fact, psychosocial theology highlights that achieving human flourishing is not only a personal goal but is also closely related to removing these structural obstacles. According to theological interpretations of *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26-27), all people are valuable regardless of their social standing. This is a direct challenge to systems that exclude or demean people.

Understanding power relations is essential to comprehending social inequity. According to Michel Foucault,²⁵ Power shapes norms and knowledge in addition to overtly oppressing people, which affects how individuals view themselves and their place in society. This realization highlights how marginalized people may accept damaging beliefs about their potential and value, which can lead to psychological anguish, according to psychosocial theology. According to theology, Jesus’ mission represents a counter-narrative, elevating the underprivileged, mending the heartbroken, and opposing repressive governmental and religious authority (Luke 4:18-19). His radical hospitality calls for a leadership style based on empathy and justice rather than domination, redefining power as servanthood.

²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital,’ in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J.G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Reprint edition (New York: Vintage, 1975).

It becomes clear that social change is both a religious and sociological need. Theories such as Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"²⁶ Support conscientization, which is the process of becoming critically aware of social injustice and enabling individuals to confront and change oppressive structures. This perspective is supported by psychosocial theology, which frames transformation as profoundly personal and communal in addition to structural. The exhortation to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" in Romans 12:2 lends credence to the notion that individual freedom and societal liberty are connected. Therefore, religion transcends personal spirituality to motivate action against structural injustice and becomes a force for social change and psychological resilience. In conclusion, sociologically based psychosocial theology rejects the premise that human suffering may be spiritualized apart from social circumstances. It addresses power relations that devalue people, acknowledges structural inequality as a theological issue, and aspires to social change that reflects God's mercy and justice. It creates a story of hope by fusing theology with social truths, showing how theology not only transforms the world but also cures the soul.

3.3 Ethical dimensions in Diakonia, public theology, and Theological activism

The ethical foundations of Practical Theology, when perceived from the position of Psychosocial Theology, encourage a vibrant dialogue among Diakonia, Public Theology, and Theological Activism. Ethics is at the heart of this relationship, not just as a guiding concept but as the fundamental basis that determines how theology interacts with society. In this way, ethical reasoning becomes not only significant but also essential to the framework of psychosocial theology, guaranteeing that theological contemplation stays closely linked to justice, human dignity, and transformational action. The daily realities of disadvantaged populations are addressed by psychosocial theology, which reflects an ethical and praxis-oriented dedication to social justice, human dignity, and holistic well-being. The three main theological paradigms of Diakonia, Public Theology, and Theological Activism—all of which have been reinvigorated and transformed by the psychosocial lens—provide significant expression for this ethical component. When seen through the lens of psychosocial theology, Diakonia—which is often characterized as Christian care to those in need—goes beyond charity. It turns into a means of addressing the structural causes of social injustice and psychological distress. Therefore, in addition to acts of kindness, ethical Diakonia calls for the dismantling of repressive systems that sustain trauma and social marginalization. The diaconal method is theologically reflected in Jesus' ministry of healing and table fellowship (Mark 2:15-17), which embodies both societal upheaval and compassion. Diakonia is reframed by psychosocial theology as an innovative dedication to building resilience, strengthening communities, and promoting systemic change. This guarantees that those in need are not only helped but also actively involved in their recovery and emancipation.

As a crucial ethical expression of religion, public theology works to further the common good by interacting with societal systems such as politics, the economy, education, and the media. The scope of public theology is expanded by psychosocial theology, which has its roots in both social justice and personal rehabilitation. It maintains that theological discussion must transcend the confines of the church and enter the public domain, addressing the psychological effects of social injustices, including prejudice, poverty, and relocation. In Luke 4:18-19, the phrase "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free" sums up this public mission. From a psychosocial standpoint, public theology ought to elevate the voices of the underprivileged and

²⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th Anniversary edition (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2000).

mould cultural narratives and governmental policies to uphold the intrinsic worth of every individual. To promote a narrative of emancipation and community healing, this ethic calls on theologians and communities of faith to challenge damaging ideas that exacerbate social and mental suffering.

In the context of psychosocial theology, theological activism goes beyond conventional campaigning by fusing social change, psychological resiliency, and spiritual commitment. It represents an ethic of prophetic confrontation, opposing systems of authority that cause systemic and emotional harm. This attitude of resistance is encapsulated in Jeremiah's prophetic lament (Jeremiah 22:3— "Do justice and righteousness and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed"). Because psychosocial theology holds that faith must both torment the comfortable and comfort the suffering, it sees activism as an ethical duty rather than a discretionary endeavour. From the perspective of Psychosocial Theology, the ethical aspects of Practical Theology encourage a dynamic interaction between Public Theology, Theological Activism, and Diakonia. Together, they advance a moral philosophy that addresses the social and psychological harm caused by structural inequality. This method upholds human dignity, promotes just systems, and imagines a society in which faith strengthens rather than oppresses people who suffer. In this way, psychosocial theology transcends its status as a theological framework and becomes an ethical requirement for both the church and society, forming a practice that benefits the world and the soul.

A more comprehensive examination demonstrates that the association between Diakonia, Public Theology, and Theological Activism is not always smooth, building on this ethical basis. "Creative Tension"—a necessary, even constructive, friction that drives theological thought and action—emerges from this interaction. Psychosocial Theology considers tension as a necessary energy that propels the church and society toward greater understanding, rekindled compassion, and revolutionary transformation rather than as a barrier. The next part explores how this kind of conflict, when carefully accepted, may spur development, resiliency, and meaningful interaction with the complexity of the world.

3.4 Creative Tension

"Creative tension" in the context of psychosocial theology refers to the dynamic interaction between differing theological positions, psychological theories, and social realities. When confronted with opposing ideologies, moral quandaries, or frameworks of justice and human flourishing, this tension arises. Psychosocial Theology acknowledges these conflicts as a springboard for more in-depth contemplation and revolutionary action rather than ignoring them. Because of this conflict, theologians and practitioners are compelled to critically examine themselves and question presumptions that have been influenced by privilege, cultural norms, or inherited dogmas. Encouraging communication between theology and psychosocial fortitude stimulates creativity and produces fresh approaches to pastoral treatment and social interaction that challenge the intricacies of human misery and structural injustice. Furthermore, creative tension fosters a more complex comprehension of social systems and human behaviour, advancing theological research beyond easy fixes in favour of comprehensive, situation-sensitive answers. It promotes a more compassionate, justice-focused practice by making theological researchers confront difficult realities regarding trauma, inequality, and power. Accordingly, creative tension serves as a driving force that keeps Psychosocial Theology anchored in doctrine, ethics, and sensitivity to the lived realities of oppressed populations, rather than acting as a hindrance to unification.

4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPING PSYCHOSOCIAL THEOLOGY

4.1 The necessity of empirical research in theology

Theological thought is grounded on actual human experiences, which is why empirical study is crucial, particularly in psychosocial theology. Theology must address social dynamics, resiliency, and suffering in the actual world; it cannot continue to be an abstract endeavour. Both qualitative, quantitative, and mixed empirical approaches provide light on the social and psychological factors influencing people's identities, struggles, and convictions regarding religion. By using a data-driven approach, theology is kept culturally relevant and provides useful insight into problems like trauma, poverty, and structural injustice. For instance, theologians might better grasp how to construct pastoral care and activism by researching the emotional toll that social exclusion takes on excluded populations. Furthermore, by encouraging accountability, empirical research keeps theology from drifting away from the very people it is meant to help. This combination of facts and contemplation, according to psychosocial theology, enhances the legitimacy and moral urgency of the theological mission by fusing compassion with reasoned action to bring about long-lasting change.

For several reasons, theological studies frequently oppose empirical inquiry. First, rather than being based on human observation, theology has historically been seen as a discipline grounded in divine revelation, scripture, and philosophical argument. Some worry that depending too much on scientific evidence might weaken the spiritual core of religion or cause it to change its emphasis from timeless truths to ephemeral developments in society. Furthermore, a lot of people think that empirical methods are only found in the social sciences. Another worry is that an empirical study may reveal unsettling realities within the theological communities. Theology needs to embrace scientific research as a tool for more in-depth comprehension and obedient interaction with the world, not as a danger, to overcome this conflict. By integrating human experiences into theology research, scholars might cultivate a more compassionate, contextually grounded theology. Theological schools ought to support interdisciplinary education, giving scholars research abilities in addition to their theological education. It will also be beneficial to comprehend how empirical discoveries improve theological praxis. This change guarantees that theology will continue to be a dynamic, adaptable field that effectively addresses contemporary problems and human suffering.

4.2 The importance of qualitative and quantitative research methodology

To accurately portray the complex relationships between social structures, human psychology, and theological thought, psychosocial theology requires the combination of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methodologies. When combined, the unique qualities of each approach give a deeper and more thorough knowledge of societal change, human suffering, and resilience.

Finding the lived experiences of marginalized populations requires the use of qualitative methods like Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnography, Case Study, and Narrative inquiry. They provide those who have been silenced by systematic injustice a voice, enabling academics to examine individual stories, feelings, and spiritual insights. This is consistent with the goal of psychosocial theology, which is to ensure that theological insights are drawn from the experiences of those who suffer from psychological trauma and social marginalization. Conversely, quantitative approaches help by providing quantifiable information, such as societal trends, mental health data, and inequality patterns. This research lends factual credence to the theological appeal for systemic reform by illuminating the extent of psychological pain and social injustice. By providing hard data that may sway lawmakers and religious organizations alike,

it bolsters advocacy campaigns. The breadth of quantitative analysis and the depth of qualitative investigation are combined in mixed techniques. This method recognizes that human experiences are both highly personal and structurally determined, which is at the core of psychosocial theology. Through the integration of statistical patterns and narrative insights, mixed approaches produce a comprehensive, multifaceted knowledge of psychosocial reality. By bridging the gap between personal experiences and structural change, this methodological synergy enables Psychosocial Theology to participate in more effective diaconal activism, pastoral care, and contemporary theology.

4.3 How empirical findings enhance theological reflection and praxis

In psychosocial theology, using mixed, qualitative, and quantitative methodologies is not without criticism since each poses different difficulties. Critics contend that human tales and lived experiences run the danger of making theological findings seem biased or anecdotal, thus weakening the universality of doctrine. As a result, qualitative methodologies may be rejected as being unduly subjective. On the other hand, quantitative methodologies are criticized for distilling intricate human experiences into data points, raising worries that this approach loses the relational, spiritual, and emotional depth that is essential to theological comprehension. Despite their desire for balance, mixed techniques can be condemned for methodological inconsistencies that combine methodologies with varying philosophical foundations, which can result in charges of overcomplication or dilution of theological purity. Beyond methodological difficulties, conservatives who see the blending of sociological and psychological frameworks as a shift from the spiritual centre of theology and possibly favouring social activity above heavenly salvation may oppose psychosocial theology altogether. Such critique suggests a “social gospel”²⁷ that turns the focus from eternal truths to temporal problems, framing interdisciplinary approaches as a secular intrusion into sacred realms. To respond to these criticisms, it is necessary to clearly state the goal of psychosocial theology, which is to enhance traditional theology rather than replace it by addressing the intricate realities of human suffering and structural injustice from a more comprehensive, interdisciplinary perspective that is grounded in both faith and reason.

In the context of psychosocial theology, empirical discoveries are essential for improving theological thought and practice. Through empirical study, which may be conducted through mixed techniques, qualitative narratives, or quantitative analysis, theological inquiry is grounded in real-world evidence, which helps to clarify societal systems, human suffering, and resilience. Theology is kept from becoming abstract or disconnected from living experiences—particularly those of oppressed communities—by this evidence-based approach. Empirical research, for example, might highlight trends in psychological suffering and structural injustice that conventional theological analysis would overlook. These realizations extend theology beyond broad moral precepts and encourage a more sympathetic and contextually aware reaction. Furthermore, empirical data acts as a mirror, highlighting instances in which church policies could inadvertently reinforce societal injustices or disregard people’s emotional needs. A more self-critical, flexible, and responsive theological praxis is encouraged by this feedback loop; it addresses

²⁷ Pinaki Burman, ‘Psychosocial Theology Is Not a Continuation of the Social Gospel Movement, Although Having a Similar Concern for Social Justice. The Social Gospel Mainly Understands Jesus’ Teachings as a Call for Social Change, Emphasizing the Improvement of Outward Social Situations Such as Equality, Poverty, and Labor Rights. Psychosocial Theology, on the Other Hand, Combines Theological Contemplation and Social Interaction with People’s Internal Psychological Experiences, Such as Trauma, Identity Development, and Emotional Resilience. It Addresses the Connection between Social Injustice and Internal Pain, Going beyond the Social Gospel’s Focus on Outward Systems. This Method Makes Sure That Theological Practice Includes Both Systemic Change and Personal Healing, Acknowledging That Social Change Works Best When It Supports the Full Person on All Levels—Socially, Psychologically, and Spiritually.’ (n.d.).

modern psychosocial realities while being true to the Gospel's demand for justice and healing. Psychosocial theology is transformed from a theoretical framework into a dynamic, active force by incorporating empirical discoveries. It enables theological scholars to bridge the gap between spiritual conviction and real-world, transformational involvement with the world by empowering them to not only understand human challenges but also create remedies that support holistic well-being.

5. CHALLENGES AND CRITICISM

5.1 Addressing concerns about theology's logical coherence and academic rigour

To establish Psychosocial Theology as a legitimate, transforming framework, it is imperative to address challenges with the logical consistency and academic rigour of theology. One typical criticism of theology is that it has the potential of being too abstract, emotionally motivated, or empirically unjustified, particularly when it interacts with human psychology and societal structures. However, psychosocial theology challenges this premise by integrating theological contemplation with interdisciplinary knowledge from sociology, psychology, and theology. By ensuring that theological explanations of human experiences are neither simple nor naïve, this integration enhances the logical legitimacy of theology.

Its capacity to engage in fruitful discourse between spiritual truths and concrete realities is what gives Psychosocial Theology its logical consistency. For instance, when combined with psychological studies on identity, self-worth, and trauma healing, theological concepts such as Imago Dei—the conviction that all persons are created in the image of God—gain real-world application. In addition to preventing theology from being disengaged from contemporary issues, this method guarantees that its moral precepts—such as justice, compassion, and human dignity—apply and are pertinent to the times. Additionally, by accepting an array of research approaches, Psychosocial Theology upholds academic rigour by making sure that theological assertions are examined considering society's reality and lived experiences. By preventing theology from becoming dogmatic or static, this dedication to evidence-based thought promotes a dynamic, flexible, and intellectually sound framework that is both socially transformational and spiritually accurate.

5.2 The need for a balanced theological and psychosocial approach

Addressing the complexity of identity, social injustice, and human suffering—areas where neither psychosocial nor theology alone offers a comprehensive solution—requires a balanced theological and psychosocial approach. From the standpoint of psychosocial theology, people are not just psychological entities influenced by social influences or spiritual souls in need of redemption. They are all-encompassing creatures with interwoven emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. One-sided approaches have the risk of oversimplifying the human experience, whether they are solely psychosocial or spiritual. Theologically speaking, concentrating only on spiritual salvation while ignoring psychological injuries and societal injustices can result in a faith that is aloof from human suffering, providing hope for the hereafter while ignoring justice and healing in the here and now. On the other hand, a purely psychosocial approach may not adequately address the deeper existential and ethical concerns that theology addresses, such as meaning, purpose, and reconciliation, even while it is useful for comprehending psychological well-being and social dynamics.

While psychology and sociological analysis are enhanced by the transforming vision of theology, a balanced approach guarantees that theology stays rooted in the lived reality of people's challenges. Jesus' mission, which included curing the sick, opposing unfair systems, and providing spiritual rejuvenation, is a prime illustration of this balance. His method acknowledged that to achieve meaningful healing, both

internal and external oppression must be addressed. Building on this concept, psychosocial theology promotes a comprehensive approach in which theological researcher communities cultivate individual and group empowerment, pastoral care incorporates trauma-informed assistance, and theological contemplation directs social action. In addition to being morally required, this approach is theologically sound as it guarantees that in the quest for justice, healing, and human flourishing, neither the soul nor the social body will be neglected.

6. PSYCHOSOCIAL THEOLOGY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In its essence, psychosocial theology recognizes that people are relational by nature, influenced by both social and psychological factors. This understanding explores how trauma, broken relationships, and systematic oppression distort human dignity, going beyond merely spiritual problems. It attempts to heal emotional scars, destroy damaging social systems, and promote resilience by using psychosocial concepts. Theologically speaking, this strategy is consistent with Jesus' mission, which encompassed not only curing bodily and spiritual illnesses but also reintegrating people into their communities while opposing unfair societal conventions. Furthermore, Psychosocial Theology presents a convincing argument against the growing commercialization and privatization of religion. This paradigm advocates for a more dynamic, outward-facing presentation of faith — one that places a higher priority on compassionate action and societal accountability — in contemporary circumstances where religion is frequently limited to institutional doctrine or personal morality. It challenges believers to adopt a living theology that addresses actual suffering, stands up for the weak, and encourages social transformation. This is especially important in situations concerning migration, economic inequality, and mental health crises, where concrete, structural change is required in addition to spiritual hope.

This theology's capacity to promote personal and societal healing is what provides it with its transforming power. It acknowledges that trauma is not only a personal experience but is frequently sustained by repressive structures, such as racial injustice, gender-based violence, and caste discrimination. By advocating against the systems that sustain suffering and relying on religious affirmations of human dignity, psychosocial theology enables people to regain their sense of significance. It combines inward rejuvenation with external engagement, reflecting the prophetic command to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8). In the end, psychosocial theology modifies our conception of theological activity and thought. It portrays theology as a dynamic, living force for change that upholds the emotional, social, and spiritual facets of human existence rather than as an impersonal academic endeavour or a strict moral code. By doing this, it pushes the church to live out a religion that liberates, empowers, and heals, making it incredibly relevant to the pressing issues facing the modern world. Understanding that individual healing is incomplete without addressing systemic injustice, psychosocial theology promotes structural transformation and holistic empowerment. It urges theological communities to confront oppressive social institutions, such as economic injustice and cultural marginalization, going beyond personal spirituality. This strategy equips those who are vulnerable with the means to effect social change in addition to emotional resilience. It imagines a religion that is grounded in action and compassion, where justice, dignity, and freedom are lived realities rather than abstractions.

7. CONCLUSION

Theology cannot be limited to solely spiritual issues or abstract theories in an era of social inequity and

psychological misery never seen before. Human suffering must be addressed by theological scrutiny in its most direct form, in the hearts, minds, and daily realities of people, particularly those who are marginalized. To meet this requirement, psychosocial theology becomes an indispensable answer that connects theology, emotional fortitude, and social change. It is impossible to overlook the importance of psychosocial theology in this context. It provides a crucial counterbalance to theologies that ignore how social injustice and human brokenness are intertwined. It fosters a theology of human dignity, freedom, and healing by tackling the complexity of both internal trauma and external oppression. This theology is as concerned with social and mental rehabilitation as it is with spiritual redemption. This paradigm enables the Church and theological professionals to effectively address contemporary issues, guaranteeing that theology stays transformational and current while enabling people and communities to strive for long-term justice and holistic well-being.

I developed Psychological Theology as my original framework, thus transforming it as an artist shapes a narrative, an identity, and an authentic story, not only as an academic concept. Theology needs to represent human struggle, resiliency, and hope and is more than just a set of thoughts. In this perspective, psychosocial theology turns into a canvas on which the real-life experiences of underrepresented groups are shown; their voices are no longer incidental but rather central to the narrative. This theology must inspire; analysis alone is insufficient. It must inspire action and captivate the imagination. Like every enduring story, it must inspire people by exposing the sacred inside the reality of social and psychological suffering rather than by imposing facts from the aforementioned. Thus, this theology transcends the realm of academia. It is a voice, a movement, and a representation of healing and freedom. I want to shape it as a researcher and storyteller to awaken a new way of seeing, thinking, and behaving that respects human dignity and promotes societal and personal development, rather than merely defining an ideology.

This article has shown that Psychosocial Theology is a distinctive and unique theological framework that incorporates sociological insights, psychological theories and integrates empirical research to inform theological inquiry. To ensure that theology is not only doctrinally sound but also informed by science and has the potential to transform society, I have worked to fill a significant vacuum in the field of theological studies through my research. Therefore, Psychosocial Theology is an innovative theological framework that arose from my study and provides a distinctive addition to Practical Theology by broadening its breadth of methodology, interdisciplinary interaction, and practical relevance. A new era in theological studies has begun with the emergence of psychosocial theology, in which empirical evidence, structural reality, and human psychology all play a significant role in theological solutions to individual psychological and systematic societal problems. By doing this, this study has broadened the scope of Practical Theology and made it more useful, relevant, and interdisciplinary in addressing social injustices in the modern world.

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23. ‘The Definition of Psychosocial: The Term “Psychosocial” Describes How Social and Psychological Elements Interact to Influence Human Behaviour, Development, and Well-Being. It Includes How a Person’s Social Surroundings—including Their Family, Community, Culture, and Societal Structures—Have an Impact on Their Opinions, Emotions, and Psychological State. This Phrase Is Frequently Used to Explain How Social Experiences Impact Psychological Health and Vice Versa.’, n.d.
24. ‘The Ecumenical Movement Offers a Wide Theological Worldview That Prioritizes Social Change, Interfaith Understanding, and Christian Communion. The Ecumenical Tradition Emphasizes the Church’s Responsibility in Addressing Global Issues, Including Poverty, Injustice, and Oppression. It

Is Influenced by Liberation Theologies and the World Council of Churches. By Encouraging Interdisciplinary Participation and Promoting a Theology That Is Both Academic and Practical in Discussing Today's Social Challenges, Psychosocial Theology Gains from This Legacy.', n.d.

25. 'The Reformed Tradition, Which Was Especially Impacted by John Calvin, Places a Strong Emphasis on the Sovereignty of God over Societal Institutions and All Facets of Life. The Concept of Covenantal Relationships—Where Religion Is Both Community and Personal—Is Upheld in This Tradition. The Idea That Humans Were Made in God's Image, or Imago Dei, Serves as a Crucial Basis for Addressing Issues of Social Justice, Human Dignity, and Structural Injustices—All of Which Are Central to Psychosocial Theology. Furthermore, the Reformed Focus on God's Providence and Societal Change Is Consistent with Resolving Systemic Injustices via Psychosocial Participation Informed by Religion,' n.d.
26. 'The Term "Interdisciplinary" Describes a Strategy That Integrates Techniques, Opinions, and Concepts from Two or More Academic Fields to Examine a Subject, Address a Problem, or Produce New Knowledge. Interdisciplinary Work Integrates Knowledge Rather than Remaining within the Confines of a Single Discipline. For Instance, It Combines the Fields of Psychology, Sociology, and Theology to Better Understand Human Beings in a Spiritual Context. This Method Emphasizes Collaboration and Seeks to Develop a More Thorough, Detailed Knowledge than a Single Discipline Could on Its Own,' n.d.
27. Williams, Delores S., and Katie G. Cannon. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013.