

"What does it mean to be human?" A systematic theological reflection on
the notion of a Black Church, Black Theology, Steve Biko and Black Consciousness
with regards to materialism and individualism

by

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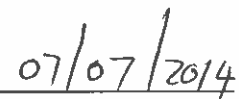
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Declaration

I declare that **“What does it mean to be human?” A systematic theological reflection on the Black Church, Black Theology, Steve Biko and Black Consciousness with regard to materialism and individualism** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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Date

Abstract

This research is concerned with the notion of being human. It acknowledges the dislocation of black people through themselves, a process which was exacerbated during, the colonial era and further through apartheid. The interest in this research is due to the historical dehumanisation of black people through dispossession and subjection to foreign rule and culture, by white people. The historical accounts of dehumanisation and disparity, through either pigmentation, poverty or an inferiority complex, led to black people viewing their humanity in terms of materialism and individualism in the present context. This research explores how materialism and individualism have affected black people's understanding of themselves and self-determinism. It is argued in the United States through Black Theology, the notion of the Black Church in the South African context and through Black Consciousness that the humanity of black people is affirmed historically and to date.

Key words: The notion of Black Church, Black Consciousness, Black Theology, materialism, individualism, opulence, capitalism, colonial Christianity and communalism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be human? This question is of profound relevance for all people because it concerns human existence. It is not a homogenous question but a relative and contextual question. It is of particular importance in matters that pertain to the quest for human identity or those who are questioning the meaning of human existence in relation to their own existence. The meaning of their humanity and humaneness in contact with dehumanisation, exploitation, etc. which requires a re-visitation and resuscitation of human meaning relevant to the specific context that raises this specific question. It is important then when asking this question, to point out what it entails because this question is existentialist, physiological, ontological, philosophical, historical, economical and theological by nature.

It encapsulates all the areas that have been mentioned as a specific methodology that can be applied to find the meaning of being human for a specific people and context. Evans points out (1992: 99): "The question of the nature and destiny of humanity is one that theology shares with other human sciences. The query "Who we are?" can be answered by biologists, psychologists, sociologists, philosophy, anthropologists and others". In this research it will be dealt with from a systematic theological perspective. Evans further argues: "However, the second part of the question asked by the Psalmist requires nothing less than a theological answer. Who and what we are in the sight of God and what there is about us that merits God's attention are proper subject matter of a theological anthropology. Indeed, no systematic theology is complete without a significant consideration of human nature and destiny as it relates to God" (1992: 99).

The research will be focusing on the physiological aspect of being human for blacks. The reason emanates from the fact that for blacks, being human cannot be separated from their blackness. Fundamentally so, due to the fact that their blackness was the very reason for their oppression and dehumanization—this was the chief principle responsible for the denial of their humanity based on colour classification. Biko argued:

Briefly defined therefore, Black Consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation—the blackness of their skin—and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the 'normal' which is white. It is a manifestation of a new realisation that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black (Biko 1978: 53).

Evans reiterates the same view as that of Biko, he argues:

One could argue that the question of being black was separated from the question of being human by the elevation of the factor of race to a normative status in relation to the human being. Thus in pre-slavery, pre-colonial Africa, one might assume that the question of being black never arose. Within their coast-like and neo-colonial status, black people continue to struggle to answer the question of what it means to be black (and human), caught between the identity that their oppressors attempts to force upon them and the identity that is theirs by their own conviction and by divine decree (Evans 1992:99-100).

For the purpose of this research, the question "What does it mean to be human?" is relevant to black people, more so, since materialism and individualism have grabbed the minds, hearts and souls of black people and have created an obsession with human meaning within them. This outlook based fundamentally from the heritage of systematic and institutionalized racism. This heritage of dehumanization has resulted in black self-hatred and what Tshaka defines as the flight of the self. Tshaka argues, (Tshaka 2012: 171): "Black internalized oppression encourages a flight from the black self". As such this flight from the self then means to assimilate what is not self, but what is the nominative of self. This in the case of black people would be whiteness, their values and cultures that blacks strive for under materialism and individualism. Tshaka further argues:

This construct assumes that the better the African is able to imitate the Westerner the closer he/she is coming to being a human being. Because blackness is characterized as negativity and badness, many blacks are in a rush to flee from such badness. This flight from the self does not only happen among the blacks who become assimilated into the established order, but it is something that is happening even among the masses. There is always an intense need to be a little better than the other (Tshaka 2012: 171).

As such, an examination of all the facets of this question is required in relation to black humanity. The question is fundamentally existentialist. By existentialist, what is meant; is the breaking away of absolutism that claims to provide an absolute human meaning. A human meaning that does not resonate with black people and what they

have suffered and still suffer from, under the historical baggage and heritage of dehumanisation and inferiority (politically, philosophically, ontologically, physiologically, theologically, etc). As these absolutes of human definitions cannot apply to black people in the sense of universalism and globalism. But Christianity is able to provide a home for those who have been dehumanized and oppressed, Cornel West argues, (West1999: 62): “Black people became Christians for intellectual, existential and political reasons”.

It is highly probable that the question for black people bears much on historical and existential issues that are interwoven and combined with issues of ontology and physiology. This context that necessitates a reflection on human meaning for black people is that of the modern and postmodern world in which black people have been engulfed with materialism and individualism in the post-apartheid South Africa under capitalism and the neglected need to humanise black people to their proper standing as human beings and not duplicates of Western interpretations and meanings of humanity. West argues:

The notion that black people are human beings is a relatively new discovery in modern West. The idea of black equality in beauty, culture and intellectual capacity remains problematic and controversial within prestigious halls of learning and sophisticated circles. The Afro-American encounter with the modern world has been shaped first and foremost by the doctrine of white supremacy, which is embodied in institutional practices and enacted in everyday folkways under varying circumstances and evolving conditions (West 1999: 70).

Instead, materialism and individualism reflect a people not healed from dehumanisation, but not reflecting on their historical predicament and accepting the norms of society. Averill (1974:13) rightly argues: “If, in any period of history, human life deserves to be designated problematic, it is surely our own.” Martin comes close to Averill’s argument, he (1973:150) argues: “Even if you start digging, social conditions make the search hard and conversely make the becoming hard for those who seek to be truly human.” This is a proper diagnosis of society and the complex nature that society has assumed under the false pretence of human universalism, globalisation, economic markets, technology and professionalism, which is clearly seen in the South African context as well as applicable to other contexts.

Averill (1974: 13) sees modern life as living on a boundary, Averill comments: "Existence 'on the boundary' – awareness at once of the stubbornness and the fragility of human life, of the possibility of an expanded humanness and humaneness beyond all our dreams, and yet of the possibility, too, of a dehumanization beyond all our nightmares – this boundary-line situation is probably the most pervasive themes of our present culture." This present age is deeply embedded in the universalism of the global village that usually expects a common meaning of being human despite the injustices of history. It is at this point that black people fit into the picture as their definition of being human is reliant on others and not self-autonomous. Biko affirmed this in his context, which is relevant in this context. He argues: "One of the most difficult things to do these days is to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture.

Somehow Africans are not expected to have any deep understanding of their own culture or even themselves. Other people have become authorities on all aspects of life or to be more accurate on BANTU life" (Biko 1978:44). Evans comes close to Biko's view, Evans (1992: 100) argues: "the true nature of black humanity has been veiled by a litany of stereotypes, endemic to western European culture. People of African descent have been described as inferior, savage, profane and invisible; they have been called outsiders, intruders, interlopes and subhuman beasts".

One can argue that the topic rises the issue of that being human cannot be seen in a paradoxically way. Human beings know that they are human and need not be told since being human is self-evident. . Kinget (1975:1) reflects: "That humans differ from all other animals is one thing about which there is no controversy. Man would not be a separate species if he could be entirely reduced to another. Common sense, moreover, confirms taxonomy: though we see occasionally a fellow human being who looks sapien or people who act like trousered apes, we know at a glance they aren't."

For black people, the question of being human reflects the above mentioned observation but also that human meaning that is contained idealistically in human universalism is far from reality and black existential and material conditions. Being human in terms of universalism seems self-evident but the history of South Africa

and the oppressed people all over the world gives a different account of universalism, which is still maintaining white power which is traceable in the modern era. The black encounter with white people, the Western world and culture, and the dehumanisation of black people show that self-evidence of being human is not a point of reflection. For black people primarily were dehumanised based on their appearance and that alone resulted in the obliteration of other human facets worthy of reflection (ontology, history, etc.) and resulted in the destruction of black life in exchange for other cultures and their interpretation of what black people are and are taught to believe that they are. Bohannan and Curtin argue:

For Europeans and North Americans, Africa has been seen for centuries through a web of myth so pervasive and so glib that understanding has to come through two stages. First, the myth itself has to be studied so that it can be stripped away to expose the reality hidden behind it. In the sense of the old aphorism, "It's not what we don't know that is dangerous; it's what we do know that's not true." Only then can we undertake the second state: seeing what is in fact there (Bohannan & Curtin 1988:3).

In the modern age black people are devoid of authentic human definition; more so, their value and outlook on life are built on foreign culture, for that has been taught to be a norm. West (1999: 86) argues: "The idea of white supremacy is a major bowel unleashed by the structure of modern discourse, a significant secretion generated from the creative fusion of scientific investigation. Cartesian philosophy and classical aesthetic and cultural norms. Needless to say, the odour of this bowel and the fumes of this secretion continue to pollute the air of our postmodern times". But what is even clearer is that blacks are victims of perpetual dehumanisation and perpetual self-hatred that are all inclusive of; ontology, physiology and history. This perpetual dehumanisation is an intrinsic part of advancing Western ways of life, meaning of life and being human – a further dehumanisation of black people even at this stage. Gibson (2003:22) argues: "The African is the embodiment of the Other Absolute, and the racial gaze of the White judges, humiliates, and deliberately and cruelty denies human recognition to the black." He adds: "The Black is the symbol of evil, of Sadism, of Satan, of moral dirtiness of sin. These symbols, projected onto the black over and over again create the basis for an inferiority complex where the White Other becomes the 'mainstay' of his preoccupation" (Gibson 2003:24).

The above is actually the situation confronting black people, as black people habitually seek acceptance of being human from their former oppressors and from their worldviews/outlooks. Fanon (1963; 1760) validates this point, Fanon argued: "...the native intellectual has thrown himself greedily upon Western culture. Like adopted children who only stop investigating the new family framework at the moment when a minimum nucleus of security crystallizes in their psyche, the native intellectual will try to make European culture his own". This is seen in the materialism and individualism among black people, based on how they are socialised into society and around each other with a constant mirror reflection through Western lenses. Kavanaugh asserts:

The fact of being human, will give rise to structures, values and demands which will not militate against my freedom but which will actually make freedom possible and enhance it. As Carl Rogers has said, "Instead of universal values 'out there' or a universal value system imposed by some group-philosophers, priests or psychologist – we have the possibility of universal human value directions emerging from the experiencing of the human organism (Kavanaugh1970:82).

Gibson (2003:40) argues: "Europe has reached the master's impasse and becomes the 'unessential consciousness', whereas Africa, the site of the slave's revolt, best expresses the project of human reciprocity."

In this research it will be of substantial value to relate black people and their blackness as God's plan and their acceptance of being black as important. Considering that self-hatred is a reflection of not knowing who one is authentically and that negative image -- whether taught or traditionally accepted – is then related to the world negatively, West argues:

Black self-hatred and hatred of others parallels that of all human beings, who must gain some sense of themselves and the world. But the tremendous weight of white supremacy makes this human struggle for mature black selfhood even more difficult. As black children come to view themselves more and more as the degraded other, the temptation of hate grows, "gliding stealthily into [their] laughter, fading into [their] play and seizing [their] dreams by day and night, rude turbulence (West 1999: 109).

This is evident with black people in their miss-identity expressed also in materialism and individualism within their given context. Fillmore (1931:158) observes this link of human negativity towards an identity and in relation to the world when he argues: "Man's part in the creative process is to express the divine ideal. When he knows

himself as the perfect offspring of Divine Mind, he expresses perfection. When he holds the thought of himself as sinful and of the universe as imperfect, he expresses those untrue ideas and so brings into manifestation all discords that appear.” Black people through dehumanization hold these untrue ideas about themselves, but what is even worse is that even in the postcolonial, post-imperialism and post-slavery times they still harbour these untrue ideas. West rightly argues concerning black striving in the modern era:

These “strivings” occur within the whirlwind of white supremacy—that is, as responsible to the vicious attack on black beauty, black intelligence, black moral character, black capability and black possibility. To put it bluntly, every major institutions in American society—churches, universities, courts, academies of science, governments, economies, newspapers, magazines, television, films and others—attempted to exclude black people from the human family in the name of white-supremacist ideology. This unrelenting assault on black humanity produced the fundamental condition of black culture—that of black invisibility and namelessness. This basic predicament exists on at least four levels—existential, social, political and economic (West:1999: 101).

The above resonates appropriately in the context of South Africa, as it can be said of other parts of the world where the black and white dynamic exist. But what is problematic is the intrinsic role they serve in questioning and denying blacks as humans. West is correct in pointing out the depth of dehumanization of black people. But what is more relevant is the existential context that continues to permeate black human identity, which is now black people problem. Rather than it being a white problem of accepting the truth of being black as tantamount to being human. West (1999: 1010) further argues: “The existential level is the most relevant here because it has to do with what it means to be a person and live a life under the horrifying realities of racist assault. To be a black human being under circumstances in which one’s humanity is questioned is not only to face a difficult challenge, but also to exercise a demanding discipline”.

Black people need to time and time again be reminded that they are created by God and the creation account in the Bible and theology has much to say about them and their identity—as black humanity—in as much as it has similar connotations for other races. Further African religion asserts this view of a human creation. Ross (1996:132) defines human beings as follows: “Humans (Hebrew words Adam,

enosh, ish; Greek word Anthropos): soulish creatures endowed with self-awareness and God awareness, innate moral and ethical standards and a proclivity for religious expression and exploration. Humans exist in the space and time dimensions of the universe and in a spiritual reality beyond those dimensions". Biko (1978: 53), in response to 'western theology' that agrees on a creation of humanity, holding the above to be true but denies the blackness of black people as human and having being created by God argues: "Black Consciousness therefore, takes cognisance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black". Further Biko affirms that in African religion and Christianity there is fundamental points of similarities beginning with creation and further overlapping to life in general. Biko argues:

The first people to come and relate to blacks in a human way in South Africa were the missionaries. They were in the vanguard of the colonisation movement to 'civilise and educate' the savages and introduce the Christian message to them. The religion they brought was quite foreign to the black indigenous people. African religion in its essence was not radically different from Christianity. We also believed in one God, we had our own community of saints through whom we relate to our God, and we did not find it compatible with our way of life to worship God in isolation from the various aspects of our lives (Biko:1978: 102).

The above mentioned properly projects that there is a reason for an authentic black human definition that expresses humanity that is complete and not fragmented in all areas of black life. As such, in theology – but more appropriately in Black Theology – human beings are created by God. Black people are then deliberately created to be black, the same goes for whites etc. and that asserts that in the "white-constructed world", they are still made in the image and likeness of God. Evans comments as follows on creation of humanity and its link to the image of God, something which is of substantial value in the notion black church and in Black Theology and the meaning of being created by God:

What does it mean to be a creature of God in African—American experience? The question for identity in African-American experience leads to a consideration of one's relation to God. The Bible asserts that human beings are created in the image of God. We discover who we are only in relation to God the creator. The traditional norms of theological discourse described that image in rational and moral terms. That is, human beings are genuine human beings to the extent that they are demonstrably rational and manifest the moral capacity love, obey, and express commitment. An unstated norm assumed that true human beings were also created in the physical image of God. Of course, most theologians would not admit this because God was assumed to be spirit and without need for a body. Yet in European and European—American art and literature images of God were, more than not, reflections of their creators (Evans 1992:115).

The following explanation is also pertinent to the notion of a Black Church and Black Theology and the definition of being human. This meaning in Black Theology and the notion of a Black Church is black humanity which might sound as a propagation of black exclusivism. But in actual fact it does not qualify to be exclusivism but rather is a starting point of appreciating being human among blacks and in the sight of God—then extending to others. When observed from this stance it is actually inclusivity of black humanity, considering the history of black dehumanisation and rejection of being human by 'white' theology. The following affirms this inclusivity of black in the human family and the latter expresses the context of black theology to the service of black humanity:

Man's creaturely relationship to God is a given factor of his existence. For man, to come to be and to exist mean the same thing as to be a creature of God. Thus creatureliness, which is the result of the positing of man in the world of existing things, is also descriptive of man's dependence on God. To live means to be at a point in God's creation where one receives and shares with others the life-sustaining gifts of creation, which are a complementary part of human existence (Unisa Archives Accession 153, 1969–1971:128).

Further in Black Consciousness thought: "SASO is committed to the promotion of Black Theology which is essentially a re-examination of the Black man's religious make up and an attempt to unite the black man to God. SASO sees Black Theology as an existential theology that grapples with the black man's day to day experience" (Unisa Archives Accession 127 (BPC) IV, 1972:8)

To be human, black people must engage the world and the dehumanisation, brutality, etc. that they have experienced in the world. All which served the purpose to demean their already existing humanity. Blacks need to realise in the world that though white supremacy questioned their humanity and led to the offshoots of black questioning their own inherent existing humanity. Black people need to know in the current that being human is not something that they ought to ask to be granted to them in the world but rather something which ought to be resuscitated in the world. This is reflected in Doniger's view of being human: "...I am inclined to believe that fully to be a human being is to enter the complex process of being one of the most widely sensitive, responsive, creative and adaptive creatures on this planet" (Doniger 1962:93). The Black Church will be useful in reflecting the meaning of being human through Black Theology and Black Consciousness. These are important to bring about a proper Dogmatics relative to black people in their quest for human meaning

in a materialistic and individualistic age.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim with this study is to argue that a methodology based on materialism and individualism is a faulty premise to reflect on being human, particularly in terms of black people. This study is also aimed at showing the historical factor – which stems from the dehumanisation, dispossession and deprivation of black people and their lessening of being human – leading up to the type of thinking and socialisation in which black people find themselves in the modern era under materialism and in individualism. It should be noted that through the "spectacles" and methodology of the notion of the Black Church, Black Liberation Theology and Black Consciousness, black people have always been human. Being human is inherent in them in as much as it is inherent in others, existing ontologically and physiologically. This assertion must constantly be said lest the modernism makes blacks to forget that the lives they now live have been pre-determined by others. Implying then that most initiatives i.e. education, profession, status etc. that they make are simply assimilation of pre-existing and pre-determined norms stemming from dehumanization.

The embedded internalisation of self-hate and an inferiority complex are what make them believe that they are not. West (1999: 109) observed: "The two major choices in black culture (or any culture) facing those who succumb to the temptation of hate are a self-hatred that leads to self -destruction or a hatred of others—degraded others—that leads to vengeance of some sort". This point of view is descriptive of Tshaka's notion of Afrophobia and the xenophobia attack which are related to material issues e.g. jobs, food etc. As such, black people fall into escapist mediums; such as those of obsessive material gains perpetuated in the materialistic age. As a way to reconcile their humanity in a world that has convinced them through slavery, colonialism, imperialism and racism that they are not human. Creating an alienation from authentic selfhood in black people, constantly bound in perpetual mirroring of the Western world's meaning of being human, is typical of the materialistic and individualistic age and qualifies to be vengeance upon the white world but further extends to the destruction of black humanity. In this study one will attempt to reconcile and affirm the undeniable humanity of black people. This is achievable through the notion of a Black Church, Black Liberation Theology and Black

Consciousness, beyond the self-hate constant recreation of the black-self under materialism and individualism.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology that will be used is a literature study. This form of methodology will unfold various views on the topic, with the understanding that each piece of literature adds a particular aspect to the subject what being human is. Considering that this question is a broad question, I will not venture much into the philosophy, sociology, economy etc. though there will be inferences. I will try to consult specific sources on blackness, the Black Church and Black Theology, and pre-apartheid and post-apartheid era sources in order to properly grasp the context in relation to South Africa's past and the implications for the future all inclusive of the world where blackness is concerned. Since this study is in systematic theology and relies heavily on Black Theology. There are various scholars that the scholar will rely on, like; Billingsley, A. *Mighty like River* (1999), Boesak's *Farewell to innocence* (1977), Cone *God of the oppressed* (1997) & *For my people: Black Theology and the black church*, Evans, JH, *We have been believers* (1992), Frazier, EF *The Negro church in America* (1964), Motlhabi, M, (2008) *African theology/Black theology in South Africa*, Stewart CF, *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness* and Wilmore, SG, 1998 *Black religion and black radicalism*. All those are essential for discussing the black church and black theology. While on a socio-political scale one will rely on Steve Biko's *I write what I like* (1978), Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the earth* (1963), and Cornel West (1999) as well as other scholars that resonate the behavioural patterns of black in relation to their humanity.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is a broad study that can be traced in most human sciences namely; anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology etc. as Evans (1992: 99) has suggested. However, it is relative to this era and theologically, due to the fact that theology holds that God created human beings. As such by implication theology can provide a more solid answer to the meaning of being human. Related in the triad formula of God, humanity and the world—Creator, creature (humans particularly) and creation. The question is bound to surface in each generation as human disillusionment necessitates grasping the meaning of human life and existence. The

reason to reflect on this topic by using a systematic theological approach to the question is based on one's interest in systematic theology and the relevance of the Gospel in relation to God, humanity and the world. This then simply depicts how this question from a systematic theological stance is bound to overlap with other fields. At the same time, as a theology scholar, one is bound to believe or – better yet – is convinced that the starting point of theology and Christianity is God, the one who can give a proper and authentic meaning of being human. As such, the study is limited to theological reflection and uses the notion of Black Church, Black Liberation Theology and Black Consciousness as points of reflection. This view is based on the intrinsic link between politics and religion, and colonial Christianity in South Africa – which all add up to the arrival of “modernisation” in South Africa and Western lifestyles as norms of society.

Chapter 2

The Black Church

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The notion of the Black Church provides both a historical and theoretical methodology to come to grips with a theological recognition of black humanity. Also it is valid in the quest for the meaning of being human for blacks ecclesiastically and theologically. The historical aspect of the notion of the Black Church provides historical origins of this church. Primarily in the advent of colonialism, imperialism, racism and slavery which brought with it a religion that enforced the ideas of white supremacy and black inferiority. Further projected both in theory and praxis in white spiritual strivings, West argues:

The Spiritual strivings of New World Africans began on the treacherous voyage of the transatlantic slave trade. These Danteque journeys were ignoble origins of Western, modernity and the criminal foundation of American democracy. They constituted the night side of the Age of Enlightenment, the reality left unlit by the torch of natural reason. African slavery sits at the center of the grand epoch of equality, liberty and fraternity, a center often concealed by modern myths of progress and liberation. And black doings and sufferings remain burdened by the unspeakable memories of Middle Passage—the chamber of horrors enacted on the slave ships like the *Henrietta Marie* (West: 1999: 51).

This was evident in the United States as is applicable in the South African context. The effect of; racism, slavery etc. resulted in the breaking of the social life of black humanity and is decisive method of dehumanization and miss-identity. Frazier argues (1964: 3-6) that the capturing of Africans from Africa during slavery resulted in the breaking of social cohesion of black people. He further adds that the Church of England and 18th century made a systematic attempt to Christianize Africans in the United States (1964: 6).

In the framework of the notion of a black church what is advocated for is black humanity. The reason for the term "black humanity" is to reach a common consensus on being black as human beings (contained in being black). In other words, there is a need to avoid simply referring to and preferring to use of the broad concept of humanity that expresses collectivism and ¹universalism of humanity. This

¹ Universalism is to be understood as those things that humanity share collectively. Things that we find resonance with. Though my contention is that to Blacks that were looked down

is not because black humanity does not express this universalism of humanity. But rather to grasp that this human universalism in a global society is fundamentally attached to Western meanings and interpretations of being human. Thus dwarfing any alternative self-autonomous meaning of being human, black humanity is recognition of the historical factor of dehumanisation of black people and is not a denial of this past that shapes the understanding of being human today for black people. It therefore highlights the need firstly to redeem black people from the sea of Western culture and human meaning to bring forth a self-definition of being human. Fanon (1963: 37) writing on the black intellect and decolonization process argued: "...the more the intellectual imbibes the atmosphere of the people, the more completely he abandons the habits of calculation, of unwonted silence, of mental reservations, and shakes off the spirit of concealment. And it is true that already at that level we can say that the community triumphs and that it spreads its own light and its own reason".

Secondly, when black people are authenticated in terms of their meaning of being human, they can then – as part of their definition of being human – express what they hold fundamentally as their meaning of being human in terms of collectivism and universalism. This is captured in the *Ubuntu* principle and the concept and philosophy of "*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*" (a person is a person because of other persons).

It is dangerous to hold on to modern human universalism because the connotation of that human universalism is more often than not, not human universalism. It is rather a silent and docile outlook on the part of black people, as it is cultural, social, political, economical and theological domination that is visible in globalism, which is Western. The reason why the Black Church must attach blackness to humanity is to remove the eclipsed subjective universalism of humanity in the church built on Western life and meaning. This is more so, since the history of the church and human universalism did not exist in colonial Christianity. That is, Westernisation, in its own right and shares in the creation of an individualistic and materialistic human

on culturally and otherwise already blacks are not to share universal values when they have not made their own authentic mark in the world

definition. That has been assimilated into a black definition of life and meaning of being human. Biko argued:

Because the white missionary described black people as thieves, lazy, sex-hungry etc. and because he equated all that was valuable with whiteness, our Churches through our ministers see all these vices I have mentioned above not as manifestations of the cruelty and injustice which we are subjected to by the white man but inevitable proof that after all the white man was right when he described us as savages. Thus if Christianity in its introduction was corrupted by the inclusion aspect which made it the ideal religion for the colonisation of people, nowadays in its interpretation it is the ideal religion for the maintenance of the subjugation of the same people (Biko: 1978:61).

In the notion of a Black Church God speaks and refers to black people as fully and truly human and not through the religious mouthpiece of white religions and Western society that came with colonialism, imperialism, slavery and apartheid. In the Black Church black people experience God, his influence, their culture and their physiology and ontological selves as fully human. Cone (1997:169) asserts: "The more black people believed that "God is a God, God don't never change", the more difficult it was for them to reconcile their religious faith with their bondage". Something they have been robbed of and is further creeping out from black people in the complexities posed by modern and postmodern mind-sets, created by dehumanisation, and explicitly noticeable in blacks encounter with materialism and individualism). Thus the Black Church is the place for black refuge, theological and otherwise. It is for this reason that the reality of the modern world necessitates reflection on the notion of the Black Church for a black meaning of being human.

2.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLACK CHURCH

The notion of the Black Church is an important point of interest in reflecting on the meaning of being human for black people. This is because being human for black people carries the significant theological reflection on the meaning of black people as human beings in a religious-racist context. Were their humanity has been brought into question, because Western religion was attached to politics in colonial Christianity and postulated that black people were sub-humans. James Cones rightly asserts the theology of the black church in relation to God and society, Cone argues:

Our theology must emerge consciously from an investigation of the socioreligious experience of black people, as that experience is reflected in black stories of God's dealings with black people in the struggle of freedom. Tertullian's question, "what...has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" is not our central question. His concern was to state the primacy of faith in relation to

reason on matters of theological discourse. We have another concern and thus rephrase that question in the light of our cultural history, asking: "What has Africa to do with Jerusalem, and what difference does Jesus make for African people oppressed in North America (Cone 1997:15).

The need for discussing the meaning of being human from a church context emanates from the connection the notion black church has with the black society, social make-up and tenets of black culture. Cone (1997:169) rightly observed: "...to understand the dynamic movement of black thought in relation to black suffering as black people attempted to make sense out of black life, it is necessary to keep in mind the social and political existence from which black thinking emerged. Black religious thought represents the theological response of an African people to their situation of servitude in North America".

In the South African post-apartheid context and United States context, the humanity of black people has been neglected and separated from their blackness. As such, a common humanity built on artificial ideals is projected in a seemingly subtle but forceful integration that promotes human universalism in a racialised, materialistic and individualistic world. Though there is enough evidence to deduce from this human universalism that a certain culture takes precedence over other cultures while disguised and disguised in artificial universal ideals (that of colonial Christianity mission, Europeanisation and the present globalism). Biko argued:

... while we progressively lose ourselves in a world of colourlessness and amorphous common humanity, whites are deriving pleasure and security in entrenching white racism and further exploit the minds and bodies of the unsuspecting black masses. Their agents are ever present amongst us telling us that it is immoral to withdraw into a cocoon, that dialogue is the answer to our problem and that it is unfortunate that there is white racism in some quarters but you must understand that things are changing (Biko: 1978:55).

The notion of Black Church is thus a historical encounter of authenticating black people as human beings, humanity contained and entailed in their blackness and is the deliberate act of the creation of black people as black by God. Thus the notion of the Black Church emanates from a dehumanising world, primarily based in white religious racism. Both in the context of Africa and the US and elsewhere where black people seek to practice the Gospel according to their own interpretation and translation of it. But the notion of a black church, particularly in the United States it is

more demonstrative on a political scale as a voice of blackness in a politically racialised global human context is the Black Church in the US. Stewart argues:

In speaking of the black church, we are not saying that it is some monolithic, homogenized institution devoid of diversity and variety. Some have argued that there is no black in the singular sense of the term because there are too many variations within black culture and black religious beliefs and that the black church is really a confluence of different cultures, hermeneutics, and interpretations of the black religious experience. While this may be true, the black church remains representative of a uniform system of values and beliefs that facilitate the empowerment, transformation, and liberation of African-American people on various levels. Be they black Episcopalians, black Baptists, or black Methodists, black churches have a common goal that is to meliorate the spiritual, economic, social, political, and cultural realities of black people in America (Stewart:1999:103104).

The notion of the Black Church therefore precisely means a Black Church, for black people. The Black Church must not be misunderstood as some sectarian racial theology that envisages black supremacy and advocates black exclusiveness. It should rather be understood within its context, which is that even within the assumed universality of the “church” black people were dehumanised politically, economically, socially and theologically. It is important to state that the notion of a Black Church did not emerge from white hatred and black reactionaries to white supremacy. Instead, it was a theological affirmation of being black and human in the world, society and the church—exposing the absurdity of white supremacy. Cone argues on the attitudes of the spirituals/blues that are part of the historical development of the black church, Cone (1997: 170) argues: “They are an expression of black people’s recognition of the absurdity of black life in a white world, which regards blackness as nonbeing”.

This was opposite to common views: but more fundamentally addressing God’s recognition and acceptance of being human and black, which has been rejected by whites and the Western world. With its institutions that had the church as an intrinsic part of it. Biko (1978:53) observed: “Black Consciousness therefore takes cognisance of the deliberateness of God’s plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life.” Pheko (1995:78) argues: “If the Bible teaches that the individual is unique of infinite worth before God, colonialism in many respects said the opposite, so that biblical

teachings were variance with colonialism, and it became only a matter of time before one ousted the other.”

Biko (1978:61) further argued: “It must also be noted that the Church in South Africa as everywhere else has been spoilt by bureaucracy.” It was this bureaucracy that led to the development of the notion of a Black Church in Africa and the United States. The existence of the notion of a Black Church was fuelled by the contradictions of the theological teaching of white Christendom in the preaching and practicing of the Gospel. The oppressed black people, when hearing the Gospel of love and a common bond of humanity, would have found it impossible to find coherence of this with white Christianity. It is at this point that when black people read the Bible for themselves, they realised the asymmetric contradictory dualism of the Western understanding of the Gospel and humanity: a Gospel of love without love and a gospel of human universalism without human unity or falsified subjective universalism. Pheko (1995:75) also argues: “... distinguish between colonial 'Christianity' and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When obeyed, the Gospel has never failed to bring blessings to an individual, family, community or nation”.

Renate (1974:38) asserts the following:

At least during the first phase of the anti-colonial struggle the new messianic religions which have been appearing in colonies of Africa, Latin America and Asia have a progressive character in so far as preaching the Africanization or adoption of Christian doctrines to local conditions. They fan the embers of a nascent nationalism and present the struggle against colonialism as a struggle against the deformations of colonial Christianity (Renate:1974:38).

For the purpose of this study, the scholar will look partly at the development of the Black Church in both the United States and South Africa. Together with, its relation to asserting black humanity's human identity, as entailed in being black.

2.3 THE BLACK CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The notion of a Black Church in the United States can be traced from the early to the Negro Spirituals. The Africans slaves in the United States found in Christianity hope and comfort. Contrary to the aims of missionaries, slave masters and colonialist in their perverted form of Christianity namely; colonial Christianity-- built on the view of dehumanizing blacks. Black people noticed the contradiction and paradoxes of

Christianity being practiced and introduced to them by whites, Frazier (1964: 12) argues: “The Negro slave found in Christianity a theology and a new orientation towards the world at large and in doing so he adapted the Christian religion to his psychological and social needs. One of the best sources of information on the manner in which the Negro adapted Christianity to his peculiar psychological and social needs is to be found in that great body of sacred folk music known as the ‘Negro Spirituals’”.

These songs were “Christian” songs packed with hidden message of liberation which were sung. It is impossible to speak of the notion Black Church without its strong ingredient of Negro spirituals. Because the Negro Spirituals mark the genesis of the notion Black Church and Black humanity. Dixon 1976: 7 records the popularised and famous old Christian Song of the Spirituals, namely; *Kum Ba yah, My Lord* and its meaning. Dixon asserts concerning *Kum Ba Yah, My Lord*:

This quiet, beautiful song is said to have made many a long journey. Born among deported Africans in America, perhaps as a prayer request, “Come by here, my Lord, come by here!” it was carried back to Africa by freed slaves returning to the continent from whence they had come. There it was discovered later by American missionaries who brought it back to the United States. Sometimes it is ascribed to Liberia sometimes Angola. Sometimes it is called a Negro Spiritual sometimes an American spiritual. It should be called a “world spiritual”, for it has made many journeys across the ocean and is sung all over the world, wherever people ask for God’s presence because “someone’s crying” or “someone’s praying (Dixon: 1976:7).

Further Dixon explains one of the other songs of the Spirituals named: “*Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Chile*”, Dixon (1976: 35) asserts: “This song was created in a country uniquely made up of people who had left their “fatherland”—and many had left their “mother tongue” as well. All had gone “a long, long ways from home”, though for various reasons. The only natives, the Indians, had been driven from their homeland by new arrivals, so the feeling of uprootedness was shared by everybody”. Moore (2007:658) further argues that; “[t]he American Negro spirituals are the product of Christian piety and the slave experience of persons of African descent”. Part of the African express is understood on how the Spirituals did things, Frazier argues:

On the sea Islands of the coast of South Carolina and Georgia where the slaves were most isolated from white, some of the Spirituals reveal some continuity with their African background. This continuity is to be found especially in what has been called the Afro-American shouts songs. These

shout songs are so named because they were sung and are still sung while the Negro worshippers are engaged in what might be called a holy dance. This may be regarded as an example of the most primitive and elemental expression of religion among American Negroes. Moreover, it, provides an excellent illustration of Marett's contention that primitive man 'does not preach his religion, but dances it instead (Frazier 1964:13).

One does not wish to point out the obvious distinction between of the notion of the Black Church in Africa, South Africa in particular, and the United States. But simply show the coherence between the two, for a similar aspiration, namely; humanity and self –determinism for blacks. Both were born out of similar conditions of dehumanisation and the purposely lack of acknowledgement of black people as human beings and God's children. The highlight of African values embedded in the Spiritual and the black church reflects that black people could conceive of a world and religion beyond the bounds of white reasoning and institutions. All which propagated the idea of black inferiority, disassociating with all that is African and projecting African inferiority. West (1999: 59) argues: "During the colonial provincial stage of American culture, Africans were more than slaves; they were also denuded proto-Americans in search of identity, systematically stripped of their African heritage and effectively and intentionally excluded from American culture and its roots European modernity. Their search for identity focused principally on indigenous African practices, rituals, religions and worldviews they had somehow retained". . Thomas Wentworth Higginson recorded some of the songs in an article entitled "Negro Spirituals" in the *Atlantic Monthly* of June 1867. But Tillotson (2010:1016) argues:

African people have a long history of engagement with various forms of spirituality. This relation to the unknown is not merely an American phenomenon for Black people; it is something that occurred prior to the forced relocation of Africans to the Americas. The enslavement and subsequent segregation and discrimination, however, altered how Africans in America would worship and engage in the practice of religion. Enslavement did not allow Africans in America to worship in an African way, and, ultimately, Africans were weaned on an alien religion that held in its beliefs the idea that Africans were inferior to Europeans (Tillotson: 2010:1016).

Thus the notion of a Black Church entered history as a point of authenticating black people as human and yearning for the freedom to be recognized as human beings. Further the notion of the black Church cannot be expressed without social

responsibility, based on the fact that black's social life was broken by domination, Frazier (1964: 6) argues:

It is our position that it was not what remained of African culture or African religious experience but the Christian religion that provided the new basis for social cohesion. It follows then that in order to understand, the religion of the slaves, one must study the influence of Christianity in creating solidarity among a people who lacked social cohesion and a structured social life. From the beginning of the importation of slaves into the colonies, Negroes received Christian baptism. The initial opposition to the christening of Negroes gradually disappeared when laws made it clear that slaves did not become free through the acceptance of the Christian faith and baptism (Frazier 1964: 6).

Further he argues, (1964: 10): "The New orientation to the world was provided by Christianity as communicated to the slaves by the white master". As Cornel West has stated that modernism still very much contains the idea of white supremacy. Thus making it relative today in a consumerist age, that has come to define black people in terms of the history of dehumanisation. That then entails the value systems and culture that make up a people historically. Evans speak of Blacks being viewed as inferior, invisible, profane and savage (1992; 100) and further argues: "It is unfortunate that, historically, the European-American Christian church has accepted and employed these negative images of people of African—descent in its own theology. Even in an enlightened society on the verge of a new millennium, the question of the humanity of black people and other is shrouded by racist associations". As such, the notion of a Black Church in the United States came about as that ambience for Africans to assert their African-ness and blackness as fully human. Throwing off the shackles of bondage enforce through dehumanisation Stewart argues:

While it is not possible to delineate all the social and institutional forms of the African-American paradigm of freedom here, this work does not affirm the African-American church as one of the most important institutions in the history of African-American people. The black church has been the paramount harbinger of freedom; the curator of culture, equality, justice, and reconciliation among the black masses; and has, among black institutions, maintained the greatest autonomy. To speak of institutional freedom appears to some to be an oxymoron. The truth is blacks have found a measure of freedom in the black church as an institution. The church has always wielded institutional power by shaping the values, culture, expectations and aspirations of African-Americans Stewart (1999:99)

Moore asserts:

When blacks were first brought as slaves to the United States they were regarded by Anglo-Americans as devoid of religion, or at least of "true" religion. Whether they should be introduced to Christianity was initially a controversial point. For many of the slavemasters, most of whom counted themselves as Christians, had scruples against holding fellow Christians in bondage, on the generally accepted principle that no Christian should make a slave of another. These masters feared lest they should be required by Christian duty if not by law to release so many of their slaves as professed the Christian religion. Hence they tended to regard zealous evangelists and missionaries as rabble-rousers bent on interfering with their property rights. Thus, in the beginning baptism was withheld from slaves and attempts to convert them were discouraged (Moore: 2007:659).

However, the conversion of Blacks was inevitable. One of the most considerable advancements in the birth of the Black Church was the influence of the Revival of the 19th century of the black Episcopalians, black Baptists and black Methodists. Frazier argues from the backdrop of the Church of England wanting to Christianize Black people in the 18th century, he argues:

The proselyting activities on the part of the Methodist and Baptists, as well as the less extensive missionary work of the Presbyterians, were a phrase of the Great Awakening which began in England and spread to the West and South. When the Methodists and Baptists began their revivals in the South, large numbers of Negroes were immediately attracted to this type of religious worship. However, it was not until after the American Revolution that large masses of the Negro population became converts and joined the Methodist and Baptist churches (Frazier 1964: 7-8).

This new era obviously continued from where the Negro Spirituals had left off and the dynamics had slightly changed.--compared to that of the spiritual, i.e. better opportunities begun to surface, in relation to social standing. This gave a stimulus to the redemption of the slaves and the presence of the Spirit of revival rejuvenated in some sense the dignity and humanity of the black people who were devoid of such due to dehumanisation. Moore continues:

Little wonder that the contagion of their spirit spread to the blacks, for here was a religion well suited, or so it seemed, to the plight of the slave. Here was a religion of vivid feeling, of soul stirring, of inner joy, of direct communion with the divine, of close fellowship with Jesus and his followers, a religion of pilgrimage, of being on the way, not yet having arrived, a religion of light and fire and ecstasy and spontaneity, a religion of unrestrained emotive power and motor effect, a religion for the uninhibited, or those who dared to be so. Here was a religion which could give to the slave – no, not give to him, but evoke in him – an inner fire when all else was bleak and cold (Moore 2007: 661).

As such, the Black Church emerges from the political, cultural and theological struggles of black people. The notion of the Black Church is entry into political, social etc. situation. This entry was availed through Blacks starting to read scriptures for themselves and to read and write was prohibited and feared by the slave masters. Frazier argues:

There were some misgivings and in some instances strong opposition to acquainting the Negro with the Bible. This fear of teaching the slaves the Bible was tied up with the laws against teaching slaves to read and write. But it was also feared that the slave would find the in Bible implications of human equality which would make the Negro to make efforts to free himself. Opposition to teaching the Negro the Bible declined as masters became convinced that sufficient justification for slaver could be found in the New Testament. In fact some masters became convinced that some of the best slaves—that is those admirable to confront by their white masters—were those who read the Bible (Frazier 1964: 10).

But the opposed is true instead as black had found hope in Christianity, that hope through the knowledge of the Bible solidified. As such, the knowledge of the Bible gave rise to black preacher, who was to serve invaluable to the struggle of black people. Frazier (1964: 11) argues: “Through the medium of the Negro preacher the stories in the Bible were dramatized for the Negro and many characters and incidents were interpreted in terms of the Negro’s experience”. Further he (1964: 12) argues: “In providing a theology, and thereby a new orientation towards the world and man, the Bible provided the Negro with the rich imagery which has characterized the sermons of the Negro preachers and the sacred folk-songs of the Negro”. It is at this point that the notion of the Black Church and the Black preacher begun to exist politically, socially, economically etc.

For one assumes that it is one thing to oppress a people politically, socially, economically and otherwise, but it is worse to oppress them spiritually because then you leave them with no sustenance and a place they can draw strength from – making them bastards of God's plan for humanity. This was presumably worse: the situation for black people based on their deep spirituality – that fundamentally defines them as human beings – since religion played a significant role in the lifestyle and society of black people prior to colonialism. Haar argues:

In Africa, “religion” refers to a widespread belief in an invisible world, inhabited by spiritual forces or entities that are deemed to have effective powers over the material world. This definition of religion emerged from the specific context of Africa, where the perceived spirit world has a considerable

and real presence. In that sense, it is quite different from definitions derived from modern Western experiences, which tend to consider religion in terms of a search for ultimate meaning in life (Haar:2009:1).

This deep spirituality was carried to the United States and demonstrated in the Negro Spirituals and the Black preachers and leaders. Hopkins and Antonia assert:

... the reinterpretation and synthesis of transplanted and newly acquired religious systems, mainly evangelical Protestantism, produced a distinctive African-American religious consciousness. Out of this mystical, survival-oriented consciousness, part African and part European, the shout songs and spirituals, expressing the loneliness and sorrow of a stolen people, emerged on plantations (Hopkins & Antonia:2012:21)..

Billingsley tallies this African Spirituality with Du Bois' point and observation of the nature of the Black Church, pointing out Du Bois' three-part typology of the black church service, Billingsley asserts from Du Bois point:

Three things characterized this religion of the slave", he concluded, "the Preacher, the Music and the Frenzy". Then he sets forth insightful descriptions of all three characteristics in which the concepts, if not the exact words, survive until this day. The preacher is the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a boss, an intriguer an idealist (Billingsley: 1999:7).

One thing which is of utmost importance is that with the black preacher the 'black church would begin to exist autonomously. West 1999: 63) argues: "Independent control over their churches promoted the proliferation of African styles and manner within the black Christian tradition and liturgy. It also produced community-minded political leaders, polished orators and activist journalists and scholars. In fact, the unique variant of American life that we call Afro-American culture germinated in the bosom of this Afro-Christianity, in the Afro-Christian church congregations". This separation from the white churches threatened whites and their power. Due to the fact that prior to this situation whites had control over the black church. Frazier argues:

The recognition which the white accorded to the Negro 'congregants' was accorded them as segments of the white organizations. White control of these segments was never completely. Therefore, there was always some tension because the slaves preferred their own preachers and wanted to conduct their religious services according to their own made of worshipping. This tension was always sharpened by the fact that there were free Negroes in the churches which were established in connection with the white church organizations. The tension was never resolved in the Negro church never

emerged as an independent institution except under the Negroes who were free before the Civil War (Frazier: 1964:19).

In line with the notion of a black church, the black preacher, the black audience with the frenzy who Billingsley reiterates' in Du Bois analysis as the caricature of the black church together with West argument. The Black preacher in being orator, politician, and idealist etc. fundamentally lays the foundation of the black church in a political, social, economical etc. struggle for black humanity. Resulting in the notion of a black church as a movement socially and otherwise while working towards transforming a racist and dehumanizing society. Frazier (1964: 33) argues concerning the notion of a black church and the leaders in society, he argues: "The leaders in creating a new community life were men who with their families worked land and began to buy land or worked as skilled artisans. It is important to observe that these pioneers in the creation of a communal life generally built a church as well as homes". This was crucially concerning the fact that slavery had destroyed black social life and created a lack of social cohesion as pointed out by Frazier (1964: 6).

This social cohesion is fundamental to blacks, then and now, particularly in an individualist era. It suffices to argue that the whole destruction of social life of blacks is actually the backdrop of individualism among blacks. Since a group of belonging was lost, as such a black church and preacher are fundamental for communal living. Frazier (1964: 33) further argues: "Many of these pioneer leaders were preachers who gathered their communities about them and became the leader of the Negro communities. This fact tends to reveal the close relationship between the newly structured life of the Negro and his church organizations. The churches became and have remained unit the past twenty years or so, the most important agency of social control among Negroes".

This approach to the Black Church and the principle role of the preacher represent and place the prophetic role of the Black Church in the world with regard to injustice and oppression. So much so that it can overlap fundamentally in addressing the opulence, materialism and individualism of black people in the current age. In a nutshell, all historical developments have a backdrop in history, which is that of dehumanisation. The Black Church and the black preacher become, to a certain extent, a symbiosis in that the black church authenticate black people as fully human

while the black preacher is the chief advocate of this realisation of the full and true humanity of black people which lies fundamentally in a racialised world because of them being black. West (1999: 113) argues: “The black church tradition –along with the rich musical tradition it’s spawned-generates a sense of movement, motion and momentum that keeps despair at bay. As with any collective project or performance that puts a premium on change, transformation, conversion and future possibility, the temptation of despair is not eliminated, but attenuated. In this sense, the black church tradition has made ritual art and communal bonds out of black invisibility and namelessness”.

The notion of a Black Church is thus in a sense a womb and historical blueprint from which Black Theology would be conceived and born inseparable from the black experience. One should argue that the notion of a Black Church in the United States is rightly tied to the slave experience as a source of its origin. Stewart (1999:100) asserts: “The Black church has taught perseverance; incited the establishment of a black Christian ethic; fuelled the fight for freedom, and provided people with a text, context, pretext, and subject for the confirmation of human dignity among the people of God.”

It is highly possible to assume, based on the Black Spirituals and the 19th century Revival which saw the explicit African projection of black people --an African projection of African values and tenets expressed in culture-- that to a certain extent the Black Church in the United States shows the depth and expression of African culture and heritage that are inseparable from the people – and the meaning of being black and African as human beings. An African bond that supersedes context but manages to resurface and flourish in that adaptable and complementary situation which necessitates no disengaging from African value and meaning to life. West rightly states (1999: 101-102): “Black people are first and foremost an African people, in that the cultural baggage they brought with them to the New World was grounded in their earlier responses to African conditions. Yet the rich African traditions—including the kinetic orality, passionate physicality, improvisational intellectuality and combative spirituality—would undergo creative transformation when brought into contact with European languages and rituals in the context of the New World”

But one can argue that the notion of a Black Church in the United States was simply an expression of African culture and being, which has been suppressed for years because of dehumanisation and cultural domination. Asante argues regarding the value of Africa culture and makes note of its importance in reference to Malcolm X:

Malcolm X knew, as others had known, that racism against any people led to the same horrible effect: The stripping of self-esteem and the creation of a population of consumers of a hostile culture. All anti-African attitudes which exist in the racist culture become, if there is no corrective, the attitudes of the Africans. In such a situation the culture derived from Africans is considered secondary to the culture of the oppressors (Asante1993:30).

Stewart asserts that as part of the strength of the Black Church and culture leading up to black voices for a black humanity in a dehumanising world, the call to black leaders are in some sense inseparable from the Black Church. He maintains:

Even in examining the more militant black nationalist movements, we discover the presence and influence of the African-American church. Malcolm X's father was a Baptist minister and other more radical leaders have been impacted by the African-American church. Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, Henry McNeil Turner, Marcus Garvey, A Philip Randolph, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Huey P. Newton, and even Louis Farrakhan have all been influenced by the black church (Stewart 1999:103).

Lincoln, in his introduction to the book *Mighty like a river: The Black Church and social reform* by Andrew Billingsley, equates the notion of Black Church with what he terms "Black Sacred Cosmos" and argues:

The Black Sacred Cosmos is addressed to the critical urgencies pervasive to the black experience that seem to lie beyond effective human resolution. Even more problematic is the fact that the cultural "set" that produced or confirmed a "mainline American religion" is not only of a different order, but a different origin. It remains an unremitting backdrop against which the travail and triumph of the black church must accomplish its mission (Lincoln, in Billingsley 1999: xx).

He further asserts:

... black religion takes its origins not from established religion in America, but from the black experience in America, which was and is a very singular illustration of the complexities of the human predicament, and of the spiritual resources available to the black church's mission to overcome. From its inception, the black church set out to do for its peculiar constituency of black slaves and freed men what no one else was willing to do for them, or to have them do for themselves (Lincoln, in Billingsley 1999:xx).

It is important to note that the displaced African slave was in that context of helplessness due to those that had brought black people to a foreign land. It is in that foreign land that the absurdity of displacement was transferred automatically as a

medium of oppression to deformity of black culture and sense of meaning of life. As such, the “black experience” necessitated the condition for the existence of a Black Church in America suitable in a racialised world. Hopkins and Antonia (2012:19) argue: “From the earliest years of their captivity, transplanted Africans, denied access to other forms of self-affirmation and collective power, have used religion and its various institutions as the principal expression of their people hood and their will both to exist and to improve their condition”.

This was achieved through the black church and it's so to date. Billingsley (1999: 12) writing on the role of a black church and black leadership in the Black American society argues:“...crisis in the African American community precipitated by Rosa Parks and managed brilliantly by the likes of Jo Ann Robinson and A. D. Nixon, the people turned to the churches for leadership and support”. He further asks a question of why the black church is an agent of social reform, Billingsley (1999: 12) argues: “The answer, we suggest, is that it had happened before, is happening now in some places and in some forms, and might well happen in the future on an even grander scale”. All this then reflects how the notion of a black church is fundamental in the quest for human meaning in society for black people.

2.4 THE BLACK CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

In having discussed the notion of a black church in the United States, the notion of a black church is also relevant and suitable to be discussed in the Southern African context. Considering that colonialism and imperialism are both relevant to the black encounter with the white world. But what makes the notion of a black church in South Africa is the role of Christianity in the lives of black people—as seen in the Black American context. Allen Boesak argues:

From the founding of modern South Africa the Christian faith, and as a matter of course the Christian church, were destined to play a significant role in the life of the nation, for good or ill. Christianity came to South Africa very much part and parcel of the colonialist project and its role was practically a mirror image of the role of the established churches of Europe. The church served as the spiritual counterpart of the state, a state that very much saw itself as “Christian” for which the theology of “throne and alter” was natural. As the church of the colonialists, it was the spiritual home of those who saw themselves as bringing light to this dark continent, and the conquest of the land and its peoples was as much a Christian endeavour as the quest of the African soul (Boesak:2004:9).

The notion of the Black Church is not only a result of a black church establishment in the United States. But it also relative and has roots in the African context, South Africa, in this study. But before discussing this, it is important to note that the Church has existed in Africa before colonialism and as such might have not been identified as the Black Church-- as it is in a racialised context e.g. apartheid South Africa. Wilmore validates this fact, he captures this as follows:

In 1973 the Abuna, or Patriarch, of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Theophilus, visited Boston where he was the honoured guest of the African Studies Program of Boston University. The African American clergy of the city were especially invited to attend one of the meetings at which he spoke, and about fifty of them came on campus to receive him warmly. In the course of his remark the Abuna reminded the black ministers that the church he presided over in Addis Ababa was founded in the fourth century AD and was one of the oldest in Christendom. Since its establishment was second to the Coptic Church of Egypt, it antedated all the Christian communions of Europe and America except the Church of Rome. For that reason, he said, not to mention others that had to do with the needs of black people on both sides of the Atlantic, African Americans ought to recognize Ethiopian Orthodoxy as the parent of all baptized Christians of African descent, "so come home to your Mother Church – she stands ready to welcomes you!" (Wilmore: 1998:1).

The above is important due to the point that Ethiopianism is important for reflection in discussing the notion of a black church in South Africa; as such this is a prelude to this discussion of a black church. It is important to mention it in order to distinguish the notion a black church's origin, in the modern context in relation to white supremacy and distortions. The point is that the notion of a Black Church is rooted in the African soil and precedes racial religiosity-- as that which was descriptive of colonial Christianity. In a sense that colonial Christianity is an antecedent of Christianity in Africa, it is at this point that distinction must be made between the two, namely; pre-colonialism and colonial era. Mugambi (1989:8) argues: "The modern Christian missionary enterprise, originating in modern 'Christian' Europe, was directed at 'pagan Africa' and at those areas where European influence had not yet penetrated." It is clear from the realisation that colonial Christianity was more based on the spreading of Europeanisation than the faith and antecedes the Christian influence in Africa.

As such, this Westernisation permeates and is prevalent in the modern era of a consumerist and materialistic society; it is precisely an achievement of this perverted

spreading of colonial Christianity and gives insight to the human meaning of black people that is attached to materialism and western life. Pheko (1982:2) rightly argues: "The subject of the Early Church in Africa puts the history of Africa in perspective and indicates that the Christian faith came to Africa long before the rise of Western colonialism and the invasion of Africa by Arabs from Arabia." This then makes discussing the notion of a black church in South Africa (and Africa as a whole) to be contextual. In a sense when discussing the notion of a black church it must be understood within a racist context.

These points are critical in the analysis of the coherence of the notion of a Black Church in Africa, South Africa and the in the United States, --and the significant high value placed on Western culture and norms as the meaning of being human for black people within the colonialist, imperialist etc. framework.

It is possible then, from that premise, to draw a sense of what the Black Church in the contemporary era represents for Africans/black people, which is to reject these values for the black meaning of being human. This applies in both the United States and South Africa (and Africa as a whole) due to fact that the notion of a Black Church came into being for similar reasons and from similar conditions, which are oppression and dehumanisation. The Black Church in the United States and in Africa could not have existed outside of politics because colonialism came with its own form of Christianity, which is colonial Christianity. It was fundamentally rooted in the ideals of the oppressors and Europe while trying to draw assumed validity for its truth from the Bible. Boesak (2004: 9) argues: "The colonial project and the concomitant conquests of the peoples of the "new worlds" were in turn firmly embedded in the rapid growth of white racism in European political, socio-economic and religious life. Its moral and intellectual justification was as it was indispensable for the establishment of white power over vast portion of the world".

Further to connect the context of Black people in the United States and Africa, Boesak (2004: 10) argues: "As far as African and the imperial project were concerned, academic thinking, as much as theology and popular religious teaching, became essential tool in the moral justification of slavery, the subjection of the "inferior races", the theft of their lands as well as their souls, and ultimately their

extinction". The notion of a Black Church is of utmost importance in South Africa in redressing societal ills for black people primarily in that the Western world that has made itself master of pre-colonial and postcolonial Africans, and has more strength from globalism, perpetuates these Western norms.

Isichei (1995:25) argues: "Nowhere perhaps in Africa has there been more a fusion of politics and religion than in the theory practice of the Nationalist Party and the Dutch Reformed Church. The power kernel, founded in 1918 ..." It was under colonial rule that the notion of a Black Church in South Africa was founded, built upon cultural and biblical truths. Phoko (1982:77) asserts: "The Gospel accelerated the political awakening of Africans as a whole." Livingstone (2000:9) observes: "From the 1890s, African Christians in some countries began to reject missionary control and some aspects of missionary teaching and to form independent Churches. Some of these resulted from secession from the mission Church, remaining broadly similar to the body that had been left". These points are important to mention in order to show the operation of a white church, politics and theology in influencing a need of a black church. Boesak rightly argues:

The church identified wholly with the colonial project and could not conceive of a vision divorced from the vision of the imperial power, whether that vision was expressed by Jan van Riebeeck or Cecil John Rhodes, Willem Adriaan van der Stel or Lord Charles Somerset. The criminal appropriation of the land, the genocide of the Khoi and the San, the destruction of the African peoples as a whole as well as their cultures, the enslavement of people, indigenous and imported—all this was not only permissible. It was unavoidable and necessary for the colonial project and therefore the will of God (Boesak: 2004:10).

It is also important to distinguish the concept of the church in South Africa from the settler church, mission church and also from mainline churches and African independent churches. J & S Gruchy argue:

It has been a failure of European colonialist historians to write about South African history as though it began with the arrival of Portuguese explorers in the sixteenth century and the Dutch settlers in the next. Some recent historiography has attempted to correct this false assumption. But it is true that the history of the church begins with the coming of the Dutch (1652), the French Huguenots (1668), and the early German settlers a little later. With few exceptions these settlers were Protestants, and the Dutch and the French were Calvinists. Portuguese Catholics had predated the Dutch in landing at the Cape—a small Catholic chapel was built at Mossel Bay 1501, but by 1652 this very temporary presence had long gone (Gruchy:2004:1).

Further it important to understand that both the mission churches and settler churches were directed for the same purpose towards; black humanity in South Africa. Though both churches would go into conflict over dominance of both churches towards their missions for black humanity, J & S Gruchy (2004: 2) argue:

...conflict between 'settler' church and 'mission' church became a dominant issue for church and society at the Cape during the nineteenth century. When Britain finally gained occupation of the Cape in 1806, and the NGK and the small Lutheran congregations were no longer the only churches in the colony, Protestant missionaries of other persuasions arrived by the score from Europe and America 'to Christianize the heathen'. But they soon discovered that the white settlers were largely unconvinced about the need for and desirability of such missionary enthusiasm and endeavour. Again and again, missionaries had to answer objections to Christian missions, objections that were by no means strictly theological (Gruchy: 2004:2).

One will not engulf much on missionary and settler churches. But rather look at the reaction they caused towards black people and the whole development of the notion of a black church. Further the notion of a black church appears also in the black mainline churches that were European in origin but black in membership though under white control. J & S Gruchy 2004: 40) argues: "There were three ecclesiastical alternatives for black Christians in South Africa by the turn of the twentieth century. They could be members of mission churches, whose membership was wholly black, but which were under the control of white missionaries and their mission boards in Europe, North America, or, in the case of the NGK, South Africa, and which would only much later achieve their autonomy". Further Gruchy argues:

A second possibility was that they could be members of multiracial denominations, those churches largely of British origin where the line between settler and mission church had not been clearly drawn. But here, likewise, the black members were dominated by white leadership, European customs, discrimination, and a great deal of deal of paternalism. In some respects, this was worse than belonging to the wholly black mission churches. There was a third option. They could leave the mission and the multiracial churches and initiate their own (Gruchy: 2004:40).

It is at this point that the notion of a black church clearly develops as blacks break away from the paternalism and subservience of black congregants and minister under white control. *The Concise dictionary of the Christian World Mission* (Neil, Anderson & Goodwin 1971:19) contains the following: "Since the beginning of widespread Christian mission activity in Africa around the year 1800, ecclesiastical schisms and related movement have grown in nuclei each decade since the first in 1819 ..." This is the background to the notion of a Black Church in the colonial era as

it came to be a church based upon the racism of white churches that were theologically, political, socially and culturally responsible for black people's dehumanisation, exploitation and oppression. And the near nihilism of their own authentic lifestyles, together with the bastardisation of culture, tradition and heritage. In a nutshell, the structural denial of their being human and their blackness by white supremacist churches and ideologies. These churches became known as the African Independent Church Movements. As such, one can deduce that they serve as a vehicle for the aspirations of black people as humans and the intrinsic link of their humanity with their culture – which is perverted by Western ways of life seen in materialism and individualism. The following appears in the *Concise dictionary of the Christian World Mission*:

Most bodies have separated from historical (mission) churches, Catholic and Protestant, as a result of a range of immediate causes which have striking parallels from one side of the continent to the other. It is generally agreed that the major underlying cause common to all movements is the clash of three cultures (traditional, secular European and missionary) and the resulting tension and disruption in the life of African tribes. An important fact evident in the majority of cases has been the availability of vernacular translations of the Scriptures, which have served as an independent standard of reference against which missions and missionaries could be judged. (Neil et al:1971:9).

The availability of vernacular Scriptures played an important role in Black people/Africans finding their own African voice and the interpretation of the Gospel in their own language—as was the case of the Vulgate in Germany under Martin Luther. Erskine points out the value of the vernacular Bible in that particular context:

Scholars and missionaries alike testify to the fact that Africans find the Old Testament easy to understand. The atmosphere of the Old Testament is like the atmosphere they breathe. Their agricultural style, their talk about offspring, their longing for offspring, and the concrete ways in which they talk about God and people, “these and many other features make this literature an appropriate vehicle of spiritual message (Erskine:1981:37).

This approach is clearly visible and tangible in South Africa, with many examples but a clearer one is that of Shembe and Amanazareth given in a book entitled *Religious traditions of the world* (edited by Earhart in 1993). This example shows how the Old Testament was related to black life in oppressive conditions that presented the Bible out of Africa and Africans alienated from the people and lives of Biblical characters, obviously creating an impression of African life and meaning as insignificant and their meaning of life also.

To be brief, Shembe was a religious leader of the Zulu tribe who infused traditional parts of black culture into Christianity and was anti-white in his approach. But his position opened the way for the Ethiopian churches to come in, as Lawson (in Earhart 1993:57) asserts:

The Ethiopian church created a new form of expression of the traditional role. There is still accommodation, but of an ambivalent kind. Their church "is as good as the church of whites", because it has the same forms of organization and the same type of leadership. But their church is their own; it is a black church, a Zulu church with its own access to power. One might have to live under the numbing shadow of the whites, but one could still live according to the resources of one's own traditions (Lawson: 1993:57).

The role of Ethiopianism is fundamental to the notion of a Black Church in South Africa. Siquibo Dwane 2004; 75 argues: "On 1 November 1892, in Pretoria, the Rev Mangena Mokone and a group of African Colleagues withdrew their membership of the Methodist Church. Subsequently they founded the Ethiopian Church, a name possibly suggested to them by the words of Psalm 68 verse 31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch her hands to God". As noted by Erskine (1981: 37) the Old Testament had a profound influence on black people, particularly the ministers who began to notice that Africa was in the Scriptures and Ethiopia was a starting point to assert their African-ness and ecclesiastical autonomy. Further Dwane argues:

Prior to his departure, Mokone wrote a document in which he outlined his grievances against the Methodist Church and which he then sent to his Superiors as his final statement before he made his exit. This rupture on All Saints Day 1892 was the inauguration of the Ethiopian movement, which was destined to leave an indelible mark on the mentality of the black community. Mokone had taken the lid off a boiling pot of racial prejudice, raging since the advent of colonialism, denigrating along its way all things African, and ruthlessly subjugating the indigenous population to the position of subservience (Dwane:2004:75).

The rise of Ethiopianism was a rejection of paternalism and racism. Through Ethiopianism blacks could assert their own values and gain their own freedom. Dwane argues:

In the stories of the leaders of this movement, i.e. Nehemiah Tile, Mangena Mokone and James Mata Dwane, there is the common theme of humiliation at the hands of white missionaries; suffering which alienated them from the "mission" churches, and drove them into a wilderness where they found a home for themselves which they could call their own, and in which they were able to bind one another's wounds, defend their values, and assert the right to think for themselves and maintain their human dignity (Dwane:2004:76).

Further Ethiopianism enabled Africans to discover God from their own perspective and from their culture, Dwane (2004: 80) argues: “They discovered from it that God the creator and sustainer of life, is concerned with the totality of human existence. Consequently, they were able to make the necessary connection between the spiritual and the material, a wholeness which confirm what they had learnt from African cosmology”. Ethiopianism was fundamental in the establishment of African Independent Churches, J & S Gruchy argues:

The first major study of the African independent churches, later referred to as African indigenous or initiated, was done by a Lutheran missionary in Zululand, Bengt Sundkler. Sundkler distinguished between three types of independent churches. There were those that retained the outward forms, structures, and much of the theology of their parent body, and usually continued to use the name of that church as part of their new title. These churches Sundkler labelled ‘Ethiopian’, a name that clearly stressed the fact that Christianity came to Africa long before any missionary. The main reason for their breakaway was racial, the desire to control their own affairs, and sometimes the desire for prestige as well as power (J&S Gruchy: 2004:44).

J & S Gruchy continue to point out that other independent churches could be categorised as Zionist, which combined African tradition with Christianity. With a caricature that contained healing, prophecy, dreams, rites and ecstatic utterances. While the last group could be categorised as the Messianic group, that usually followed a native leader, who would serve and represent as the head of the church (Gruchy 2004: 44). J & S Gruchy argues:

One of the very reasons why the independent churches arose in the first place was because the white-dominated churches were so captive to European culture. The church cannot escape from the culture in which it is set. It has to relate to it is to exist and witness all. So the African initiated churches were increasingly recognized as legitimate expressions, by and large, of Christian faith in Africa, and as legitimate protests against many of the spiritually deadening influences in the most traditional churches (Gruchy: 2004:45).

Within the political and social context the African churches were not political but had tenets of black resistance to white domination. Further they also serve to validate the politic approach to asserting being black and human legitimacy in a white constructed society, Dwane (2004: 81) argues: “Though not a political movement, Ethiopianism nevertheless inspired people to think politically and to see the injustices of economic deprivation and of disparity in the ownership of land”. In politics the African Independent Churches held ideals that would be re-affirmed by black political

organizations in the struggle for freedom and equality. Dwane (2004: 81) asserts: "In the black consciousness movement, the ideals of Ethiopianism were given a prominence and articulate expression. Ethiopianism therefore is the rekindling of that spirit of resistance which African people fought the wars against colonial aggression. It is the response of people lying in the valley of dry bones to the quickening breath of the Spirit of God". J & S Gruchy (2004: 46) validates this, they argue: "These independent churches symbolize the black revolt against European spiritual and cultural domination. However, while some soon appeared to become largely apolitical, their rise was coterminous with and paralleled by the awakening of black nationalism. And since Christians led the way, this development becomes part of our story".

The African Independent Churches worked to develop a version of Christianity in Africa that helps to restore African culture and spirituality. An African culture and spirituality, that draws heavily from the Bible in relation to African life. But more so Ethiopianism as a fuel to African Independent Churches reflects the need on the part of African to be self-reliant in all spheres; politics, economics etc. Dwane (2004: 79) affirms this: "...Ethiopianism set out from the beginning to be a Pan-African Movement. Another aim of the movement was to educate African people and teach them self-reliance.

Neil et al (1971:9) validate this attempt of self-reliance: "In most cases bodies have attempted to Christianize African traditional customs ..." They further assert:

From many points of view, the African Independent Church Movement is an unprecedented phenomenon, unique in the entire history of Christian missions; the immense number of schisms and adherents involved (one-fifth of the entire Christian community in Africa) its remarkably uniform spread across one-third of Africa's tribes in the last hundred years and the paradoxical co-existence for the first time in history of four-elements-strong animistic traditional societies, mass movements into the historical churches, formidable missionary assaults on traditional religion and society, and the widespread provision of vernacular Scriptures which were interpreted as vindicating much of the traditional way of life. The AICM can therefore be placed on a level with other great schismatic controversies in history (Neil et al 1971:10).

The above indicates a great achievement for black people and their need to comprehend the Gospel in their own language. The Gospel and the Bible made the Black Church in South Africa come to life for a dehumanised people due to their

pigmentation. The South African context provides a twisted view of the Bible and the Church which is also applicable in the United States. Firstly, those who were responsible for the oppression, dehumanisation and dispossession in South Africa made use of the Bible. Secondly, by using the Bible and the European-centric church, the black culture, heritage, language, values and lifestyle of black people were nearly destroyed simultaneously with their humanity under the false pretence of God's will. Isichei argues:

Modern scholars have often condemned expatriated missionaries for their Eurocentricity, their condemnation of indigenous culture. In a sense, though, this was inevitable. The newly-arrived missionary could not be an instant expert of African languages and cultures and the incarnation of Christianity in different African cultures involved a great multiplicity of choices that ultimately, could be made only by Africans themselves (Isichei: 1995:82).

Finally, and more fundamentally in the South African context, the Bible is seen from the point of reflection: problem and solution which works in addressing issues. The Bible as a problem, Mosala (1989: 18) notes the following: "The insistence on the Bible as the Word of God must be seen for what it is: an ideological manoeuvre whereby ruling class interest evident in the Bible are converted into a faith that transcends social, political, racial, sexual, and economic divisions. In this way the Bible becomes an ahistorical, inter-classist document". While Mofokeng argues:

...when many Black Christians read their history of struggle carefully, they come upon many Black heroes and heroines who were inspired and sustained by some passages and stories of the Bible in their struggle, when they read and interpreted them in the light of their Black experience, history and culture. They could consequently resist dehumanization and the destruction of their faith in God the liberator. It is this noble Black Christian history that helps to bring out the other side of the Bible, namely, the nature of the Bible as a book of hope for the downtrodden (Mofokeng: 1987:38).

In Mofokeng's view, the Bible is both problem and solution, but the latter seems to suggest that it is only the Bible that can re-correct the errors of the past (including dehumanisation). However, when black people took the position of the latter in their liberation and begun to find legitimate salvation and authenticity of their humanity as black people, white Christendom saw that as a threat. Isichei (1995:24) says: "After the nationalist victory in the 1948 South African general election, Dickerkboode (in Isichei 1995:24) declared: 'We as Church give thanks with humility that the members of our Government are all bearers of Protestant belief and members of the Christian Church'." She further asserts concerning the fear of white Christendom and the white

political church of the National Party: "The day is coming when the non-white races and power will stand mobilized against the white for their supposed rights. So also will the time come that the mobilized powers of unbelief under the leadership of the Prince of Darkness will rise up in bloody strife against the real Christendom. These events summon us as a Church today. MOBILIZE – MOBILIZE – MOBILIZE TO THE UTMOST" (Isichei 1995:24).

This line of reasoning re-asserts the history and context from which the notion of a Black Church emanates from. It further points out that in the white churches black people could not attain freedom, equality and (more than anything) recognition as full human beings. As such, this is the eternal memorial value of the Black Church in opposition to the white church and its politics. It is in the Black Church that the theological authenticity of blackness and humanity is reiterated in the context of both South Africa and the United States.

2.5 BLACK MAINLINE CHURCHES AND AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

Briefly, there are key issues that need to be noted in discussing the notion of a Black Church in the United States, Africa and (more relative for this study contextually) South Africa. In the context of the United States, the cultural heritage of the notion of a Black Church enabled people of African descent to have African values and a way of life in an alien society. It is also in the United States that the Africa culture is more of a conscious state rather than a practice of African traditions. Stewart (1999:104) argues: "The principal focus of African-American spirituality has been the conservation of black soul force as an instrument of creativity, autonomy, and vitality. This soul force has not only shaped black identity and consciousness but, through the praxis of culture and spirituality, has created its own ethos of survival and freedom." For black people abroad, a part of their humanity is to reflect constantly on being African and human away from their culture, though the context of their habitation to a certain degree hinders that. Stewarts (1999:100) explains: "The black church is the principal institution of the African-American community where the praxis of spirituality and culture developed into transcendent forms of freedom that summarily translated into the social praxis of freedom. The black church has enabled black people to develop internal and external models of freedom."

In the South African context the notion of a black church through the African Independent Churches, that helped also to re-surface being African, and Christian within the confines of church and culture. Due to the fact that the black mainline churches-which were subordinates to mother churches- were not so much into African culture in practice but as a point of reflection. The black mainline churches though would advocate being African looked down on African Independent churches based on the subordination and this is the very reason why the African Independent Churches were born and a separation occurred. J & S Gruchy argues:

There were various reasons for this separatist movement. First it was a rejection of white control both in the mission and the multiracial churches, especially with regards to question concerning church discipline. Second, it was a rejection in many instances, and especially in the case of the 'Zionists', of European culture and if the suppression of African culture in the life of the church. African culture was customarily rejected by missionaries, including men of the stature of Robert Moffat, as heathen or at least inferior. Third, particularly in the multiracial churches, the cause was plainly racial discrimination and paternalism. Fourth, the desire for power and prestige... (J&S 2004:44).

A further point, which that reflects how the black mainline churches were in some sense still in their view of being black custodians of white Christianity. Is reflected in how they wanted to dictate to African Independent Church-as they were by whites-how they should practice Christianity. To a large degree the encroachments placed on black mainline churches was now being transmitted to the African Independent Churches. But the African churches did not want that burden to resurface in their new found faith, J & S Gruchy (2004: 44) argues on what they wanted; "They wanted the liberation of their people from all unjust bondages, including control by black Americans in the African Methodist Episcopalian Church".

Further, the notion of a black in the South Africa also through the African Independent churches as opposed to black mainline churches helped the keeping of culture in the migration into cities. This migration was caused by industrialisation and urbanization. While the black mainline churches did not fulfil the keeping of African culture but rather were assimilations of white version of Christianity, J & S Gruchy argues:

The independent churches served another significant purpose. The rapid growth of black urbanization, stimulated by migratory labour and post-war industrialisation, had radically altered the socio-cultural existence of the black community since early in the twentieth century. As a result, much of the former tribal cohesion was fragmented and many personal and social

problems arose without traditional resources available to handle them. The independent churches enabled many urban blacks to cope with this alien world of the township (J&S Gruchy: 2004:45).

This view is fundamental in also understanding the stressing of holding on to African cultures in the United States concerning black churches. While in South Africa there was a need for a synergy between being African and being in the Christian church. Maluleke makes a valid point of how to balance this aspect of being African, black and Christian under the concept of 'Black Christianity', Maluleke (2004: 184) argues: "The very formulations 'Black Christianity' or 'African Christianity' denote the coming together of two realities, Africinity on the one hand and Christianity on the other" The above has commonality in Africa in cultural heritage rather than tangible practices – this is reflected in the role of the Ethiopian churches. In South Africa, the black churches have maintained traditional practices although they are coherent to the universal beliefs of the Christian faith:

In most cases bodies have attempted to Christianize African traditional customs, and this has inevitable lead to charge of syncretism being levelled against them. An ecumenical assessment of their theological character would have to recognize that, although in many respects they fall short of recognized Christian orthodoxy, yet their almost universal claim to confess the historical Jesus as Lord and Saviour establishes them as genuine Christian churches (Neil et al 1971:9).

But the key element is that both the notion of a Black Church in the United States context and the South African context are fundamentally based on the deliverance and relevance of the Gospel to black people's humanity and sense of pride. Livingstone (2000:9) argues: "The mainstream Churches mostly moved from White missionaries to indigenous Black leadership about the time of the political independence of countries concerned. Since then the growth of all the Churches has been prodigious." Stewart (1999:102) also points out: "The black church has always instilled in African-Americans the imperatives for establishing cultural fluency and intellectual vitality, and, contrary to the apologist of black history, the black church in every stage of its existence, has always been an institution of freedom for black Americans." So in both contexts the notion of a Black Church plays a role in the dehumanisation of blacks politically, culturally, socially and theologically.

However there is a need for black mainline churches and African Independent Churches to recognize that both mainline churches and African Independent Churches can contribute to having an authentic African Christianity. That is suitable

for black humanity drawing strength from the current context. Maluleke rightly argues:

Almost all innovative theological projects in Africa regard as one of their key subjects something called 'African Christianity' Christianity in Africa; Black Christianity; 'the Church in Africa' or some other linguistic approximation of the same. The basic quest in much of the theological output of Black and African Theology has been to discover, articulate and give shape to this reality of African or Black Christianity. Basic to the quest is the suggestion that peculiarly and manifestly African and Black ways of being Christian are desirable, possible and already in the process of being accomplished, if not in existence already. This premise—itsself seldom probed—is basic to almost all hues of Black and African theologies (Maluleke: 2004:184).

Thus the notion of a Black Church is valid for both the United States and South Africa, but they reflect two realities concerning the notion of a Black Church in that in the United States African culture is symbolic and useful for raising the African consciousness of black people and reminding them where they came from. Thus in the United States the notion of a Black Church is more philosophic and not so practical in embracing the practice of African culture; whereas in the Black Churches in South Africa, it is more of culture and traditional practice with not so much philosophic methodology in dealing with racism—this is demonstrative in the African Independent Churches. Even the black mainline churches need not to look down on the African Independent Churches but learn from them. J & S Gruchy asserts concerning the reaction of mother churches and black mainline churches towards African Independent Churches:

Whatever their faults, however, these churches stand as a legitimate protest against white racism and ecclesiastical imperialism, and in their own right as remarkable attempts to bring together Christian faith and the traditions of Africa. It was to take the mission and multiracial churches to fully understand the theological and social significance of the movement, though the authorities the authorities were aware of its political potential very early. It is our contention that whatever the reasons given for the birth and growth of this African Independent movement, and whatever its problems and failures, it is properly understood as part of the story of the struggle of the Christian church on South Africa (J&S Gruchy: 2004:45).

The notion of a Black Church needs to develop a unification of both the black churches in the United States; black mainline churches even South Africa. And the African Independent Churches. To give a proper meaning of a theology of a Black Church and will result in true humanity for black people philosophically, socially, culturally, politically and theologically. Nonetheless, the notion of a Black Church does exist and simply needs the unity of the two realities of symbolic and practical to

come truly and fully to the fore front as a theological authenticity for black humanity and a black church. The form of Christianity that will come out from this will truly be a black experience and expression of black people faith in God and themselves—and will be true to its context existentially. Maluleke rightly affirms this, he argues:

Admittedly African Christianity is not textbook Christianity. It is not the same as conventional Protestant or Catholic Christianity. Nor is it a rehash of traditional religion. I am suggesting that in African Christianity we have a new religion new in relation to pre-colonial African religion and new in relation to colonial Christianity. What we need to do is to begin looking at this new religion on its own terms and not constantly just it against either conventional Christian doctrine or conventional African religion. African Christianity is a dynamic young religion which have not yet begun to appreciate. But first things first. We must first acknowledge it as a largely coherent that borrows from negotiates with and interprets various religious traditions. Before we rush to evaluate and judge this religion, we must acknowledge its reality (Maluleke 2004:190).

2.6 WHAT IS THE BLACK CHURCH?

In the discussion above concerning the notion of the Black Church and its historical development, there are elements that stand out as the key components that solely identify the Black Church and the essence of the notion the Black Church. As such the is enough evidence concerning the historical developments of the notion of a Black Church to ask what is then a ²Black church historically and contemporarily?

² It is fundamental to form and point out a synergy between the understanding of a black church and the church. Particularly since 'the church' as understood usually conotates whites churches that have assumed through dominance universality. It is important then to firstly to see whether are the differences between what is understood by 'church' and a black church. Secondly it would be see the difference between theology in relation to the true universal church and black theology in relation to the black church—as a point of departure from religious dominance. Lastly, it is fundamental to prove that the notion of a black is not a point of departure to the universal ecclesiastical teaching and doctrine. But rather, it is a point of departure from the subordination of Christianity to the western world. That unashamedly fails to acknowledge the devastation, suffering, dislocation, dehumanization and dislocation coupled with disillusionment it has caused to blacks. J. Deotis Roberts writing of black ecclesiology comments: "Church is a people, not a building. *Ecclesia* in the New Testament means "an assembly of people". *Ecclesia* is used by the Septuagint to translate two Hebrew words *'edhah* and *qahal*. The Revised Standard Version translates *'edhah* as congregation" and *qahal* as assembly" (Roberts: 2003: 75). He further adds that *Ecclesia* was used as a reference of the first community of Christian in Jerusalem. As a descriptive of those who had received Christ and having been baptized and received the Holy Spirit (Roberts: 2003: 76). It is important to state that the church is a place of hope, where Christ promises are kept and adhered to. Migliore asserts: "In the New Testament the church (*ecclesia*, "assembly" or "congregation") refers to the new community of believers gathered to praise and serve God in the power of the Holy Spirit in response to the gospel of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word "church" can designate either local assemblies of Christians or the universal Christian community" (Migliore: 2004: 251). The definition of what the church is is, fundamental in then understanding what the black

The notion of a Black Church does exist to fight racism, dehumanisation and bastardisation of culture. Through Black Theology, the notion of a black church also locates a common resonance and realisation for black people as part of the human creation of God. Evans (1992: 117) argues: "The common foundation and goal of human existence are exemplified in Christ's example and ministry. For Black Theology this means that its definition of what it means to be human must be conceived in relation to both God and one's neighbour". This is contrary to the dehumanisation and demeaning for which colonial and white churches have been responsible for, through the medium of racism and the denial of their being human based upon their physiological variant as black people in relation to whiteness. Rhodes explains: "For tax purposes, slaves were counted as property – like domestic animals. Eventually, however, a question arose as to how to count slaves in the nation's population. The Congress solved the problem by passing a bill that authorized the U.S. Census Bureau to count each slave as three-fifths of a person. This Congressional compromise resulted in what one Negro writer of the 1890s called "the Inferior Race Theory", the placing of the Negro somewhere between the barnyard animals and human beings" (Rhodes:1991:1).

The notion of a Black Church is the arena where the quest for a true humanity with a more humane face is located and to be affirmed in a dehumanised world.

church is. As it is established in the thesis, having understood the historical development of the black church. The notion black church does not go against the grain of what theological the church is. Billingsely and West (p-30) captured the charismatic aspect of the black preacher and somehow the pneumatological influence on the church, speech of the preacher and the frenzy in the church. But nonetheless ecclesia cannot exist alone without the Spirit; as such ecclesiology is inseparable from pneumatology. While this is true in the universal sense of the belief in the church. It is also true in relation to the notion of the black church and black theology. Roberts rightly asserts: "The church is the assembly of God in Christ. It is a spirit-filled community. It is not a self-appointed, self-initiated community. It originates in the redemptive act of God in Christ and lives through its unity with Christ in his death and resurrection and through the comfort, guidance, and power of the Holy Spirit" (Roberts: 2003: 76). He adds that the church carries with it 'chosenness', which something that blacks have resonance with. Since black theology places God with the oppressed and their history (Roberts: 2003: 77). Karen E. Mosby-Avery, writing on Black theology and the Black Church asserts: "The starting point for black theology is the experiences and stories that are the basis of black faith. Likewise, the starting point for liberation of the poor is the experiences and stories of the poor. The African American church and white church cannot set the agenda for liberation of the poor without dialogue with the poor" (Mosby-Avery: 2004: 36). As such the mission of the black church and the church as a whole are the same. The only key difference is the historical suffering of blacks by colonialism, slavery and imperialism through colonial Christianity. Black Ecclesiology and pneumatology addresses these issues through the black church and black theology.

Furthermore, the Black Church is based on material conditions that are linked to Black Theology (actually it gave birth to Black Theology), necessitating Black Theology in a racialised society to constantly re-affirm black people's humanity, which is inseparable and intrinsically linked to their blackness. SS Maimela argued:

Black theology, like all other theologies of liberation, is a phenomenon that should be understood against the social context of pain, humiliation, degradation, and oppression to which people of colour (especially of African descent) were subjected in North America and South Africa. That is, Black theology is a particular theological response to a unique situation of racial domination and oppression—both of which are by-products of the slave trade and colonialism. By racial domination we refer to that conscious or unconscious belief in the inherent superiority of all people of European ancestry, a superiority which entitles Whites to a position of power, dominance and privilege and which justifies their subordination and exploitation of people of colour, especially those of African ancestry, who are regarded as inferior and doomed to servitude (Maimela: 2005:29).

To a certain degree, Black Theology is to be a theme for the Black Church – a prophetic voice to redeem and warn black humanity of destruction seen then and even in the present individualistic and materialistic black society (a society of black people living out the values of a foreign society). ³Allan Boesak (2004: 20) in the

³ In the South African context and dealing with the notion of a black church, black ecclesiology and black theology Allan Boesak is fundamental. In his book entitled *Running with Horses, Reflections of an accidental politician*. All Boesak (p 21-62) writes on how from his early days as a theologian coming from what is said to be a 'coloured' community was confronted by the realities of life. Something that Dutch Reformed theology in South Africa, through white churches and institutions, could not have not prepared him for. As a matter of fact Boesak goes on to argue how the church and white regimes maintained the lie of apartheid. However Boesak explains his 'conversion' with black consciousness and being exposed to Black Theologians. It is from that premise that Boesak in dealing with harsh realities of a racist regimes and churches appealed to black ecclesiology. His black ecclesiological account finds Jesus historically, through the biblical narratives and part and parcel with his role to black humanity. Boesak then introduces the concept of a Black Messiah setting a scene for new understanding of Christ, and pivotal for black ecclesiology. His insistence on the black Messiah provides a conceptual and historical framework of what is known about Jesus, deducible from his ministry. While at the same time it sharpens the contrast between European theology, churches and white Christians. In that Jesus Christ stand with material condition of the oppressed a theme carried out in black theology and the black church. Furthermore Boesak's conversion came with a new visitation of Calvin, which was different from the Calvin, used to justify apartheid (Boesak: 2009: 32-41). All these factors contribute in the growth of black theology and black ecclesiology in South Africa together with the African theologies which sought their own voice concerning God and the church. Boesak argued: "...the theology of the black church must take its own voice if it is to survive, if it is to become truly 'church'. We must come to understand that this faith is not new, politicised faith, but rather the age-old gospel. It is the message of the Torah and the prophets. It is a message that unmask the sinfulness of humanity, in personal life as well as in the existing social, political and economic structures. It is a message that judges, but vit also speaks of hope, of conversion, of redemption. It is a message for the whole of life. And

South African context argued: "Black theology, as liberation theology, rewrote the agenda for Christian theology in South Africa". Through it blacks begun to see things anew, Boesak further adds that black theology exposed the prophetic role of white theology. Boesak asserts:

We showed that they had heard nothing of John Calvin's holy tirades against the wretchedness of the poor and the greed and complacency of the rich. Nor did they hear Calvin say that "the whole human race is united by the sacred bond of fellowship", which would have helped them tremendously in their perverse claim on Reformed theology for a racist interpretation of Scripture and the tradition they shared with us. Their theology did not include Calvin's insight that a just and well-regulated government will be distinguished for maintaining the right of the poor and the afflicted (Boesak: 2004:21).

The notion of a Black Church is an affirmation that draws strength from the recognition of a common consensus of humanity from God and among blacks. This is important in that the notion of 'Black Church' was not only for black church members but also for all black people in the world, since all were victims of dehumanisation. Day argues:

In the last few decades a growing body of literature suggests the Black Church can and/or should be primarily interpreted as prophetic within black communal life and the wider society. This refers to a tradition that focuses on radically denouncing and critiquing structural oppression and social injustices such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism and other forms of inequality (Day:2012:18).

Stewart (1999:107) affirms this by asserting that "[t]he black church has created the refuge where black culture and spirituality could freely flourish. It was here within its hallowed halls that African Americans could create and express their soul force spiritually and culturally".

For black people, as for human beings as a whole, it is humanity with a more humane face (a humane face being the inherent nature and essence of human identity) that is even more relevant and suitable in a volatile and dehumanised world. It is also resonant of the black experience as indistinguishable and inextinguishable in the modern era under globalism, capitalism, individualism, materialism, and cultural and societal miss-identity – that is sought in the "others". Particularly in worldviews demonstrative of opulence and is evasive of the real issues. In the Black

it is our task to bring this message to our people in such a way that it makes sense in the de facto situation" (Boesak: 2009: 56).

Theology, Black Church, Black Experience and black reality of black life is relative to God and because black people relate to God as black people. It results in how they react and relate to themselves and the world. SS Maimela (2005:33) asserts: "Indeed, in a racial society where the Christian faith was co-opted and used to justify the enslavement and colonial domination of one racial group by another, it was only natural that the oppressed Blacks, reflecting on their current situation in the light of the gospel, would reject current Christianity and affirm their humanity, thus turning the gospel into an instrument for resisting the extreme demands of racial oppression".

Further by doing this Maimela (2004: 33) observed: "In doing this, oppressed Blacks gave birth to Black theology, which seeks to interpret these oppressive conditions in the light of the biblical God whose justice requires that the poor, oppressed, and downtrodden be set free. Black theology, as a response to White theology, which sanctifies racist social institutions, is thus a passionate call to freedom; it invites authentic human existence and liberation from racial people of colour".

the role of Jesus in the notion of Black Church is regarded as Jesus of the oppressed (noted in Cone's book *God of the oppressed* [1997] and the Black Consciousness fighting God in Biko's work on Black Theology and a quest for a true humanity, *I write what I like* [1978]). Mofokeng makes note Jesus' message to the spiritual and physical realities of the poor and to black people, black theology and black churches and Christians. He argues:

As we all know, the weakest, neglected, poor and marginalized people in Palestine at the time of Jesus felt attracted to Jesus' practices and message about his God and human life. What Jesus taught and did benefitted them materially and spiritually and gave them a reason for hoping for a different future and believing in their right to decent human existence. It is no accident that after Jesus' departure, this first Christian community structured and organized their communal and material in the manner in which Acts 4 relates. This was a roughly practised structure of material survival and the basis for hope for the weak and poor in that threatened community at that historical period and those imperial economic circumstances (Mofokeng 1987:38)

The above resonates with the manner in which the notion of Black Church, through Black Theology and Black Consciousness, would work in the world – beginning (obviously) first among black people and ultimately influencing the world at large. It is important to note that the Black Church emanates from a historical situation where a

church existed. However, the type of church that existed was driven by Western ideals, stereotypes and attitudes – all that demeaned black people and dehumanised them. Rhodes commenting on Black Theology, black power and the black experience argues: “Most blacks accepted the slave brand of Christianity at face value. Moreover, white missionaries persuaded the blacks that life on earth was insignificant because “obedient servants of God could expect a reward in heaven after death”. The white interpretation of Christianity effectively divested the slaves of any concern they might have had about their freedom in the present” (Rhodes: 1991:2).

The notion of a Black Church is not utopian and a romanticized institution but has its flaws and weaknesses. Particularly in the present context of; post-colonialism and colonialism. Today the radicalism, which has always been an inherent position of the notion of a Black Church, is slowly shifting. This tenet of radicalism, which usually defined and permeated the notion of a Black Church, has been muted. But, more appropriately, its muting is due to a need for political correctness and financial appropriateness in an age of consumerism and materialism.

Colonial Christianity and its interpretation required the black masses to render themselves to a foreign God, culture and religion while dismissing their authentic humanity, culture and heritage. What is meant by "a foreign God" is the same monotheistic God who was only to be worshipped in a Western way based on the false premise of colonial Christianity as authentic Christianity by white churches. Thus a Western culture and norms consisting of God as Western meant that black people were the stepchildren of God or aliens to the Western Christian God. Worship in such a manner does not dispute the nature of God legitimately by simply making God foreign and this is worse in that already the world makes black people aliens and discards of Western constructs of society. Cone argues:

For blacks in white churches, the white denial of the theological value of black history and culture in the doing of theology meant a denial of black humanity and an establishment of white Christianity as normative for all Christians. Therefore, the fight was not just for the acquisition of economic and political rights, but also for the establishment of the dignity of black humanity as defined in its cultural past and in its current fight for material freedom (Cone: 1984:47).

The notion of a Black Church with the influence of Africa's deep spirituality is inseparable with blackness and being African for reflecting on humanity as black people and a direct influence of God in their lives. This influence is of urgency even in the present context to serve the role that the notion of a Black Church served historically and socially. It is at this point that the influence of God is a necessity for the aspirations of the oppressed looking for a way to progress, thus the existentialist distinctiveness of the Black Church. Biko's argues of the relevance of the black churches, Black Theology and Black Consciousness in the relation of God and dehumanised and marginalised humanity. Biko argued:

...Black Theology at length, let it suffice to say that it seeks to relate God and Christ once more to the black man and his daily problems. It wants to describe Christ as a fighting God, not a passive God who allows a lie to rest unchallenged. It grapples with existential problems and does not claim to be a theology of absolutes. It seeks to bring back God to the black man and to the truth and reality of his situation (Biko: 1978:104).

This would give him his own authentic human definition and place in society. He also argued: "Black Theology therefore is a situational interpretation of Christianity. It seeks to relate the present-day black man's God within the given context of the black man's suffering and his attempts to get out of it" (Biko 1978:64). The only way to get out of it is by means of true and authentic salvation, that of ontological and physiological realities – two key areas that are of utmost importance and irreplaceable as essential elements of the Black Church as part of the continual affirmation of the humanity of black people in this materialist age. They also chiefly define it. Lastly, the Black Church provides genuine salvation for the dehumanised black person. Even this is a necessity in the present consumerist age that has ontology and physiology as important aspects of black humanity's salvation.

2.7 THE SOTERIOLOGY OF BLACK HUMANITY IN THE BLACK CHURCH

The contemporary era is a problematic one, with modernity and postmodernism both leaving black people in a pool of miss-identity. This miss-identity is obviously because of history and carries with it the dehumanisation of black people, the destruction of being black physiologically and ontologically from the historical encounter with oppression, and then recently the confusion of authentic identity for blacks in a materialist age. Cornel West argues:

In our time—at the end of the twentieth century—the crisis of race in American is still raging. The problem of black invisibility and nameless, however, remains marginal to the dominant accounts of our past and present and is relatively absent from our pictures of the future. In this age of globalization, with its impressive scientific and technological innovations in information, communication and applied biology, a focus on the lingering effects of racism seems outdated and antiquated. The global cultural bazaar of entertainment and enjoyment, the global shopping mall of advertising and marketing, the global workplace of blue-collar and white-collar employment and the global financial network of computerized transactions and mega-corporate mergers to render any talk about race irrelevant (West:1999:115).

West's analysis is of utmost importance, as the miss-identity issue affects black people precisely due to the globalization. It is also the very reason of race as irrelevant that further proves as a hindrance on the part of black people accepting the racist society that they live in and denies then self-identity as black. In the South African context the issue of being black is covered by the euphemisms that seek to deny the history of racism and dehumanization this is achieved through the concept of a "rainbow nation". This concept of a "rainbow nation" is related to the whole concept of universalism causing race to be an irrelevant subject. It is at this point that Tshaka's analysis of Afrophobia is sufficient to corroborate West view of race being irrelevant. It is important to point out that the issue of Afrophobia is fundamentally linked to the irrelevance of race in the modern era and further to materialism—since in most cases Afrophobia is driven by need of jobs, housing etc. And further point to miss-identity of black people that make them to love and accept other but reject themselves and deeply rooted in dehumanization of black people. Tshaka rightly argues:

At the heart of Afrophobia, and indeed the treatment meted out toward blacks, is the black other is a question of power. Power is often thought of as having control over economic or political matters. But power involves the control of values, perception and outlooks as well. These dimensions of power are not understood well in South Africa. For many, such talk about racism is considered irrelevant and backward. The reason for this is two-fold. First, it is

tempting to wish the past away because of its ugliness. Many people, especially white people, claim that they were not aware of the devastation for which apartheid alone is responsible. Their profession of ignorance are plausible, given the evident separation between black and white in this country (Tsaka: 2012:168).

Tshaka (2012:168) further adds: "The second is the fact that racism has not been defined adequately, here in South Africa. For many, the most convenient definition of racism is racial prejudice. It makes things simpler if one can classify all human beings in categories under those who are bad and those who are good, with racial prejudice used as a convenient determining yardstick. As long as one does not verbalize his her racial prejudices, that someone is considered a good person". Tshaka is right in his analysis and reflects that society in the modern era is muted and that this muteness is seen as progress making race irrelevant. Though beneath that muteness, society is as it was in the past and it is precisely this that makes black progress for identity stagnant. Another point to be added is that this universalism and non-racialism makes black people in some sense to be in denial; that white racism made it necessary for them to acknowledge their blackness. Tshaka further asserts:

South Africa since 1994 has become a rather polite society in which true feelings of the other are not verbalized for fear of being politically incorrect. There is both good and bad in such an approach. The good is that we have been forced to be sensitive and civil towards others, but the bad is that because of this political correctness, we are increasingly becoming a dishonest society, dishonest about how we really feel about the other. As a result, there is much popular talk in South Africa that we are a country that is striving towards a non-racial society. Embedded in this talk is the assumption that racial prejudice can be quickly eradicated. There is also much talk of reverse racism in South Africa, as if the effect whites might experience is equivalent to what black's experience. Such talk is possible because we have confined to talk about racism to racial prejudice and have not extended it to systems and structures that discriminate and continue to discriminate against people based on race (Tshaka:2012:168).

Another point which is to be added is that blacks continually deify whites and their institutions and are deeply reliant on them. To a certain degree black people feel indebted to whites regardless of what they have experienced at their hands. The dehumanization, colonialism etc. they have experienced under white rule as unjust as it was has been eclipsed by what they came with it, namely; 'modernism'. As such there is fear to conceive a world without whites with black culture flourishing, which, if it would exist, would take black people to 'backwardness'. Fanon (1963: 168) rightly exposes this: "When we consider efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has

been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave; they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality". It is also possible to deduce from Tshaka and Fanon the root directedness of Afrophobia that seeks to drive out blacks instead of whites. Who within the experience of blacks under white supremacy is responsible for their perpetual poverty, prejudice and many for of social ill that are evident and experienced by blacks daily.

Black people have in the past provided a platform for asserting their authentic humanity within the confines of the notion of a Black Church. But modernism has perverted it and even the church. Biko observed that the church is plagued with bureaucracy (1978:61) and black people need a new kind of salvation. The salvation of black people within the Black Churches today must be a distinct one from its application of the redemption found in the Gospel. That usually is metaphysical to a degree and the missionaries had exploited the metaphysical position of the Christian faith upon blacks.

The notion of a Black Church is to entail aspects of both metaphysical and physical realities. The metaphysical being the concept of sin, which is an immaterial construct while this metaphysical stance is expressed in the material realm (for example, thoughts of evil manifested in the social ills, injustice, dehumanisation, etc. in the world). The physical stance of black humanity is that which has been affirmed by the notion of a Black Church – liberation politically and otherwise. However, the salvation of black humanity is also an ontological and physiological task. Rhodes captures this in his critique on Cone's black theology. He argues:

Cone notes aspects of blackness: the physiological and ontological. In the first sense, "black" indicates a physiological trait. It refers to "a particular black-skinned people in America". In the second sense, "black" and "white" relate not to skin pigmentation but to "one's attitude and action toward the liberation of the oppressed black people from white racism. Blackness is thus "an ontological symbol for all people who participate in the liberation of man from oppression (Rhodes 1991:4).

This is typically carried on within the Black Consciousness Movement's framework in both a physical symbolic (physiological) and ontological meaning. Consider that the being (ontology) of black humanity applies in both senses of those who are at the margins of the white world and Western society and those who have been affected by dehumanisation. Biko argued:

We have in our policy manifesto defined blacks as those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations. This definition illustrates to us a number of things: Being black is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a reflection of mental attitude. Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being (Biko:1978:52).

This applies to many ontologically but in the current era, it is more relative to black Africans who have had their humanity and humaneness challenged, questioned and nearly obliterated based on colour. Evans points out:

To define a person on the basis of his or her physical distinctions tends toward biological determinism, undergirded by individualistic assumptions, and leads to the conclusion that whatever a person is or is to become is completely programmed in her or his genetic makeup. To define a person on the basis of his or her historical and cultural association tends towards a spiritual dynamism, undergirded by communal assumptions and leads to the conclusion that whatever a person is or is to become, i.e., that person's destiny is vital and open (Evans: 1992:104).

Black people, under the hegemony of white distort and falsified myths were simply hated based on the difference of colour but extends to culture and lifestyle and also ontologically – that outward hatred has had an everlasting internal, ontological impact that fractured black humanity's existence and sense of being as authentic beings. This is projected in the artificiality of the individualistic and materialist era that involves psychological, ontological and physiological elements for black people in relation to being viewed as subhuman by Western culture-- Posel noted this when speaking on post-apartheid South Africa and the life of opulence which is related to whiteness and elitism. This result in self-hate and rejection of one's being with the artificial and evasive democracy seeking to deny the impacts of dehumanisation and to a certain extent denying black existence in a Western-constructed world. Boesak argues the following on the topic of self-love and self-hatred:

Self-denial is not the same as self-hatred and self-destruction, and it is these which can arise within circumstances so devastating that even basic human self-love is absent. People's personhood can be so effectively undermined, even destroyed, that in time they learn to despise themselves and regard themselves as incapable of leading normal, human lives. This abnormal situation, provided it lasts long enough, become for them the accepted, normal way of life (Boesak: 1977:28).

This is a precise diagnosis of even the modern-day behavioural pattern of black people who came from a heritage of dehumanisation (psychological, physically and ontologically) and are exhibiting this suffering through abnormalities in an unconscious and conscious quest of self-authenticity (this they do under; consumerism, materialism and individualism) due to their historical deprivation and desperation that still permeate today.

Another point worth discussing regarding the notion of a Black Church in relation to salvation of black humanity.-- in both the context of Africa/South Africa and the context of the United States is the global attack on black humanity. There seems to be a bilateral formula for the destruction of black people, which is the outward hatred from whites that is transmitted to black people and has made black people hate themselves from the outside (and vice versa). To a point were the being of black people (ontology) was not even a point of reflection for white people with regard to the inherent humanity of all human beings. This point is further reiterated by Rhodes (1991:1) when he says: "...one Negro writer of the 1980s called 'the Inferior Race Theory' the placing of the Negro somewhere between the barnyard animals and human beings". Being classified as half-beings surely causes physiological and ontological human displacement. Since it obviously limits any prospect of being human while not qualifying one to be both beast and human. Only, the injustice and dehumanisation creates a life of barbarism, savagery and seem to convey living like an animal. Though people know that they are not animals but also not considered human beings what is left is the wave of misidentify that is evident today.

Today it is only proper to argue that the charming ideals of integrity, equality and human universalism are strictly utopian, and contain and maintain Western arrogance as master over all of black life. The above clearly articulates well the resonant residues of colonialism, imperialism, slavery and apartheid, primarily because the destruction of black humanity happened both on the continent and away

from the continent. In both contexts, the physiology and ontology of black people were denied as part of their humanity. This makes the work of the destruction of black humanity one event and not two; the only difference is that of geographical contexts. One can argue then that the salvation of black humanity can only be achieved through the notion of a Black Church, Black Theology and Black Consciousness. It should focus on addressing the escapist devices of the consumerist age. Jones (1990:37) argues: "Black awareness should not be contingent upon white recognition of the humanity of blacks, for that would place black self-identity outside black consciousness".

Parallel to Jones view, Fanon address to black intellectuals and a call for a national culture and consciousness is of utmost important for the salvation of black humanity. Fanon argues that one of the hindrances to black people salvation rests upon Western culture as a norm. This is observed also by Boesak on self-hatred and self-denial that makes one culture a norm and the other an anomaly. Fanon argues for the freedom of black intellectuals and natives thus relative to the question at hand, Fanon argues:

In order to ensure his salvation and to escape from the supremacy of the white man's culture the natives feels the need to turn backwards towards his unknown roots and to lose himself at himself at whatever cost in his own barbarous people. Because he feels he is becoming estranged, that is to say because he feels that he is the living haunt of contradictions which run the risk of becoming insurmountable, the native tears himself away from the swap that may suck him down and accepts everything, decides to take all for granted and confirms everything even though he may everything even though he may lose body and soul. The native finds that he is expected to answer for everything, and to all comers. He not only turns himself into defender of his people's past; he is willing to be counted as one of them, and henceforward he is even capable of laughing at his past cowardice (Fanon: 1963:175).

It is a difficult task to disseminate from western culture as a norm of society but for true black salvation this separation is vital. Its vitality is important in forming an authentic mental framework for black people to properly re-conceptualise themselves as people out of white awareness. This new outlook is fundamental for a people to be a people and not duplicates of others. Fanon (1963: 175) points out the difficulty of this separation and the implication thereof of not separation: "This tearing away, painful and difficult though it may be, is, however, necessary. If it is not accomplished there will be serious psycho-affective injuries and the result will be individuals without anchor, without a horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless—a race

of angels". Biko corroborates Fanon's view and further spells out for the salvation of black humanity the areas that are fundamental in re-correcting the situation that black people find themselves in due to western norms. Biko argues:

...implications of Black Consciousness are to with correcting false images of ourselves in terms of Culture, Education, Religion, Economics. The importance of this also must not be understated. There is always an interplay between the history of a people i.e. the past, and their faith in themselves and hopes for their future. We are aware of the terrible role played by our education and religion in creating amongst us a false understanding of ourselves. We must therefore work out schemes not only to correct this, but further to be our own authorities rather than wait to be interpreted by others (Biko: 1978:57).

This was precisely the strength of black theology, as it promoted self-determinism. Hopkins and Antonia (2012) records Martin Luther King jr. as one of the early contemporary luminaries of Black Theology in that as a black man from a black church, he tackled (as Malcolm X did) issues confronting black people in the world beyond religious circles. As such, this depicts the coherence of the Black Church, Black Theology and Black Consciousness as an existential reflection, methodologically and soteriological in practice. Hopkins and Antonia (2012:31) argue: "The new black theology, however, is grounded in the liberation of one important segment of the mainline black Church to which he belonged. It seeks to learn from and assimilate the values of the black consciousness form of survival tradition that he enlisted by the appeal made to the urban masses within and outside the church."

In maintaining a soteriology for black humanity, the notion of a Black Church must have a soterological syllogism which will entail both paradigms of ontology and physiology. This is a call beyond the traditional metaphysical soteriology of Christendom that has often been interpreted as a one-sided gospel that the missionaries exploited. But it should be a salvation that will expel condescending, demeaning and all facets of black humanity's dehumanisation that are still attached to black people who are affected by consumerism, materialism and individualism. Imarogbe argues:

Our acceptance of inferiority cannot be consciously admitted so we repress it, leaving it to function as unconscious motivation. We reject our Blackness and seek to build a fantasy identity with which to connect it. This is the Black man's identity problem. A Black man living in a white world which has declared him inferior cannot escape the stigma of his blackness. There is no

escape as an individual. Only a group can create a counter culture in which black is acceptable. Because you are Black, you live in a ghetto with all of its restrictions; poverty unemployment, crime, exploitation, poor schools, social disorganization, and powerless dependency; you resent being black with all of its restrictions so you try to break your identification by denying your identity. You try to pretend that you are not black (Imarogbe: 2001:xii-xiii).

The soterological syllogism should operate between the two aspects of black humanity's destruction, which are physiological and ontological. The physiological part will entail the deliverance from perpetual self-hate of our blackness propelled by using the Western world as a mirror lens of authentic reflection of legitimate human existence and meaning of what it is to be human. Fanon (1963: 176) arguing on black intellects reveals precisely the attitude posed by blacks in the modern era, Fanon argues: "...because the native intellectual has thrown himself greedily upon Western culture. Like adopted children who only stop investigating the new family framework at the moment when a minimum nucleus of security crystallizes in their psyche, the native intellectual will try to make European culture his own". Further alienating from one own culture and human meaning. In such a situation the black churches will assume its former position of relativity in the black human condition – a point of reaffirming the humanity of black people historically and contextually today. This is a deliverance of black people from the decadent destruction that is historical, in as much as it is today, relatively present and associated with a simplistic global plague of materialism.

By reaffirming the humanity of black people, the church should teach black people self-love and not a material narcissistic approach and individualist stance of this age. Boesak (1977:28) says the following about human love and worth: "All normal human beings have regard for themselves, have self-respect, and are aware of their worth as human beings. In this sense, self-love is not sinful. We point out, furthermore, that self-love can be mentioned only within the context that Jesus himself had placed it, namely, the context of love for the other."

This theological outlook tallies well with the culture of black people, particularly in aspects of lifestyle and principles of the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. Consider that communalism is a chief and potent ingredient that defines black life. Motlhabi (2008:63) argues: "In African traditional society, the promotion of harmony, well-

being, and the effective coexistence of all the members of the community was based on the morality of communalism. Communalism was regarded as the essence of morality. In this society the community was made up of past (the living-dead), present and future generations.”

The physiological soteriology re-affirms black humanity in all the facets of its physiological construct and organically. As such, in this regard the Black Churches must in a consumerist age of black people, voice out against the recreating images and particularly issues of aesthetics which are linked to dehumanisation ontologically and physiologically of black people. The Black Churches, preachers and black theologians must state that there is nothing wrong with black people's organic hair, pigmentation, aesthetics, history, heritage and culture – since these are what blacks are alienated from and seem to propel the materialistic and individualistic attachment to human meaning for black people. Fanon called this process as decolonization, Fanon (1963:35) argued: “We have said that the colonial context is characterized by the dichotomy which it imposes upon the whole people. Decolonization unifies that people by the radical decision to remove from it its heterogeneity and by unifying it on a national, sometimes a racial basis”. But, obviously, in a global society that is pushing for Western forms of culture, history, aesthetics, etc. as authentic meaning of being human, the notion of a Black Church must decisively keep the unity of black humanity physiological and ontologically. This must be part of the church message, contextually and continually.

At the same time, the Black Church bears a great responsibility for it must spiritually uplift black people in order to deal with the material conditions in which they find themselves. A unity and uplifting of their: physiology and ontology, in dealing with those material conditions. Biko (1978:30) affirmed this view as follows: “The fact that apartheid has been tied up with white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, and deliberate oppression makes the problem much more complex. Material want is bad enough but coupled with spiritual poverty, it kills. And this latter effect is probably the one that creates a mountain of obstacles in the normal course of emancipation of the black people.”

It seems that Biko prophetically could have seen a glimpse of the exacerbated material want of the age lacking spiritual morality and discipline. The change to true black self-identification can only emanate from the notion of a Black Church and its role in society and in the world. To manifest true autonomous black meaning of being human. That cannot be reduced to materialism and a constant creation of self-image. Biko (1978: 51) asserts: "In rejecting Western values, therefore, we are rejecting those things that are not only foreign to us but that seek to destroy the most cherished of our beliefs—that the corner-stone of society is man himself—not just his welfare, not his material wellbeing but just man himself with all his ramifications. We reject the power based society of the Westerner that seeks to be ever concerned with perfecting their technological know-how while losing out on their spiritual dimension"

Simultaneously, soteriological ontology will be a deliverance and reflection of the being and essence contained in the materiality of black humanity. An ontology that is linked fundamentally in their blackness, that which has been at the hands of Western hegemonies of distortions and distorting history of black people as human beings. This aspect of salvation goes parallel to the task of theology and God being the Divine Being that bequeathed and established humanity within humanity or humaneness, ontologically and physiological, in all human races. Mofokeng asserts the following about the Bible as both problem and solution and how the Bible strengthens black people through the narrative therein, particularly with the incarnation of God in Jesus:

It is through these stories that God the creator of humans is manifested as the God of the oppressed and accepted as such. This creator God acts incarnately in Jesus to end the rampant enmity in creation and restore real humanity to people. Only the reading of these stories of the downtrodden God among the downtrodden of this world strengthens the tormented faith of the oppressed of our time, as well as enhancing the quality of their commitment to the physical struggle for liberation (Mofokeng: 1987:41).

To further validate the balance of the new salvation of black people, one can draw strength in the incarnate of God through the humanity of Christ; both realities of physiology and ontology are unified. Thus by making God humanely present and relevant for humanity's comprehension of the meaning of humanity, this is the Jesus who must be present in the world through Black Liberation Theology. Migliore

(1991:175) argues: “Jesus is indeed fully human, but his is a new humanity. The intimacy of his relation with God and his solidarity with sinners and the oppressed are new and offensive. He is the human being radically free for God’s coming reign and therefore radically free for communion with and service to the neighbour.”

As part of the role of the notion of Black Church in re-affirming black humanity even in this materialist and individualistic age. Considering the haphazard opulence of black people which further alienates blacks from each other and more so too the core of their human values such as *Ubuntu*, the Black Church is called to hold on to the fundamentals of the Christian faith and communal life in building a human society with a humane face. Mofokeng (1987:41) argues: “The history of theology has indisputable evidence which proves that the de facto canon of a particular Christian community is determined, among other factors, by the context and challenges of the historical trajectory of that community. The same applies to the South African theatre of Christian life and political struggle.”

It is at this point that communalism is a necessity for defining black humanity in a materialistic and individualistic age. It sets the platform for building, upon human relations that are resonant of others, a sense of people-ness that makes individuals and the community bilaterally connected and having symbiotic relations with sentimental value. Motlhabi argues:

According to some theologians, a critical aspect of the focus on communalism by traditional morality is that it does not seem to have given much consideration to the worth of the individual. This was because the individual was considered to be primarily a person in community. Thus, a Setswana saying goes, *motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe* (lit. A person is a person through other people). The implication of this was that without the community, the individual was nothing. The community was the key to understanding the African view of a person. A person’s identity, worth and his or her very life received value from that person’s membership of the community (Motlhabi: 2008:64).

This resonates with the love of self and that love of the other. Boesak (1977:28) explains: “Therefore, self-love cannot exist as an objective independently. It can be understood only as an expression of the interrelated reality of human existence. Self-love should be joyous affirmation of the desire to be there for the other in a genuine,

human, way. An understanding of self-love as egotism, self-interest, and the satisfaction of one's own desires at the cost of others is a distortion."

Imarogbe argues:

Man constructs the world system with its values, lifestyles and institutions. If it is communal, then it is compatible with the will of God. If it is individualistic and corrupt, then it is evil-Satan personified and is not characterized by love, harmony, unity and balance as the Divine System. But it is dominated with selfishness, hatred, greed, isolation, violence, war unfaithfulness, deceit, theft, dishonesty, injustice and oppression. It is in disobedience to God (Imarogbe: 2001:20-21).

And Stefan reiterates the gist of Imarogbe's argument, he argues:

The first characteristic of today's economic ethics is "consumerism", which is a materialist outlook on man and life, embodying greed and spiritual indifference. The powerful attraction towards the material would lead to a destructive outlook on matter (or more precisely to an absolutization of those resources entertaining biological life), and to an intertwining of each moment of life with the consumption of matter (Stefan:2008:68).

One can assume, based on what has been discussed above concerning the notion of a Black Church, that being human means in this era and in the church a coexistence of both our ontology and physiology that works in balance. However, if these two realities are set at odds, diametrically opposite to each other, they can only repel each other. Such is the condition of black humanity in the materialistic and individualistic age. However, if optimism is anything to go by, one does have hope that Black Theology, Black Consciousness and the notion of a Black Church can re-affirm blackness in our world, which would otherwise seem to be a crime of treason. SS Maimela asserts:

...there can be no theology of the gospel which does not arise from an oppressed community. This is so because God in Christ has revealed himself as a God whose righteousness is inseparable from the weak and helpless in human society. The goal of Black Theology is to interpret God's activity as he is related to the oppressed black community. Second, Black Theology is Christian theology because it centres on Jesus Christ. There can be no Christian theology which does not have Jesus Christ as its point of departure. Though Black Theology affirms the black condition as the primary datum of reality which must be reckoned with, this does not mean that it denies the absolute revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Rather it affirms it. Unlike white theology which tends to make the Christ-event abstract, intellectual idea, Black theology believes that black community itself is precisely where Christ is at work (Maimela:2005:34).

This blackness affirmed in the black church by black theology must not be equated in any way to the white supremacy or theology. That has been a chief ingredient in the

Western world and globalisation. Instead, it is a recollection of black authenticity in culture, heritage and way of life.

One must state that the reality is that materialism and individuality are not perennially evil, but rather what is evil is the psyche in which we are brought to them – which has to do with our ontologically and physiological comprehension of ourselves as black people. Furthermore, the notion of a Black Church – in a materialistic and individualistic age – must again engage in economics to restrict the plague of materialism under capitalism. Roberts argues:

We cannot live by bread alone. Neither can we live without bread. It is, therefore, essential that all Christians should give some attention to understanding the economic order. Not only individuals but also social structures can be either “sinful” or “humane”. Black people have too often been the victims of unjust economic structures. Black churches do not have the luxury of ignoring the sorry economic plight of the masses of black people (Roberts: 1994:91).

This view is fundamental in the current materialistic and individualistic age, the sweeping into secularism and globalism that is affecting the black society, and the people in society that are in the Black Church.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I argued that true humanity for black people, theologically and otherwise, will emanate from the Black Church. Moreover, it will be based on the link between the historical development of the Black Church and its nature. That is usually communal, radical, political, etc. Both the church in the US and the church in South Africa is a church that has sought to preserve being black in culture, religion and way of life, as well as the entire outlook of African people. At the same time, there seems to be a change in the objectives of the Black Church, particularly with regard to materialism and individualism in the global society that proposes a false meaning of universal humanity. While Western cultures take precedence and dominance over other cultures, the Black Church is called upon to return to its mandate towards black people and black societies.

Again, redemption must also engulf the reconciliation of the realities of ontology and physiology to give a balance of being human and black. This is something that is lacking today in black definitions of being human (which are usually one-sided, namely materially and externally inclined). Though the reason for the one-sided reflection is the dehumanisation of black people physically, socially, communally, ontological and physiological, a connection of these can result in a theological legitimacy of humanity – humanity created as a whole and complete being. This is what ought to define black people as human beings and the meaning of being human in this era.

Chapter 3

The transformation of the Black Church in the materialist age: Consumerism and materialism

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The notion of a Black Church availed a new form of asserting humanity for blacks, a humanity that has been denied and even ignored by whites and their institutions, including churches. Evans argues:

Slavery and its theological justification, introduced a new set of issues for African thought on the person. The physical colour of the African became a way of making a slave. It took on a symbolic significance and in time became associated with a defective religion, savage behaviour (as defined by the capturers), bestiality and finally as the mark of unforgivable sin. However, the negative assessment of their humanity foisted upon them by the slaveholding community did not prevent African slaves from affirming—in both direct and indirect ways—their innate conviction that they were fully human (Evans: 1992: 102)

The observation given by Evans reflects the denial of blacks as part of humanity. Revealing the place for racism to exist with religious and theological justifications. The white churches and the racist societies they belong to have managed to dehumanise black people to the point that this form of dehumanisation has resulted in a current and historical inferiority complex that has furthered the internalisation of the sub-humanness of black people. As such, white churches and the Western world continued to exploit the minds, bodies and resources of black people through this intense internalisation of inferiority complex embodied in the dehumanisation process. Biko rightly argued:

If one takes religion as nothing else but what it is—i.e. a social institution attempting to explain what cannot be scientifically known about the origin and destiny of man, then from the beginning we can see the necessity of religion. All societies and indeed all individuals, ancient or modern, young or old, identify themselves with a particular religion and when one is existent, they develop one. In most cases religion is intricately intertwined with the rest of cultural traits of society. In a sense this makes the religion part and parcel of the behavioural pattern of that society and makes the people bound by limits of that religion through a strong identification with it (Biko: 1978: 59)

Biko's analysis makes an important point in how religious and theological justification of racism and dehumanisation form part of the social make up. This point further reflects how dehumanisation goes against the whole theme of human origin and destiny. Something fundamental in the Christian faith as opposed to colonial

Christianity. The church having been introduced to South Africa and to black slaves in the United States with racism embedded in it, had a role in the creating of an inhumane social order for the dehumanized. With religion validating the social make up of South Africa. Biko asserts:

The Church and its operation in modern-day South Africa has therefore to be looked at in terms of the way it was introduced in this country. Even at this late stage, one notes the appalling irrelevance of the interpretation given to the Scriptures. In a country teeming with injustice and fanatically committed to the practice of oppression, intolerance and blatant cruelty because of racial bigotry, in a country where all black people are made to feel the unwanted stepchildren of a God whose presence they cannot fee; in a country where father and son, mother and daughter alike develop daily into neurotics through sheer inability to relate the present to the future because of a completely engulfing sense of destitution, the Church further adds to their insecurity by its inward-directed definition of the concept of sin and its encouragement of the mea culpa attitude (Biko:1978: 60-61)

Biko was right within his given context and more globally to the black experience, experienced by black under white rule. This culminates to a preconditioned society. Biko appealed to black church structure under white supervision to model their framework under Black Theology. Thus making the church to active in society and existentialist to black people religion and the connection it has with their humanity and the rest of black society (Biko: 1978: 63-65).

The postmodern era and post-apartheid South Africa has resulted into the resurfacing of the dehumanisation of black people. That is easily traceable in materialism and consumerism in the black context. But to understand materialism and its impact on black people and their humanity. One needs to understand materialism and consumerism it had to be noted that capitalism serves as its framework in dehumanizing and dispossessing black people. More so since capitalism came with white racist institutions This point is important in that when speaking of the black church and social justice black theology is at heart. Since black theology had resonance with Marxist views of capitalism and its relevance to the black experience and the dehumanisation of black people. James Cone who was instrumental in the of coining of black theology (1975: 39) argued: Black Theology, through a profound influence from Marxism, had a distinctive ingredient in the form of a theology that would come in the context of black humanity seen through the spectacles of Marxism, the existentialist position that would necessitate the human condition and the material conditions that have humanity at the centre of it all. As

such, the word and the world are involved together, a mix of historical materialism (humanity as a point of foci) and dialectical materialism (the material conditions of the world and humanity). James Cone asserts concerning Marxism and Black Theology:

The importance of Marx for our purpose is his insistence that thought has no independence from social existence. In view of his convincing assertion that 'consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence', theologians must ask, 'What is the connection between dominant material relations and the ruling theological ideas in a given society?' And even if they do not accept the rigid causality of so-called orthodox Marxists, theologians will find it hard to avoid the truth that their thinking about the divine is closely intertwined with the 'manifestations of actual life'. A serious encounter with Marx will make theologians confess their limitations, their inability to say anything about God which is not at the same time a statement about the social context of their own existence (Cone: 1975:39).

Mosala (1989: 85) argues within the South African context concerning capitalism and dispossession, which are tied as one in the dehumanisation of black people: "In South Africa, as in other parts of the world, the advent of the capitalist mode of production was preceded by a historically and logically prior phase, which Marx has called "the primitive accumulation phase". This is the historical process in which the original producers and owners of the means of production are dispossessed and transformed into the possessors of marketable labour power".

These views are of important to state, in that the depravity of black people with regards to economics, self-worth and dignity plays a significant role in the conceptualisation of black people in terms of human meaning in a secular world. It is at this point that one can observe a paradigm shift in the role of the notion of a Black Church to black humanity in the current materialistic and individualistic context. The black church and black theology which were instrumental in social change and justice that included race and the power of capitalism has been muted. In some sense it would be correct to point that the modern era make the black church to join in its conceptualisation new ideals of a capitalist society that fracture human dignity and social value of a society—particular the black society. Day (2012) argues that advanced capitalism influences the social institutions which include the church; to Day capitalism has further developed to, advanced capitalism which is a colonised life through commoditisation. Day (2012:7) argues:

Advanced capitalist practices also employ neo-liberal values to shape and determine economic outcomes. Neo-liberalism carries a belief in the “invisible hand” of a free market to regulate transactions among individuals; thus state regulation of or government intervention in the economy are deemed both unnatural and adverse. Neo-liberalism privileges an economic structure that resists government oversight and intervention and also adheres to a philosophy of success through individual action and merit. Individuals are responsible for their economic success or failure, not the market of institutional structures. Individual merit and ambition are hallmarks of responsible and deserving citizens, which in turn suggest that the poor are irresponsible, undeserving, and lacking in ambition and merit (Day:2012:7).

The above is of substance in dealing with the perverse change of the notion of a Black Church in the modern era. Considering that the notion of a Black Church is not a static church but rather moves with the times—due to the existentialism of Black Theology. As such (even with the current change in politics, economics and general society), the notion Black Church serves as a point of reflection. And there is a need to reflect on the notion of a Black Church, contextually and contemporary. To see whether in a capitalist, individualistic, materialistic and global world, does it still asserts that black people are fully human outside the boundary definition proposed by materialism. But to fully investigate this view the black megachurches which exist due to the notion of a black church can be a point of reflection, Barnes writing on the subject of black megachurches validates this view as a note when examining black mega churches and their role in society, Barnes argues:

A note on terminology: throughout this book, “Black Church” refers to the collective institution and “black church” refers to individual congregations. Use of the former term should not suggest to readers the lack of diversity among black congregations based on the factors such as denomination, theological focus, worship style, programmatic efforts, and community involvement. In addition, elements that suggest a unique “black flavour” in the Black Church tradition are often formally known as Black Church culture (Billingsely 1999; Costen 1993; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Wilmore 1995). For consistency, the term “black” is used to refer to “African Americans” (Barnes: 2013:3).

Further Barnes (2013: 177) asserts:

..I make the case that the black megachurch is a complex, contemporary model of the historic Black Church in response to globalism, consumerism, secularism, religious syncretism, and the realities of race. I contend that large black churches can also represent Christianity unfettered by traditionalism and denominationalism, and the rules and regulations they tend to foster. these characteristics point to a point form of adaptability, where black megachurches benefit from the innovation, evangelical focus, proactivity, and flexibility found among high-growth megachurches, as well as the “semi-involuntary” nature of the historic Black Church tradition (Barnes:2013: 177).

As such this is part of the continuation of the discussion of the notion of black churches, black humanity and reveals the change of black churches in the present social conditions that black people find themselves in. Another point that tallies well with this discussion important to discuss in dealing the notion of a black church and social change is that the notion black church exists parallel to the black preacher as having pointed out in the structures of mainline black churches and African Independent Churches. This is important in that the leader who in the observation of Cornel West, Billingsely (observing Du Bois analysis of a black church), Frazier and others represented a position of significance; politically, socially, culturally, economically etc. As such this ought to be a tradition of a black church and preacher. But if the preacher diverts from this tradition the church is bound to divert in its mission. Martin points out the following:

...both historically and currently, Black churches have assumed diverse responsibilities beyond spreading the Gospel to save souls. While the function of Black churches provides some clues about this religious institution, those clues also reveal that Black churches provided more than traditional religious instruction. Consequently, a fundamental understanding of the functions of Black churches requires some knowledge about how race, racism, and racial discrimination, have impacted the spiritual needs of African American people (Martin: 2011:156).

Along the same line of thought Barnes (2013:177) having listed tenets that are part of the historic Black Church, points out: "And all this possibility is fuelled by a belief in an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God to which believers have unlimited access. Yet groups that only seem to be constrained by the imaginations and personal accountability of their leaders can be problematic".

Further Martin argues on the point of the notion of black churches within the mentioned areas of focus i.e. racism, of the black church that prove its invaluable significance to black people. Martin asserts:

Such diverse functions distinguish Black churches as a metaphor of African American life itself. However, despite the ubiquitous resourcefulness of Black churches concerning African American life, neither Black churches nor African Americans have remained static across time or place. Black churches, like African Americans, do not constitute a monolith. The emergence, growth, and influence of Black mega churches entail one of the most significant developments regarding how Black churches have responded to changes over time in African American communities (Martin:2011:156).

It is therefore important to keep in mind that the black church and preacher and black theologians represent the fundamentals of the black church in society. But more importantly fundamental, to black communities and societies. The black church and black preacher relationship is important in giving a voice to black humanity. Thus making the role of the black churches to black humanity after their dehumanization and internalization of it, as a perennial necessity. In the present context of materialism, consumerism and individualism blacks are not a homogeneous group affected by these outlooks. But rather within the black context there is need to reflect on the view that the self-conceptualisation of black people and their humanity in a secular and consumerist culture is attached to their dehumanization. Dehumanization based on pigmentation and now is the very powers that form a different nature of the world and society for blacks. This is problematic to blacks because the same instruments involved in their dehumanization are still intact through capitalism. Barnes (2013: 180) argues concerning the need of the involvement of the black church and preacher in a consumerist era, Barnes asserts: "...significant economic problems in both black and non-black spaces will be necessary for a revolutionary shifts in U.S. views and response to poverty. As global economic problems persist, it will be important to gauge whether black megachurch pastors (and megachurch leaders in general) follow the challenge by theologians and scholars for a radical restructuring of capitalism".

Barnes views (2013: 18) are not only applicable to black megachurch pastors but also applicable to black scholars and theologians. Though as a point of departure from Barnes view, it seems highly likely that the aim of black theology and black consciousness is to overthrow capitalism instead of reframing it or as Barnes put it restructuring capitalism. This is important in that capitalism produced economic and cultural distortion of black humanity and fuelled dehumanization of black humanity, as such, it is problematic to black humanity. Who were turned through racism and capitalism and every part of being black i.e. culture, all turned blacks into commodities of labour, typical in a materialist age. Biko (1978; 96) validated this view by stating that "There is no doubt that the colour question in South Africa politics was originally introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of white community had to create some kind of barrier between black and whites so that the whites could enjoy

privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white conscience”.

Mosala (1989: 87) argues concerning the impact of the capitalism mode of production and black culture. With the impacts of it to the oppressed and how they will view themselves and the world, Mosala argues: “The culture of the colonized people, being both the outcome and a determinant of their history, represents a contradiction to the mode of production of the colonizing forces. It has to be distorted first before it can be used against the history and people of which it is a product”. This is important in understanding the secular world, globalism and consumerism and how these are experienced by blacks. Considering that the western worldviews take precedence on black life and human meaning. Material gains, and view of success of blacks indicates that all are associated to whiteness since whiteness has taken precedence over black life through racism and capitalism.

This is significant to the black church and black humanity since even in the pews of black churches comprise of individuals who are employed. Thus are directly and indirectly linked to the secular world, materialism, racism, colonialism, imperialism and consumerism. All these that have been mentioned are not only affecting blacks, though the point of departure is that all these affect blacks to a greater extent as black have been brought into them through white supremacy. So the threat to blacks is more linked to finding identity from miss-identity and fully coming to realise the ontological self. The black preacher, black consciousness, black theology all which are elements that define a black church play an important role in addressing these issues of identity and social structure concerning blacks. Fanon (1963: 195) asserts: “As soon as the Negro comes to an understanding of himself, and understands the rest of the world differently, when he gives birth to hope and forces back the racist universe...”. This instilling of hope is clearly seen in the historical notion of a Black Church. But as it stand in the post-modern era what is the role of a black church in asserting black humanity beyond the psychological impacts of racism, dispossession, and dehumanization in an individualist and materialist era.

3.2 THE TRANSFORMATION FROM INSTILLING DIGNITY AND HUMANITY TO OPULENCE

The notion of a Black Church within Black Theology and Black Consciousness, inclusively, has managed within their framework to instil value and dignity into the lives of black people. Biko argued this point when writing for black ministers in traditional white churches by origin. Biko pointed out the benefits of adopting Black Theology within the church setting and its standing of society and the Gospel in relation to black humanity (Biko 1978: 63-64). Biko sums up why Black Theology and black churches would be relevant to black in their context and even to date. Biko points out the fundamental task of a black church and its ministers:

The time has come for our own theologians to take up the cudgels of the fight by restoring a meaning and direction in the black man's understanding of God. No nation can win a battle without faith, and if our faith in our God is spoilt by our having to see Him through the eyes of the same people we are fighting against then there obviously begins to be something wrong with that relationship. Finally, I would like to remind the black ministry and indeed all black people that God is not in the habit of coming down from heaven to solve people's problems on earth (Biko:1978:64-65).

What it (Black Theology) has achieved in the United States and particularly in South Africa (also post apartheid) is therefore undeniable. In South Africa the Black Church, Black Theology and Black Consciousness were instrumental in toppling apartheid (as a system of dehumanisation) by first instilling pride, dignity and humanity in the dehumanized black population. Boesak asserts the following about the impact of black theology in South Africa:

That discovery of the "powerful message of liberation" is precisely the discovery of the biblical story—the story of the God of the exodus, the prophets of social justice and radical conversion, and of Jesus of Nazareth—and the difference that story makes in the human story. Despite the white Christian interpretation black Christians in South Africa discovered, and believed passionately, that the God of the exodus who brought Israel from slavery and raised Jesus from the dead would help them cross that sea into freedom, would raise them up as they fought for justice. The God of the Bible was the God of justice they prayed to in the silence of their homes, called upon in the midst of their suffering, and relied upon in the heat of confrontation. They understood, despite the mammoth efforts of white Christianity in this country, the liberating and radical call of the gospel in terms of justice and freedom and human dignity (Boesak (2004: 19)

This is precisely what Biko was urging black ministers to do by adopting Black Theology. Boesak (2004: 20) further adds: "...Biko helped us through the philosophy of Black Consciousness and Black Power to come to grips with the South African

political realities and , merging with Black Theology, create new possibilities through our new-found pride in our cognisance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people".

Day reflects on the other hand the value of a notion of a black church, with black theology embedded in it, for black humanity in the United States, Day argues:

In the dominant white world, slaves were degraded, debased, and rendered subhuman. In the Black Church, slaves were able to enter an alternative or substitute world that affirmed them as human beings with a culture who deserved educational opportunity, socioeconomic equality, and political power. The Black Church was a "world within a world" that challenged the internalized socialization of a white racist society. The Black Church represented a surrogate world for enslaved and oppressed blacks in which "they could exercise their communal power and create alternative narratives of black dignity and goodness (Day: 2012:23).

Day's observation of a Black Church as a surrogate world validates the view of the Black Church as the womb for Black Theology and the birth of a new humanity for black people. The Black Church as both a womb and a surrogate world allows black people to assert their humanity unequivocally to the world. Even though, oppression and dehumanisation might influence black people's view themselves. There still seems to have been an asymmetric and imbalance of the Black Church with regard to its goals and principles towards black people in South Africa and the United States today. Particularly in the areas of materialism and the consumerist culture of black people, as they attach humanity and the meaning thereof to Western values from a history of deprivation. .To a large degree the impacts of colonialism are ever evident and its heritage strives to advancement through the distortions that it has created. Frantz Fanon argues:

Perhaps we have not sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today (Fanon: 1963: 169)

It seems that the psychological suppression of the extent of black people's dehumanisation is resurfacing in the secular world and inevitably in the church. This is informed by the opulence among black people and the advent of materialism and individualistic obsession. More so the history of oppression is still very much existing,

even in the current stage. Posel (2013:160) argues within the South African context: "The demise of apartheid also saw South Africa's reintegration into a global economy in which conspicuous consumption is par for the course, which makes it unsurprising and unremarkable that comparable trends should emerge within the ranks of South Africa's black population, for whom these opportunities were previously politically curtailed (their white counterparts having embraced consumerist versions of the good life decades before)".

The consumerist and materialistic culture of modern time renders black people among the most people gullible and vulnerable people to consumerism and materialism. In the South African context, the origins of materialism and consumerism in the contemporary world can be traced to the constant mirror reflection that usually necessitates black people to look at the lives of white people and the Western world for norms and hallmarks of being human. Even in post-apartheid South Africa. Martinez-Roca and Vazi argues:

Bling lifestyle in post-apartheid South Africa might then be associated to race issues and specifically to Black Africans. Some other statements of the many that can be found in the media, which point towards this hypothesis, are: "Bling is the current in South Africa and there are a lot of black people with money and they simply are just showing off their success"; "From hosting lavish parties where sushi is served on models' bodies to quaffing rare whiskeys, the display of wealth by South Africa's new black elite is raising eyebrows among the poor majority"; "Wedding planning is a personal choice but it also reveals a corruptive cultural influence and vulgar modes of how black people use material things for their presence to be felt (Martinez-Roca & Vazi:2012:3)

Within the American framework this too is applicable as observed by Eric Lincoln writing about the black consumer and the Negro's Middle Class Dream, Lincoln argues:

In Washington, among those aspiring to the middle class, or those who are recently "in", status is measured by the quantity and the cost of whisky served one's guests. The most conspicuous feature in such a home will be the bar appointments, and it is for the host to offer his guests "cheap whisky". One Washingtonian gained prominence in his set by consistently being first to serve rare and expensive imports before they were well known in the Negro community. He learned what was "in" by frequenting an exclusive liquor store patronized by high Government officials (Lincoln1971: 104).

The above leads to the understanding that for black people, the question "What does it mean to be human?" is a historical necessity—and depicts Fanon view of an emptied history (1963: 169). Thus the horrors of a past of; injustice and

dehumanisation continually need to be engaged with. Since black people have to recover from the dehumanisation and atrocities. The issue of opulence in the present context is relevant in that it entails the social make-up of South Africa, in particular the creation of worldviews and norms for black people. It is at this point that in the modern era theologians need a theological existence to make clear that the people in the black churches are the same as those who live in the secular world, where opulence and materialism are prevalent. Sauter makes an interesting point in the book entitled *Rationality and Eschatology* (1996) where he discusses the unity of being a theologian and a human being, with the understanding that being a theologian and being human must be synonymous as we engage with God, the world and each other. Thus theologians and others who engage the issue of humanity from a disengaged point of reflection on the world, lack relativity and theological existence. Sauter argues as follows about this theological existence:

[It] starts from the indeed apt observation that our being human today is endangered by diffusions of various sorts. We do not know the centre of being human anywhere. Our doing and thinking do not live in the distinction between the important and the unimportant anymore. We consume a multitude of offers promising a better and more meaning life. We lose ourselves in testing these different offers instead of really living from the centre of our own existence. We seek our salvation in diffusion. We look for relaxation in a restless journey to ever new impressions, and then we have to realize that we did not recollect ourselves and find ourselves, but instead, have split ourselves even more (Sauter:1996:77).

The reason why this point is fundamental in this study is that it tallies well with Steve Biko speaking on black ministers and black mainline churches. Were the black masses are attacked by their ministers as if the ministers are exempted from the oppression. Biko (1978: 61) argues: "Stern-faced ministers' stand on pulpits every Sunday to heap loads of blame on black people in townships for their thieving, house-breaking, stabbing, murdering, adultery etc. No one ever attempts to relate all these vices to poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, lack of schooling and migratory labour. No one wants to completely condone abhorrent behaviour, but it frequently is necessary for us to analyse Situations a little deeper than the surface suggest". By digging deeper than what the black eye has been made to see things appear for what they are and not what seem as if they are. Biko pushes that black ministers to be relevant need to be relevance and that relevance proves to be a theological existence which Biko identified within Black Theology, Biko argues:

...we must focus our attention is a thorough understanding of what many people have hitherto scorned, namely Black Theology. There is truth in the statement that many people can say one thing differently because they look at it from different angles. Christianity can never hope to remain abstract and removed from people's environmental problems. In order to be applicable to people, it must have meaning for them in their given situation. If they are an oppressed people, it must have something to say about their oppression (Biko:1978: 64).

The question of black people being human in the modern world has resulted in black people having an answer thereof in materialistic consumption. This has to be done against the backdrop of the historical and sociological dehumanising, heritage of lack, around a white consumerist society, Western values and outlook on life – and that is problematic for authentic black human meaning. The social make-up of black humanity is that of constant reconstruction and recreation of being human – physiologically due to the ontological limitation of one's own existence – and interpreting one's blackness in a way that suits the world and globalism. This is involved in the bastardisation of cultures and multiple meanings of being human through artificial human universalism. The Black Church is not an exception to this consumerist, materialistic and individualistic approach to modern-day life—and a theological existence of a black church and black theologians need to resurface. As such as a result, one can rightly observe that the black churches abound to sell such ideas of material consumerism as part of human success. Day asserts:

Like many other institutions the Black Church evolves, grows, and changes over time. Much research indicates that it has developed into what I call a post-civil rights church. This does not refer to the end or culmination of the civil rights struggles for blacks, but rather to how black communities have evolved over the last four decades. They are now characterized by greater economic stratification and sociocultural differences; thus, bringing about change requires new methods (Day: 2012:108).

The historical material conditions of lack and need of black people as humans are seen in today's spiritual conditions within the church and the secular world with the black masses' obsession with material gain. To a large degree dispossession and dehumanisation embodied in a racist ideology strips of power to the victim. Thus race and racism are connected to power, power which blacks aspired for. Though the weakness of it would be to assume that white power was power, thus the need for blacks to constantly imitate white lives and values. Tshaka's point on race and power validates this point, Tshaka (2012: 169) asserts; "Racism therefore should be defined as racial prejudice alongside institutional power. Racism needs to factor in

the social and economic privileges that are therefore white because of their whiteness—whether whites ask for them or not. Talk of racism only as personal prejudice does not seem to reckon with the fact that we are all—black and white—affected by racism”.

Another point that is important to reflect on is that of institutional power that manages to alienate society, particular white and black. With whites occupying privilege due to black dehumanisation while whites consume. Posel (2010:160), commenting on the South African context, argues: “The desire and power to consume was racialized, at the same time as it was fundamental in the very making of race. This interconnection in turn has had a profound bearing on the genealogy of varied and contested imaginings of 'freedom'. This line of argument thus revisits the connectedness of race and class.” At the Critical Research in Consumer Culture seminar held at the University of Cape Town the following was recorded:

Arguably the way race works, as an instrument of power and status, is never separable from regimes of accumulation and consumption. In South Africa, racial classifications were partly a direct expression of the perceived relationships between orders of "civilisation" vested in modes of dress, deportment, leisure and communal life, and entitlements to social and political standing. Being classified black was tantamount, inter alia, to being deemed unworthy of certain modes of consumption. The acquisition and display of consumable goods has been saturated, then, with racial meanings. If this is so, we need to consider both the aiding residues and the new traces of race, in recent spectacles of stuff and in their spectacular rebuttal (CRICC 2013).

It is important to note that for black people in Africa and abroad, the Western world and its definitions and worldview are the perpetual point of reflection. In this regard, black people which constitute the Black Church assimilate such secular worldviews that are easily accessible for their minds due their history and the Western world's secular influence and dominance. Day (2012:107), speaking about the Black Church and its goal to prosperity that is based on class-based efforts to eradicate poverty, points out the following: “Many contemporary black churches have lost this class-based vision of economic justice for the poor. Instead, they articulate and promote a prosperity gospel theology that reinforces neo-liberal free-market values. The current prosperity gospel thrust ignores the vast complexities and contradictions associated with wealth and prosperity in our market society and their negative effects on the poor” (Day: 2012:107).

It is important to note the implications of being poor and poverty, particularly in the current era built by the past. That the poor are usually seen as lesser human beings by the rich and elites as such is dehumanisation. It is fundamental to state that the Western world has succeeded in advancing and imposing its culture on black people and has made itself the rational for black people in constructing themselves, their world and worldview or approach towards defining themselves. In the past, this was done in blatant and harsh terms but the modern era depicts that it is now done under globalisation and Americanisation which influence black people in the world as well as in their religious circles. Nicolaidis (2012:118) argues: "American norms, values and practices are being conveyed across the Atlantic as the suitable mode of behaviour for Africans. As a consequence of this cultural migration, Africa's rich culture is being degraded and is viewed as inferior by many Africans." Nicolaidis (2012:126) also argues: "Americanization and Globalisation have resulted in the extinction of about 22,000 indigenous cultures in the last decade and approximately 90% of the world's languages will disappear in the next century."

It is of utmost importance that Black people in Africa and abroad realise that their destruction is bilateral and symmetric in form. What is meant by this is that in order to destroy a people, it is important to let them be the agents of their own demise and destruction. It is fundamental that materialism, consumerism and individualism function in Africa unless it is being projected as a norm by other Africans, elites and entertainers such as in America, for example BET (Black Entertainment Television) Entertainment. Nicolaidis (2012:126) argues: "Pop culture" is in reality a form of Americanization, because the United States is by far the biggest producer of popular culture products, including movies, television programmes, newspapers, and music. It also includes fast foods and clothing, which are also part of entertainment and consumer items. Entertainment comprises the largest industry in the United States".

Furthermore, this material human definition attached to consumerism is advanced by advanced capitalism. Day point out:

... advanced capitalism and its systems of commodification have become cultural and political values that inform social relations. For example, within advanced capitalism labour is no longer seen as a human capability worth of respect but rather as a commodity that is exchanged to maximize profit. Labour has lost its humanizing element and become depersonalized, nothing more than another commodity that is a part of economic transactions.

Advanced capitalism sponsors a type of morality that dehumanizes social relations so that they are used instrumentally as a means towards the ends of market goals. Simply put, an advanced capitalist political economy promotes commodity fetishism in which social relationships among people are expressed as relationships among things (commodities and money) (Day: 2012:7).

In their book (1992), Shelley and Shelley write about the advent of consumerism in the church in the context of the United States relative to South Africa. In South Africa, it appeared later in the post-apartheid era and continues to date. They argue: "The dilemma of living like Christian stewards in a money culture first appeared as a major concern of believers after the Civil War. The giants of culture in that generation were no longer minister or pioneers. They were business and industrial tycoons like Andrew Carnegie, J Pierpont Morgan, Marshall Field, William H Vanderbilt and John D Rockefeller" (Shelley & Shelley 1992:111).

This change in society is relative to the South African context but more on the social make-up than in the church. In that our society is built on an inferiority complex to prove ourselves. Though society and the church are intrinsically linked, society today has a profound influence on the church. The relationship between the Black Church and black society are symbiotic in dealing with black authentic identity. Gibson (2005:93) argues: "... if race and class are no longer complicit in the reality of post-apartheid South Africa and that economic success does not conspire with 'social treason'. As Fanon points out, coupling the psychological critique with his philosophical humanism, this compulsion to 'prove ourselves' is neither correct nor reasonable but a 'nauseating mimicry' of the white ex-colonial masters..." Gibson speaks in reference to Thabo Mbeki's call for Black bourgeoisies Gibson adds:

In today's multicultural South Africa, forgetting the fact that 90% of the poor are black simply indicates the assumed logical relationship between poverty and race: that the language of apartheid has been replaced by the colour of money, the language of corporate capitalism and markets. It is not only that exploitation can wear a "black mask", but racism can take many forms that indicates how deeply it is embedded in South Africa's socio-economic structure and, consequently, how deep the uprooting of that structure needs to be (Gibson 2005:96)

Gibson further discusses the fetishism and the goal of elitism that eclipses the aspiration of the masses and in the black church. The powers of elites in the political arena supersede addressing human freedom, which in South Africa has to do with the recognition of being human in blackness. It is a human meaning that has been

destroyed by imperialism, colonialism, slavery, apartheid and colonial Christianity that pushed a version of Christianity that was purely metaphysical as part of hindrance to material freedom, denial of an analysis of the material conditions in which black people found themselves. This one-dimensionalism causes a chasm in black people's outlook towards and understanding of God, the world and themselves. Fanon argues:

On the unconscious plane, colonialism therefore did not seek to be considered by the native as a gentle, loving mother who protects her child from a holistic environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology and its own unhappiness which is its very essence (Fanon: 1963: 169-170).

It is important to note that the nature of the Christian faith maintains both paradigms of existence: the physical and the metaphysical. If the coexistence of both realms is fractured and they are detached from each other, one is bound to hold to one extreme and neglect the other. Such a lack of balance and syllogism is what caused the ⁴Christological controversies, which – interestingly enough – revolved around the divinity and humanity of Jesus. The point is that both have to be maintained, which is what the current era needs.

What colonial Christianity proposed was the importance of spirituality over material wants and needs for black humanity while, at the same time, it exhausted and exploited the materials, resources and all necessities of black humanity. As a result, in the end, black people believed in a loving God who would find solace in saving their souls and yet submit them to such suffering. This was a contradiction of the dogma of the doctrine of the creation of the material world for humanity and other creatures for habitation and sustenance in that the material world was viewed as

⁴ “The Antiochian school, represented most prominently by Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius, emphasised the full humanity of Christ. In contrast to the Alexandrian “Word-Flesh” Christology, the Antiochian school defended a “Word-human being Christology” (Migliore 1991:171). This historical event shows the deep issues of relating divinity and humanity, in that both are coherent in a true theological definition of being human. The Christological controversies reflect what happens when a syllogism is not maintained, which is typical in the modern era. But now more than ever it is time for the church and particularly in the black church to appreciate the humanity of Christ and grasp the human suffering of God. That is relative for blacks and their quest for human meaning

something that should not be loved by black humanity. Thus the spirituality and physicality of black people have been put at odds with each other and, depending on one's preference; one could be swayed to either side. The reason why I mention this is because the coming into being of the Black Church and its aspiration for black people go hand in hand with this, but today it is depicted in a consumerist culture that is the flipside of the coin. Day (2012:108) argues: "Hope and black cultural renewal have always been important to the mission of the Black Church. This is an essential first step for blacks in order to empower them to transcend the racist logic and practices of white privilege."

It seems that black humanity has concentrated too much on spiritual wants and virtues in white churches and black mainline churches, and now seeks tangible substance to substantiate or make up for lost times—this is seen in black megachurches. Barnes (2013: 177) argues: "Contemporary Christians appear to expect more salvation than the promise of heavenly reward and godly lifestyles. Black megachurches reflect this increased demand for spiritual growth and tangible accoutrements based on a personal relationship with an all-powerful God. Believers want to experience vestiges of "heaven" on earth; many consider megachurch involvement a mean to these spiritual and material ends". .It is at this point that the Black Church is also moving fast to consumerist and materialist approaches. This move is explicitly visible in the Charismatic movements and latently in other Protestant circles (although the Charismatic churches seem to propagate this approach than any other denominations).

Martin, Bowels, Adkins and Leach argue concerning the Pentecostal movements which are also charismatic churches that form as part of black church. Based on the profound influence and coherence with black people culture that Du Bois and others noted make up the black church i.e. singing, clapping, dancing etc:

Pentecostalism among Black people emerged from the religious experiences of Reverend William Seymour and Bishop Charles Harrison Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ. Pentecostalism within Black churches incorporates worship experiences that characteristically include passionate preaching, inspirational music, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit such as clapping, dancing, speaking in tongues ... (Martin, et al:2011:4)

Day (2012:109) says: "It is interesting to note that the prosperity gospel theology rooted in shifts within the American political economy and a growing American class." Within the Charismatic faith that emanates as part of the 19th-century revivals in the United States for black people and the notion of a Black Church, this is clear in the ⁵"prosperity gospel". Martin et al (2011:4) argue: "Predating the emergence of Prosperity Gospel, several well-known, twentieth century, Black preachers emphasized the pursuit of material wealth in the here and now rather than waiting for riches in Heaven in their theological teachings.". They point out: "A Prosperity Gospel provides congregants with an energizing, other-worldly worship plus a this worldliness message of wealth and consumerism" (Martin et al 2011:4 & 5). Day notes:

Many black neo-Pentecostal and "word of faith" preachers teach their parishioners that wealth should be seen as part of their rightful inheritance as God's children. They encourage their congregants to "name and claim" God's promises of wealth and divine health for all Christians who have great faith. Such leaders correlate wealth with the quality of one's faith and obedience in God; wealth and health are the results of unwavering faith. Consequently, those who experience chronic illness or financial duress must lack faith in God's eternal promise of riches and abundance for God's children (Day: 2012:109).

Day adds:

... beginning in the 1980s a shift occurred within the Black Church with the influx of young, upwardly mobile middle-class people into Pentecostalism. These neo-Pentecostals were not interested in waiting on the hereafter or focusing on the coming *eschaton*. Members of this new middle class were preoccupied with how to understand their faith in light of their quest for the individual success by the American dream (Day: 2012:109).

This analysis of the shift in the Black Church reflects how the church has moved from its fundamental rooting. It is still about humanising black humanity, but rather affirms secularism and its consumerism and materialism. Day further observes: "Simply put, word-of-faith teachings argue that God wants all Christians to experience financial prosperity. It is a "divine right". Instead of advocating for voting registration, direct protests, boycotts, and other forms of social action historically associated with black churches, "word" ministries teach members that "poverty is a

⁵ The prosperity gospel is prevalent in Charismatic circles but these churches simply convey the concerns and needs of ordinary people, which are material gains. They do not qualify to be the problem but simply reflect the aspirations of a society of believers in a consumerist age who are black and come from the historical disadvantage of dehumanisation and deprivation under colonial Christianity. As such, material gains are sought in the modern-day interpretation of postmodern and post-apartheid Christianity.

curse from the devil and the power to transform one's oppressive realities resides in a person's measure of faith" (Day:2012:110).

This form of reasoning shows how the impact of the missionary "hereafter" teaching has produced this form of theology. God within the Black Church no longer to reaffirm black people as human beings, but is a winning ticket for the current materialistic and individualistic society.

In South Africa the concept of democracy has become an antidepressant and clearly leads black people to the opulence that is seen and learned from their long experience of oppression and deprivation. This form of lifestyle and the social make-up of South Africa against the background of dehumanisation are transmitted from society to the church and it leads its members to a society of materialism as a point of definition of their humanity. That has not been recognised and the Black Church needs to be the home where black people can affirm their humanity in the church and world, even today.

It is a historical necessity that has not been made available to black people by white churches and the Western capitalist and individualistic world with its injustices and inequalities. The oppressed and marginalised black people need again to revisit the Gospel, which has salvation and liberation as pertinent themes for humanity. It is a salvation and liberation not from sin alone, but also from oppression, dehumanisation and the religious monopoly of white and Western supremacy in any given context to validate the meaning of being human to black people. To demonstrate the current dilemma of the Black Church and its application for salvation today quite different from its origin. It must be understood that more black churches today have suited in and maintained the obsession of sin neglecting society which those sins are committed, Imarogbe argues:

The Black Church is in conflict because it has adopted a gospel of salvation rather than a gospel of liberation. The two are not the same and it is impossible to build a Black Nation without rejecting the gospel of salvation, which is an individualistic otherworldly conception of salvation-preaching that salvation is the free gift of God, made available to those who believe by sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary and that we are saved by faith alone and not by works. Because of this theology, the Black Church has programmed people to believe in individual salvation resulting in our own gross neglect of the needs of Black people on a whole (Imarogbe: 2001:vii).

Based on the argument above, it is clear where the notion of a Black Church has gone somewhat a different direction in the current era. In that it has neglected advocating for freedom and humanising society as part and parcel of salvation. Mofokeng discusses the role of Christ in his given context and one can draw from his analysis the relevance of Christ in giving meaning to black people's authentic humanity in relation to God and themselves. He asserts:

At a spiritual and ideological level, Jesus had given them a new way of reading the Old Testament and understanding their God. With this new way they could counteract the official reading of the Old Testament as well as the dominant view of God as the God of law who demands total and blind obedience or else ... Against this view they witnessed to a God who delights in the salvation of people, the removal of their burdens and not in their destruction. They could hold onto a gracious God who is merciful to the weak and the blind who fall continuously or lose their way in the socio-economic and political jungle. Jesus also brought them to a God championing the cause of the victims of people's inhumanity to the point of suffering and the cross (Mofokeng 1987:38 & 39)

Parallel to the concept of sin in the black churches is the role of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who in the historical development of the notion of a Black Church, Black Theology and Black Consciousness in relation to church and society represented God of the oppressed (Biko: 1978:104-105). Today within the megachurches in particular, Jesus is at times used to propel consumerism, opulence and materialism – contrary to being the champion of the poor and marginalised. This is also evident in the advent of the prosperity gospel that is sweeping the black religious society as influenced by the advent of opulence, materialism and individualism in the entire black and generally secular world governed by capitalism. Shelly and Shelley say the following about the modern era and materialism's impact on people's lives in the process of self-progress and identity

In the New Industrial State, John Kenneth Galbraith, the well-known economist, describes the impact of the consumer economy upon Americans. The belief, he says, that increased production is a worthy social goal is almost an article of religious faith. Nearly everyone identifies social progress with a rising standard of living. But what have we found? We have found that "more cigarettes cause more cancer. More alcohol causes more cirrhosis. More automobiles causes more accidents, maiming and death" along with more pollution of the air and the countryside. What is called a high standard of living consists, in considerable measure, in arrangements for avoiding muscular energy, increasing sensual pleasure and for enhancing caloric intake above any conceivable nutritional requirement. "Making it" in the land of opportunities has emerged as the day-to-day faith by which the majority of Americans live. The entrepreneurial spirit – or "utilitarian individualism" – is one of the major challenges to a lifestyle shape by biblical values (Shelly: 1992:12).

They also point out that the rise of materialism in the United States, which is applicable in the South African context, has changed the tone of the churches. On this occurrence or advent of materialism, they argue: "Worldly goods were falling into the hands of a few monarchs who controlled the lives of millions. The poor had no access to centres of power, but ministers often minimized their plight and their numbers. The gospel in many pulpits stressed the necessity of conversion as a remedy for laziness and unemployment. The most vivid account of religious individualism was called the "Gospel of Wealth". (Shelley & Shelly 1992:114)

Beyond all that, there is a chasm in the coexistence of both materialism and spirituality in black people that seems empirically to stem from the complexity of the metaphysical colonial Christianity. That detached black people from material life and fuelled spiritual fulfilment at the expense of the recognition of the situation of lack in black people's material conditions – something which Jesus' message, when properly understood and adhered to, helped to balance.

3.3 THE SIGNIFANCE OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CONSUMERISM AND MATERIALISM

The role and unequivocal importance of the Black Church is significant in the changing political, social and economic dynamics. As there is a need to eradicate the conformity and reformist stance prevalent in the black community and the black church in the age of materialism. Against the background of dispossession and dehumanisation, and white consumerism around black people to further dehumanise them, stands the methodology for blacks to regain their humanity. Thus the conformity and reformist approach of following global capitalism has to change. As such, under this conformity and reformist consumption is registered in the black mind a seal of being human and such an understanding has been carried down to be a chief element in post-apartheid South Africa. Martinez-Roca and Vazi (2012:3) argue: "Post-apartheid South Africa has made possibly the "emergence of an African middle class". Public discussion of this phenomenon usually hinges on two criteria: access to consumption patterns previously reserved for whites and residential mobility, the number of households that left the townships and segregated areas for the formerly white suburbs"(Martinez-Roca & Vazi (2012:3)

The Black Church and Black Theology must affirm Black Consciousness as a holistic methodology for black humanity, a black humanity that will not reflect on being human as the spectacles of white people and globalism. Boesak (1977:26) argues: "In simple terms, Black Consciousness means that black people realize that their recognition of their blackness is essential to their humanity. In its relation to Black Theology, Black Consciousness means that being black becomes a decisive factor in black people's expression of their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord".

One key element in the notion of a Black Church in the present context that sometimes seems to be ignored is that of the undeniable ever presence of the black experience. Maimela (2005: 29) distinguishes the meaning of the black experience in the United States and South African contexts. Maimela points out of black experience in the United States: "Racial domination and oppression in North America is associated with the history of slavery which, as developed by the Europeans during the expansion of modern capitalism, was brutal and degrading and had a shattering effect on Black personhood" (Maimela 2005: 29). Maimela (2005:30) asserts the following about the black experience in South Africa:

Black people in South Africa have been, and continue to be victims of racial oppression, and accordingly they have propounded Black Theology in protest against a system that denies their personhood. But, unlike Black Americans, South Africans were not directly enslaved and held in bondage. Rather, their domination and oppression are by-products of European imperialism, which used its cultural, scientific, economic, and military power to subjugate people of colour and, to rob them of their land and dignity (Maimela: 2005:30)

This black experience is now muted in vocal pronunciation of the preaching of the Gospel, more so in the gospel of prosperity. However, the desires of black people within the churches and societies in a consumerist age seem to suggest that they are informed by this still-present experience. Sauter (1996:77) explains: "Experience is nothing but the expression of the fact that I have searched for and found myself." This is precisely what the black experience has resulted in – a quest for black authentic humanity distinct from white definitions of black humanity and being human.

However, in the present context of the notion of a Black Church, experience seems to suggest that black people have learnt from experience to be white or European

duplicates Instead of being human and (quite accurately) blackness being the starting point of authentic humanity. The black experience has not resulted in a definition of being human today, but has been diluted by Western constructs of the meaning of life and universalism. This conveys a sense of freedom dictated by the Western world and capitalism. Black people, Christian or not, are drawn to this approach to life because from this experience, they do not authenticate themselves as black humanity but rather seek to duplicate themselves as the images of Western humanity under capitalism. Sauter (1996:80) argues:

In Western Civilization human beings are absorbed by the world of technology and bureaucracy, by an impressive and oppressive administration of life and its turning of reality into a made and manageable product. We are under pressure to produce, bring about, form, and register something. Only that which we thus set forth is reality for us and others. It certainly cannot be denied that, because of all this, our being human is distorted and the protest against this are justified. But the attitude taken by many theologians in the face of this is little more than the expressionistic escape into a counterculture, into a world where unrulid activity and free associations are dominating (Sauter: 1996:80)

Biko (1978:51) indeed did warn blacks to not duplicate themselves behind the images of being white or western. But rather black-determinism will result in a new humanity for blacks and the world. Biko (1978:51) asserts: "We believe that in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationship. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still to come from Africa—giving the world a more humane face". The way that blacks are engulfed in the artificiality of the post-modern world expressed in materialism. Reflects how blacks will continue being taught by the world and in turn, because of blacks duplicating western values will not have their on part to play in the world.

Martinez-Roca and Vazi point out that "[the] assumption seems to be that 'bling' culture is a black culture" and Cone (1984:28) says: "I firmly believe that the issues to which theology addresses itself should be those that emerge out of life in society as persons seek to achieve meaning in a dehumanized world". Boesak (1977:27) tallies both with Cone and Biko and Boesak argues: "For blacks, authentic humanity means black humanity. Blacks know that racial fellowship and reconciliation will never become a reality unless whites learn to accept blacks as black people. This

much must be clear: When blacks speak of the affirmation of their blackness, this does not mean a resigned acceptance. It is affirmation: Black is Beautiful”.

The church should therefore not preach the simplistic view of the Gospel in relation to black human existence. Concepts of sin, grace, mercy, etc. seem vague to a dehumanised people as they do not deal with their material condition. That has left many black people in the church and the secular world vulnerable to materialism and individualism as human definitions. Cone argues: “The convergence of Jesus Christ and the Black experience is the meaning of the Incarnation. Because God became human in Jesus Christ, God disclosed the divine will to be with humanity in our wretchedness. And because we blacks accept God’s presence in Jesus as the true definition of our humanity, blackness and divinity are dialectically bound together as one reality” (Cone 1997:33). Boesak (1977:27) explains the following: “For people to become authentically black, to affirm their blackness in a situation where they have been taught from childhood to accept their 'coloredness' or 'non-whiteness' or whatever white law wishes to impose upon them, is an experience similar to a rebirth, a total conversion, the participation in the creation of a new humanity.”

He further argues: “Blacks, through Black Theology and Black Consciousness, now seek their authentic humanity, free from the blemish of white contempt – systematic or personal” (Boesak 1977:28).

The notion of a Black Church needs to assert the role of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit who created humanity and thus can give direction in the consumerist culture permeated in blacks and furthered by miss-identity. God should be the starting point of human identification parallel to the human and the human encounter of humanity in the African culture. God is part of human history, in which salvation of humanity takes place and is exhibited during the materiality of the existence of humanity. Thus God becomes incarnate. Stefan (2008:71) in his context rightly argues: “Christian ethics implements the truth of the revealed nature of ecclesial teaching and holding in view that the Son of God becoming incarnate assumed to Himself everything that is man’s nature, none of its prescriptions can be inhumane, artificial or false” This too, is applicable to black humanity in the United States and in South Africa.

Biko (1978:101) argued: "The philosophy of Black Consciousness therefore expresses group pride and the determination of the black to rise and attain the envisaged self. Freedom is the ability to define oneself with one's possibilities held back not by the power of other people over one but only by one's relationship to God and to natural surroundings."

It is fitting, as a theological stance, to hold that there must be some moral ethic in approaching materialism with humanity relying on it in the world as well as in the church. Stefan (2008:71) argues: "In contrast, the ethics of contemporary man is proudly secularized and relativistic, drawing its origins from non-spirituality, and serving the consumerism and materialism of this world. Far from serving man post-modern ethics offers no solutions to his life problems, it is useless before suffering and death, love and beauty, and is starkly artificial."

In terms of black people's quest for their own humanity, the problem of identity and abundance or opulence is not an individual problem. This understanding is clarified in an understanding of the fallacy of the application of individuality in the black world and society. Due to the nature of the problem of human meaning for black people, which is more communal than individual, the current era provides artificial-ism for black life – particularly in pushing the Western idea of human meaning that is individually oriented. In South Africa, this individual meaning of being human is propelled by money and is responsible for opulence, materialism and individualism in black people recreating themselves. Hanely and Wilhelm (1992:9) argue: "Money itself holds little value. It is merely a means of exchange. But for a great number of people projection of the emotional psychological value of money far exceeds its relative economic value." In a study designed to understand the symbolic meaning of money Wernimont and Fitzpatrick (1972) concluded that individuals apply a variety of meanings to money, including failure and social acceptability.

Asante argues: "... assaults on black people by racist social scientists often become indistinguishable from the works of other white scholars. In the aftermath, blacks may consciously or subconsciously internalize accusations of their inferiority. In a capitalistic society, they too value "status" and "success". But when they attempt to

apply these values to themselves, they find failure, which results in self-hate” (Asante (1993:124).

This argument holds significant value for black humanity and a quest of authentic human identity defined by themselves. In the present context, the effects of white-deification by black people are the potent medium of black humanity’s miss-identity and the opulence exposed and expressed in materialism. Erskine explains: “One of the great tragedies of this world that confronted black people was that of the white person wanting to be revered as God: the creature wanting to be revered as the creator. And the creature in this world of abject suffering sought to separate the bodies and the souls of black people. It was this false understanding of humanity which made the Moravian church in the Caribbean own slaves and plead with the slaves to be better slaves” (1981:38).

Biko (1978:111) argued: “... the black man in himself has developed a certain state of alienation, he rejects himself, precisely because he attaches the meaning white to all that is good, in other words he associates good and he equates good with white. This arises out of his development from childhood.” In Posel's view:

The demise of apartheid also saw South Africa’s reintegration into a global economy in which conspicuous consumption is par for the course, which makes it unsurprising and unremarkable that comparable trends should emerge within the ranks of South Africa’s black population, for whom these opportunities were previously politically curtailed (their white counterparts having embraced consumerist versions of the good life decades before) (Posel's:2013:160).

The miss-identity of black people in South Africa stems from the evils that others choose to do and is no surprise in the current era. It is also true of black culture and human meaning that includes the past, present and future (seen and unseen). Browne (1996:62) says: “The evil human beings do may produced or provoke both societal and personal misfortunes. Malicious intentions may result in other individuals being miss-fortuned. Because of the indispensable and fated bond between deed and consequence, the evil we do has inexorable consequences to the perpetrator. All evil is reprehensible and the human source is reprehensibly liable.” The dehumanisation contained in white supremacy and their deification by black people has produced a society of black people that is narcissist and elitist.

3.4 MATERIALISM AND SELF-DEIFICATION

As mentioned above by both Biko and Erskine concerning the perpetual childhood state of black people towards the Western world's hegemony, in a similar fashion the deification of white people and the Western world has been transmitted to black people and created a self-conceited and narcissist society that is projected clearly in black elites. Shutte (1993:57) argues: "What the Bible calls idolatry is something we are doing all the time. It is the indirect cause of the arms race, the increasing economic gap between North and South, rich and poor, apartheid, AIDS-the lot. It is the unconditional valuing of oneself, one's growth, security and happiness, above everything else." The above provides a view of the social make-up of South Africa in the post-apartheid era as well as the American context. To a large extent, the manner in which black people have been socialised is very much informed and influenced by their past.

Browne has an anthropological and psychological take of individuals and society, and the interconnectedness of the two. He argues: "Anthropology is especially placed to recognize, in its process of maturation and eventually becoming a complete or fulfilled person, the extent to which the individual becomes something of his or her own making while simultaneously being the creation of society" (Browne 1996:33). Ayelew, in discussing Frantz Fanon and Marxism, points out the condition of the black man. He says: "He is an artificial creation devoid of inner or authentic identity which is requisite for creative endeavour. Just as the 'Jew is one whom others consider a Jew' the black man, too, is a creation of the white man" (Ayelew 1975:80). White people and the entire perception of the Western world have made themselves the deity of black people not only in a theological, ecclesiastic setting but also in a socio-cultural stance. Through the mediums of oppression and dispossession, white opulence in similar fashion has become the validity of privilege and aspirations for black people in considering themselves human.

In the South African context, Adam and Moodley (1986:198) argue: "Like Afrikaner nationalism, which used the state to seize its share of wealth from English imperialism, so Black nationalism, on the whole, aims at capturing capitalism for its own benefit rather than overthrowing it." This is precisely what is wrong in South

Africa and the meaning of being human, since reformism has been adopted as a norm of life (black life).

This type of narcissist deification outlook on materialism makes the situation for black humanity in South Africa quite complex in that it widens the boundaries not only between white and black people but also between black people themselves, due to status and class that are typical of self-deification. Shutte (1993:61) argues: "If sin is self-worship, it seems obvious that it should result in an inability to form a true human community of whatever kind, sexual, social, political. And in fact human history is a history of opposition, struggle and war, culminating now in the twentieth-century, when humanity at last has the power to do what it pleases, in the war between the rich and the poor." He further (1993:61) argues: "All our institutions, all our culture, all our customs are infected by self-worship. And if the Christian understanding of sin is right then we have lost our freedom to change" .

It is fundamentally important to argue that materialism and miss-identity, which lead to self-deification, are linked to the modern and postmodern era. It causes miss-identity and challenges while widening further inquiry for meaning of being human for black people. It is at this point that Christianity and the Black Church are called to rise to the occasion by authenticating the life of God and humanity of black people.

Stefan argues:

Modernity attacked traditional Christian values, throwing man into a world of uncertainties, into a desacralized world. The idea that God has dominion over the world, that the world is His creation or handiwork has begun to fade towards extinction. Man is chasing God away from history and life, hoping to affirm absolute freedom for himself. However, in so doing, he fails to see that without God history is meaningless and life is hostile; without God, man must struggle by all means against everything. Modernity also led to the end of harmony (Stefan: 2008:64 & 65).

He further argues:

According to negative post-modernist thinking, our current epoch is dominated by longing (nostalgia) for nature and genuineness, and thus it creates substitutes for God as best as it can. Our current epoch sells away the most numerous desired illusions, even intellectual illusions. Man is left in the hands of the whirlwind of this society wherein each and every product is but an object to sell for pleasure, and whatever fails to provide immediate and immanent satisfaction is discarded as ugly (Stefan 2008:65).

It is important for the notion of a Black Church to be critical of the era of materialism and individualism, and not be drawn to embrace a new destructive worldview. That cannot instil a sense of human pride to be black and the prosperity gospel that cannot achieve authentic humanity for black people. Day observes:

The religious worldview of the prosperity gospel does not question the “capitalist moment” in which we live in. This moment, characterized by commodification, exploitation, and maldistribution of resources, contributes to increasing poverty in America and abroad. It treats the human subject as a commodity. Labour, for example, is no longer seen as a human possession worthy of respect but rather as a commodity to be exchanged to maximize profit. Labour thus loses its humanizing element and is depersonalized—just one more commodity (Day: 2012:113).

3.5 CONCLUSION

The Black Church should return to its principles of justice, truth,, liberty and humanising society for dehumanised black people. The Black Church is of utmost importance today as it is relevant in dealing with the discrepancies of society that have led to black destruction. Above all, the church must remain a light and witness to the world in which black people live. This position of contextual relativity of the Black Church further necessitates Black Liberation Theology and Black Consciousness as proper models and methodology for black people to be recognised by themselves as human beings. As such, it need not be beguiled by secularism, globalisation, materialism and individualism as methods of asserting their humanity.

Chapter 4

The Black Church in relation to communalism

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The notion of a Black Church emanates from historical developments and occurrences of black people's encounter with the Western world. The notion Black Church is not just another religious institution as the many others that exist in society. Fundamentally, it has been pointed out in previous reflections on the notion of a Black Church that it is directed at black people, their dehumanisation and experience in the world. Frazier (1964: 6-46) pointed out that the historical development of the "Negro church"/Black Church was directed towards blacks. But more so, it had to be beyond a religious institution but go to the heart of the society in which this dehumanisation and social fracture was happening. Frazier (1964: 12) pointed out that: "The Negro slave found in Christianity a theology and a new orientation towards the world at large and in doing so he adapted the Christian religion to his psychological and social needs".

The secular world and the constructs of life that are popularised as the social make-up of the world pose another challenge for the notion of a Black Church. Historically, it was dehumanisation and the black experience in Africa and abroad that gave birth to the notion of a Black Church. Through the Black Church, black people could re-affirm their own humanity, culture, history, spirituality and way of life that were denied in the Western individualistic construct of the world. Cornel West (1999: 101) rightly points out: "The sheer absurdity of being black human being whose body is viewed as an abomination, whose black thoughts and ideas are perceived as debased and whose black pain and grief are rendered invisible on the human and moral scale is the New World context in which black culture emerged".

It is important to note that the notion black church came with cultural renewal for blacks. While it also goes hand and hand with black cultural life, namely; ⁶communalism. Today the Black Church is challenged to provide a human meaning

⁶ In having discussed the historical aspect of the notion of the black church in chapter 2. Where the nature of the black church is, particular its contribution towards the appreciation black culture and promoting commonness and unity among black. It is then founded that communalism is to be stressed, firstly as an intrinsic part of African culture and as a chief

for black people, especially in this consumerist, materialistic and individualistic age. Shelley and Shelley (1992:24 & 25) give a narration of the world of the past and a church-cultured society that was able to see variation in denominational affiliations though common bonds were held, but they observe that currently the churches/denominations still exist but the world has changed. They point out that the modern world likes to assert freedom of choice in religion and other areas of life though it is not autonomous decisions but usually preconditioned by society, they argue:

definition of human meaning. That which is identified in the inclusiveness of the African community, rather than in individualism, which is attached to the western autonomy. But another point, which is to be made, is that communalism is a value system that has kept African life and meaning of life in order. While also serving as a contrast to European social order, Ntibagirirwa points out, that African societies face a moral crisis which is fundamentally based on their identity crisis. Ntibagirirwa argues: "...the moral crisis comes from the fact that Africans have shifted away from their own value system and the moral values that God with it to other value systems underpinned by other metaphysical foundations" (Ntibagirirwa: 2001: 65). Further, Ntibagirirwa argues that this is due to the fact that African leaders post-independence opted for foreign value systems, namely Marxism. This is due to the analysis of the capitalist framework and the implication of socio-economics. Another contention is that Ntibagirirwa observes Marxism was due to the after effect of World War II and the fall of the Soviet Union saw the acceptance of liberalism, found in Kantianism and utilitarianism (2001: 65). The sense here is that socialism and communism are not African, same goes for capitalism, as such cannot resolve African problems. The views Ntibagirirwa raised are valid, though there is a point of difference in that how will African systems work in a world embedded in modernity which is not African. While at the same time that modernity defines the world, as such, not that African value systems are valid enough. But possibly because these; socio-economic analysis provided in socialism/Marxism are possible gate ways to ultimately returning to African value systems. At the same time one can find that one fundamental thing that cannot be missed in African value systems is that of the defining point of human meaning. A call that is relevant in an individualist age. Writing on "*The ontological background of the African Value System*" Ntibagirirwa point out: "The African value system cannot be fully understood and appreciated outside the way we conceive the human being in the universe, on the one hand and among others, on the other hand. The way we understand the human beings in his universe and among others cannot be divorced from the Bantu ontology or notion of being" (Ntibagirirwa: 2001: 66-67). Ntibagirirwa notices the limitation of the Bantu ontology and does not generalize it. But what is key is how the is an intimacy between individual and community, something that modernity does not offer through its alienation of human being from another. The Bantu ontology can then be descriptive in a sense to the black church, black ecclesiology and the African value of communalism. Noting that in chapter 2, Deotis pointed out the nature of the church which is rooted in fellowship and communal life. This African value system is fundamental in the making, keeping and engagement of the black church, and black people in a consumerist, materialist and individualist age. It is possibly that Marxism/ communism are fundamental in the economic critique of capitalism. While communalism supersedes economic reflections, but rather ties all: metaphysical and existential realities, together in the ontology of blacks. That which also needs soteriology, but quite fundamentally and adequately so soteriology only to be found in the black church and extend to the greater part of black communities.

Both the Bible and social scientists tell us that contrary to popular belief, people seldom make autonomous decisions. They lean heavily on the social advantages that they expect to gain from their decisions and actions. The apostle Paul recognized this pressure when he urged the Roman Christians: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world". And the apostle John had similar motives in mind when he urged his "little children not to "love the world or anything in the world". What does that "world" look like in our time? How has it changed in the last generation? If America is no longer characterized primarily by Christian values, if the religious landscape is no longer dominated by the traditional denominations, what do we find on the social horizon? (Shelley & Shelly 1992:25)

This provides a prelude to the discussion on the connection of society with the church and vice versa. In this chapter this study therefore focuses on the obvious responsibility the church has in society, but especially on the role of the church in safeguarding both the church and society from dangers that might lead to the disintegration of humanity and hindrances that might result in a chasm between human beings (thus breaking the human-to-human encounter). The Black Church, in view of the suffering of black people today in an individualistic society, needs to assume its place for black humanity. However, it has to assume its role primarily to unify humanity through communalism, asserting humanity from black/African understanding of being a human. Evans (1999:101) asserts: "The idea of humanity in African traditional thought is summed up in the phrase "existence in relation" and is undergirded by two principles; that of indwelling and that of interaction". He further points out that indwelling refers to human participation with the divine, while interaction is said to be: "Interaction refers to the notion that no person can achieve the fullness of life apart from the group" (Evans 1999: 101).

This would be primarily the strength of a black church as a religious and social institution. Frazier (1964:16) argues on the same point of having communal bonds existed from the black church of the Spirituals: "More often, however, the religion of the Negro was expressed in the Spirituals showing faith in fellowship with his fellow slaves"

4.2 THE CHURCH, COMMUNALISM IN SOCIETY AND COLLECTIVE HUMANITY

All that has been discussed about the humanity of black people with regard to the notion of a Black Church expresses a black cultural and theological position of their humanity in its humaneness as identified within the Black Church, black culture and Black Theology. It includes an acceptance of all people as ⁷created by God and as such reflect communal life for humanity and recognition of the black existential point of view expressed in Black Theology. Pityani (1972:42) argues: "Black Theology concerns itself with liberation, and liberation presupposes a search for humanity and for existence as a God-created being" (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1972:42). The following is also made clear:

Man's creaturely relationship to God is a given factor of his existence. For man, to come to be and to exist mean the same thing as to be a creature of God. Thus creatureliness, which is the result of the positing of man in the world of existing things, is also descriptive of man's dependence on God. To live means to be at a point in God's creation where one receives and shares with other the life-sustaining gifts of creation, which are complementary part of human existence (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1972:128)

It is from this premise that black humanity expresses collectivism of humanity in the sight of God and as part of God's creation. Thus, making communalism an urgent necessity. The Black Church became the ambience where legitimate black humanity is located and reaffirmed, firstly, among black people who need to view themselves

⁷ Since this research is in Systematic Theology/Dogmatics, it is essential to touch on Christian beliefs of creation. The creation of the world goes hand in hand with the creation of humanity as an emanation of creation and the Creator. For the belief of God creating humanity implies that humanity did not just emerge as organic constructs similar to the world; the point the creation of humanity suggests is the uniqueness and speciality of the *Homo sapiens*, a speciality that transcends racialism and culture. Kolakowski (1978) discusses the doctrine of God and creation and its impact on humanity. He argues: "The whole visible world has been called into existence for man's sake, in order that he may rule over it; consequently, human nature is present in the whole of created nature, all creation is comprised in human nature and is destined to achieve its freedom through man. Man, as a microcosm of creation, contains in himself all the attributes of the visible and invisible world. Mankind is, as it were, the leader of the cosmos, which follows it into the depths and back into the divine source of all Being" (Kolakowski 1978a:25) In using creation as a point of reflection, the reality of being human is elongated to supersede variation of cultures, races and tradition but grapples with the view of a common consensus of humanity. Murphy and Knights (2010:147) says about the glimpse of this common humanity: "Each morning most of us, I suspect, find ourselves looking into a mirror as we prepare for the coming day. When we carry out this simple and all too human action, we are unconsciously confirming that make us who we are: self-conscious and self-reflective creatures."

through the spectacles of God and the black self and, secondly, leading to a common consensus of black people viewing each other as equal human beings beyond the constraints caused by variations of ethnicity and culture. Furthermore, it is not aimed at denying the humanity of white people but at making both black and white people recognise black people as fully human. It is important to note that the term "black" has different meanings. In one sense, it represents people of African descent and colour, while on the other hand it carries a more symbolic meaning for all those considered less human by a white system and as such suitable to be considered as non-whites since whiteness is associated with the meaning of being human. In Black Theology and Black Consciousness, the term has both meanings, since both meanings are fundamental to validating humanity as being "black". Since communalism is chief in African cultures, being black means affirming black solidarity. As such, the term "black" is considered an optimistic and political rhetoric to put all the indigenous people and all other discards of white supremacy under one umbrella for a model of communalism as an expression of the quest for being human. Posel argues:

The content of racial difference, and the number of races distinguished, have thus varied across space and time, depending on particular histories of exclusion and domination. In the case of South Africa, from Union in 1910 up to the advent of apartheid in 1948, official racial discourses recognized and distinguished between three races ("Europeans", "natives" and "coloureds"); after 1948, this extended to four races, then designated as "whites", "Bantu" or "Africans", "Coloureds" and "Indians". The discourse of the anti-apartheid struggle reproduced the notion of these four distinct races as a fact of everyday life in the country; but the term "black" was used politically to encompass all those who were not "white" (Posel:2013:161).

Gibson (2003:33) explains: "Defined in the context of the White the Black has been stripped of identity and 'abraded into nonbeing'. What is finally at stake in the colonial situation is the replacement of the indigenous consciousness by 'an authority symbol representing the master' who is charged with maintaining order and control." Thus they were identified in unity as black people in terms of the white world's construct and supremacy, and this is extended to all who are excluded to not qualify as being human beings in a white world. Biko (1978:100) wrote: "We must realise that our situation is not a mistake on the part of whites but a deliberate act, and that no amount of moral lecturing will persuade the white man to 'correct' the situation. The system concedes nothing without demand, for it formulates its very method of

operation on the basis that the ignorant will learn to know ...” He further argued: “Hence thinking along lines of Black Consciousness makes the black man see himself as a being complete in himself. It makes him less dependent and more free to express his manhood. At the end of it all, he cannot tolerate attempts by anybody to dwarf the significance of his manhood” (Biko 1978:102).

Lastly, it is from the premise of the Black Church that the collectivism of a common bond of humanity is to spread to the world through Black Theology and Black Consciousness. All work to prove the relativity of humanity and the human-to-human encounter. Adam and Moodley (Adam & Moodley (1986:199) argue: South Africa, on the other hand, prides itself on being a Christian state. Black religious activism, therefore, reaffirms the common bond even when the specific policy is called in question. In the South African context, Black theology implies reform, not revolution. Liberation theology has different implications in different situations. In South Africa it stresses the brotherhood of man, denouncing the policy of apartheid as heresy”.

Another point that is of utmost importance is that the Black Church would – and should – usher in communal life among human beings as expected by God. This communalism is fundamental to Christianity, in as much as it is important in the African culture and is fundamental in the making of society and providing a human meaning that is coherent in dismissing the fallacies of dehumanisation that black people have suffered. So, in some sense in a culture of secularism, consumerism and individualism, communalism should be a culture that is ushered in by the Black Church. Kinget (1975:3) argues on culture: “Culture making, a social process pertinent to all human activities and products whose patterns are distinctive in a given society. Such patterns can be discerned in the endless variety of customs, institutions, laws, language, religion, politics, entertainment, rituals, cooking, dress, art and architecture prevailing with a society during a certain, often extensive history.”

Small states that culture “is a comprehensive phenomenon” (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1972:15). It is important to note that there can be a culture that includes all of humanity’s efforts. But more so, in the present individualistic and materialistic context. Rahner expresses the same line of thought as that of Biko on

the deliberateness of God in creating people and the meaning of culture that includes communalism:

This term designates the shaping of man himself and of his world through the exercise of his own mind and freedom. Man can never exist without culture, for he necessarily exists as an embodied being (objectifying himself in his bodiliness and its surroundings) and as a personal being who has freely fulfilled himself; therefore, culture is his fundamental task (Gen 1:28), in accomplishing which he also realizes his relationship with God (Rahner:1975:113)..

The creation of humanity as a part of theological reflection necessitates that with creation there came into being the phenomenon of culture as part of the diversity of humanity and the creativity of the human creature. Furthermore, it reflects the intrinsic link between individuals and their natural surroundings and the human-to-human encounter.

This is crucial in the current era that is very much materialistic and individualistic, more so in the purpose of this study in the South African context and fundamentally among black people who are challenged by their alienation and by modernity and its interpretation of life and of humanity. Evans (1999: 102) points out: "...emphasis on the group's role in the formation of the individual is a radical departure from the individualism that has marked European-American theological Anthropology since the time of Augustine". Western norms and standards are materialistic and individualistic in their approach to life and humanity. Contrary to Western life, the African structure and culture are usually communal in form and result in a close-knitted society. Biko realised that within his context, as even in the current era which has as its backdrop Biko's context, the globalisation of Africa would result in the bastardisation of black culture, values, social outlook and not attending to human meaning for black people in the new found individualistic society.

To reiterate this view, Biko advocated that black culture has to resurface to the top to resist the conformism brought about by modernity and its constant dehumanisation of black culture by dwarfing other cultures through Western interpretations and globalisation. Biko realised that African culture is egalitarian and, to a certain extent, see all human beings as unique and communal individuals. He argued that African culture is truly man-centred society based on the humane sacredness of a tradition

of sharing that rejects the individualistic Western outlook of life, which is narrow and cold (Biko 1978:106). Biko correctly pointed out that human beings are self-conscious and innovative through culture, with the self-definition of humanity as the nucleus. He argued: "A culture is essentially the society's composite answer to the varied problem of life. We are experiencing new problems by the day and whatever we do adds to the richness of our cultural heritage as long as it has Man as its centre" (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1972:25).

This is a formidable basis for the universality of the church and the contextual existentialist church, namely the Black Church as part of Christian faith from the biblical narratives pushes and propels the love of another and sharing as the cornerstone of the faith. It is probable that both the church and African value systems are corrupted by modernity since the modern culture is that of materialism substantiated by a corrupted focus on economics. Stefan (Stefan: 2008:68) argues: "The first characteristic of today's economic ethics is "consumerism", which is a materialist outlook on man and life, embodying greed and spiritual indifference. The powerful attraction towards the material world leads to a destructive outlook on matter (or more precisely to an absolutization of those resources entertaining biological life), and to an intertwining of each moment of life with the consumption of matter"

This view echoes the need for a legitimate black humanity and communalism, and reiterates Biko's observation of material want lacking spiritual fulfilment. Ayelew (1975:75) argues: "The modern era not only subjected black people to slavery and colonialism in order to appropriate their labour and resources, but systematically and thoroughly subverted their norm of life and existence." To a large extent, it is true that the norms of life and existence of black people are tainted by the blemish of white supremacy and individualism. This, in the modern era, is made out to be the only formidable position of authentic human life and meaning. Ayelew (1975:75) further argues concerning modernity and its effect to the African, he argues: "In effect, it destroyed their identity as a people and as a historical and moral force." But Western life managed to disassociate and disorient black humanity and society and its structure. Furthermore, in the fallen state of black humanity through historical misidentification, modernity has proposed an alternative – which was to ease and

free black people through materialistic and individualistic opulence. However, this alternative is contrary to the African outlook of unitary life and thus can be identified within individualism in economics, professionalism and religion (the prosperity gospel).

Modernity provides artificial pleasure associated with wealth which only comes to a few, such as black elites, and the psychological effects of suffering easily exacerbate into breaking the unity inherent in Africans – and making the African meaning of humanity devoid of meaning. At the heart of the modern world and the negligence of communalism is individualism which harbours elitism and egoism. But more to blacks who find themselves in white positions, Fanon argues on the black intellectual and individualism: “The colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by the members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men may make; the essential qualities of the West, of course”.

Further Fanon adds:

Now it so happens that during the struggle for liberation, at the moment that the native intellectual comes into touch again with his people, this artificial sentinel is turned into dust. All the Mediterranean values –the triumph of the human individual, of clarity and of beauty—becomes lifeless, colourless knick-knacks. All those speeches seem like collections of dead words; those values which seemed to uplift the soul are revealed as worthless, simply because they have nothing to do with the concrete conflict in which the people is engaged (Fanon:1963: 36)

What Fanon is suggesting that the institutions that be teach blacks western mannerisms but further the whole global make-up also is involved. The usual result is to split society and creating elitism and individualism even among one’s own, a hindrance to communal life. Fanon goes on to argue about liberation in breaking free from preconditioned thinking, he asserts:

Individualism is the first to disappear. The native intellectual had learnt from his masters that the individual ought to express himself fully. The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native’s mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory. The very forms of organization of the struggle will suggest to him a different vocabulary. Brother, sister, friend—these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme of getting on. The native intellectual takes part, in a sort of *auto-da-fe*, in the destruction of all his idols:

egoism, recrimination that springs from pride, and the childish stupidity of those who always want to have the last word (Fanon: 1963:36).

If the Christian faith is true and authentic for humanity, reflecting on the texts of the early church and particularly the book of Acts concerning faith and communal life, it seems a bit impossible to not realise that the early church was not like modern-day organised religion and churches. The black churches have in the past held on to communalism but modernity has crept into their theme of black communal life and society. This is clearly seen in the Black megachurches of the charismatic and Pentecostal faith. That has the materialist element entailed in it, Barnes points out in discussing the prosperity Gospel this element, Barnes (2013: 179) asserts: "As one clergy member here suggests, divine, less conspicuous healing among Prosperity supporters may be overshadowed by a focus on more tangible outcomes such as massive churches, expensive cars, and ostentatious lifestyles. It is just likely that an emphasis on wealth mirrors the materialism evident in the wider society".

It is safe to suggest that money and ⁸economy in the modern day and the conceptualisation of an economy was and is fundamental in breaking the bond

⁸ Ashmore and Sharer (1979:404) point out: "... economy ... refers to the provisioning of society. An economy is broader in scope than twentieth-century use of the term implies: prices, wages, international, markets, capitalism, and so on are very specific characteristics of the present day Western economy. In its broader sense, however, economy refers to the range of processes and mechanisms by which adequate food, clothing and shelter are provided to all members of a society. Economic considerations include technological ones: How is food procured?" The shift from an archaeological sense of the word "economy" is not hard to see since material and individualism are not based on the broader society by narrow economies of a few individuals. So, in a sense, it is possible to suggest that economies were part of the communal structure of life, in part in this context black life. Fowler (1995:43) argues: "Prior to the colonial era, Africa had balanced, self-sustaining economies. They did not have the wealth of consumer goods or the level of industrial output of a modern Western economy. On the other hand, they did have productive manufacturing and agriculture industries with effective commercial systems for the profitable distribution of the out of these industries." Paralleling this with creation proves the validity of communalism in that the Biblical narratives tell of creation given to humanity, with humanity as custodians possessing natural resources for sustenance and creating symbiotic relationships between humanity and the resources through economies. The modern era is very much off the mark and mission of economies in that it now pushes opulence, debt, materialism and individualism. With the constant need for competition and class typical in phrasing of the first, second and third world, that on its own gives an impression of a chasm of humanity from an economic angle in as much as it exist in a racial context.

between black people and humanity as a whole. Today that breakage of the communal bond has given rise, in post-apartheid South Africa, to materialism and individualism expressed in opulence found even among black elites – and the close association of freedom with money. Money is now used to recreate and give human meaning to wealth in the context of black humanity. Hanely and Wilhelm (1992:9) argue that money itself holds little value; it is merely a means of exchange. But for a great number of people the projection of the emotional psychological value of money far exceeds its relative economic value. Wernimont and Fitzpatrick (1972) in their study that was aimed at understanding the symbolic meaning attached to money concluded that individuals apply a variety of meanings to money, including failure and social acceptability, Hanely & Wilhelm (1992: 8) assert: “Models of consumer buying behaviour frequently suggest that consumers tend to purchase products congruent with one’s self-image or congruent with an image that one wishes to portray. Specifically, it has been suggested that a consumer may compare the symbolic or perceived attributes of a product with potential for self-maintenance or self-enhancement ...”

The self-recreation of black people is primarily based upon the psychological effects and profound impact of black inferiority when compared with white people. This is due to dehumanisation, particularly with regard to the long history of suffering, poverty and disparity. That serves as validation of such behaviour observed by Hanley, among black people. While it is possible to argue that post-apartheid South Africa brought about integration as part of promoting the ideal universality of humanity after the horrors of colonialism, imperialism, slavery and apartheid. It is not sufficient to deal with the magnitude of the black self and dehumanisation. The problem is also that a culture of consumerism falls beyond the achievements of this integration. The reality is that it is an imbalanced integration where black people are still being marginalised based on viewing freedom through the spectacles of white hegemony. Integration in this regard is not a viable vehicle and not ideal for dealing with the "realness" of the situation – which is one of inequality of the life – of black people who are further typified in the materialistic age. Biko argued:

... an integration based on exploitative values in a society in which the whites have already cut out their position somewhere at the top of the pyramid. It is an integration in which blacks will compete with blacks, using each other as stepping stones up as a ladder leading them to white values. It is an

integration in which the black man will have to prove himself in terms of those values before meriting acceptance and ultimate assimilation. It is an integration in which the poor will grow poorer and rich richer in a country where the poor have always been black (Unisa Archives, accession 153 1972:21).

This rightly depicts the context of black people in a materialistic and individualistic age as one where the competitiveness of human beings is bound to result in individualism. However, those in professions and even the poor associate materialism and obsession with material gain as symbols of being human and success. More than anything, the rise of professionalism and the popularism of individualism as the ideal further fracture the meaning of the humanity of black people and communal living. This affects the African culture of communalism, human-centeredness and the sacred tradition of sharing. It detaches Christian truth from communalism and a common consensus of the recognition of humanity. The greatest effect of materialism, with money as its chief proponent, is that black humanity seeks social acceptance to validate being human or making it. Lincoln gives a clear indication of this, he records:

I sat recently in a comfortable middle-class home in northwest Washington talking with Jerry Coward and his wife, both school teachers in the District of Columbus school system. "You know, when we moved into this neighbourhood five years ago," Jerry said, "the whites all threatened to move out. A few stayed. And since that time, two brand-new white families have moved in, right down the block. Professionals people, too. When white people start moving into, instead of away from, a Negro neighbourhood, I guess we've got it made (Lincoln: 1971:108).

The words of Biko resonate well in the context of the churches today, particularly black churches. Today the black churches seem to distance themselves from the broader view of the human condition and authenticating human identity for black people. Though this does not mean they do not have it in thought, but rather that fervent fire that characterized black churches activity in society is not evident as before. Instead, there is a stance to advocate for a capitalistic agenda and individualistic modus operandi based on the perpetual slave–master relationship. Day (2012:23) notes that black churches are grounded in what in "anthropological principle" is considered a strong belief in affirming equality for all humanity under God, with race not being the concern or any natural order.

The communalism of both the Black Churches and black culture envisaged in the Black Consciousness and Black Theology, depending on interpretation and application, usually puts humanity on an equal footing. It also gives prominence to the egalitarian and classless society of humanity, though in a theological stance the church through Christ must primarily advocate for this unequivocally and this can only be done through Black Theology in South Africa and in the United States. The following therefore holds true:

Accepting the situational character of Jesus, his first interpreters and his 1970 South African followers, the idea of a black theology, ceases to be theological emotionalism. Black theology has to ask "At what crucial point does the human situation of blacks in South Africa fit in with the human situation of Jesus in Roman occupied Israel? What message of hope did Jesus have for his contemporaries whose situation parallels that of Black South Africans? (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1969–1971:1)

Makhathini argues:

Black Theology is the knowledge of God's existence with Black existence. ie. What God's answers are concerning the Black man's existence. It defines the results of God's encounter with Black people in their natural setting, confronting them with his will which challenges them to become what they are where they are (in culture and custom), what he created them to be (Unisa Archive, accession 153, 1972:2).

Contrary to Biko's observation, the church then and now seems to support class and hierarchy based on its allegiance to modernity. Biko (1978:61) argued: "It must also be noted that the Church in South Africa as everywhere else has been spoilt by bureaucracy." However, it says very little about the material conditions of humanity, a context in which humanity find themselves. Biko further argued:

Even at this late stage, one notes the appalling irrelevance of the interpretation given to the Scriptures. In a country teeming with injustice and fanatically committed to the practice of oppression, intolerance and blatant cruelty because of racial bigotry; in a country where all black people are made to feel the unwanted stepchildren of a God whose presence they cannot feel; in a country where father and son, mother and daughter alike develop daily into neurotics though sheer inability to relate the present to the future because of a completely engulfing sense of destitution, the Church further adds to their insecurity by its inwards-directed definition of the concept of sin and its encouragement of the mea culpa attitude (Biko:1978:61).

The above shows the reality of apartheid and post-apartheid effects on black people which Biko described as resulting in a neurotic society at odds with each other. This goes together with the breaking up of the family and which is a crucial starting point for communalism, although today families also consist of individuals, which can be

named individualism in a family structure – a depiction of the *Ubuntu*/humaneness principle not only becoming obsolete in the world of extreme volatility that confront blacks. But even at the grassroots level of the family. The family is the root for the formation of societies, communities and cultures. The Black Churches in the modern era must uphold as part of the Christian faith and African cultural consciousness the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. Because *Ubuntu* represents the collective recognition of humanity, Louw (1997:2) argues: "... this traditional African aphorism articulates a basic respect and compassion for others. It can be interpreted as both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It both describes human being as 'being-with-others' and prescribes what 'being-with-others' should be all about."

This observation is similar to that of Bergie (1991:181), who argues: "Implicitly in all I have tried to say is that the core of being human being is to be correctly related – whether to God, others, or the natural order." This framework tallies well with the essence of communal life, which is not only for a human-to-human encounter. But rather for an all-inclusive experience: God and the world, a point of urgent necessity in authenticating a theological stance of God giving us our humanity and that humanity which is to be realised in the world. Frank (1965: 221) discussing the link between being human and the divine, says: "Being a natural creative and at the same time an image of God, a created embodiment of the Divine spirit, man stands midway between God and the world and participates in both". As part of raising awareness of a consensus on true and legitimate humanity, the Black Church must not downplay the salvation of individuals that reflects God's personal care for each person. However, this is where the *Ubuntu* aspect is crucial for truly identifying individuals and the community as interrelated. Louw argues:

Ubuntu's respect for the particularity of the other links up closely to its respect for individuality. But, be it noted, the individuality which *Ubuntu* respects, is not of Cartesian making. On the contrary, *Ubuntu* directly contradicts the Cartesian conception of individuality in terms of which the individual or self can be conceived without thereby necessarily conceiving the other. The Cartesian individual exists prior to or separately and independently from the rest of the community or society. The rest of society is nothing but an added extra to a pre-existent and self-sufficient being. This "modernistic" and "atomistic" conception of individuality lies at the bottom individualism and collectivism (Louw: 1997:3).

The *Ubuntu* philosophy can be coherent with human life that has been cut off through dehumanisation and the black people accepting a twisted logic of individualism and materialism as being human. The antithesis of black soterological syllogism of the recognition of the humanity of black people (both physiologically and ontologically) therefore leads to new horizons, making them equal and black people able to recognise their humanity; while the synthesis of it would be a humanity of God that transcends race. Lealt, Kneifel and Numberger (1986:107) argue: "In black consciousness thinking, the history of South Africa can be interpreted according to a dialectical process. From the thesis of white racism and the antithesis of black solidarity, a synthesis will emerge; true humanity without regard to race or colour." Buthelezi (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1972:72) expresses it as follows:

It should be clear from the very outset that by true or authentic humanity, we do not mean some Platonic abstraction thought to an "ideal man", but rather that state and form of existence which God intended when he created man. This immediately raises the problem of the criterion of true humanity and also implicitly necessitates the characterization of what is not true humanity (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1972:72)

This formula is a humanity that Africans would have had to rediscover for themselves, while simultaneously projecting true humanity to the world. It is important to note that black people do not stand alone in finding their humanity which was demeaned. Instead, black people need to teach the rest of the world, particularly white people, to be human. This is based on the view that being human is not sufficient to a world that is inhumane and to victims of a dehumanising society. As such, authentic humanity that comes from black people as victims of dehumanisation requires black people to hold onto the memory of being dehumanised in order help the world and humanity to be humane again. Lewis, in discussing memory, argues the fascinating truth of humanity in relation to remembering and their commonness regardless of time and context. He (1982:77) argues: "The main point is that when we do recall a past occasion, we recall it in its fullness, not only as an occasion when something we remember happened but also as one in which we ourselves were involved; and this may be spelt out more explicitly by saying that we not only recall what went on in the past but also recall it as including, on our own part, the same awareness of ourselves than as we have now" (Lewis 1982:77)

Pheko (1982:77), writing about Christianity in African and African Christian leaders, and the implication of Africa discovering true humanity for the world, asserts: "Indeed, it was the Christian leaders who came up with the slogan 'Africa for Africans, Africans for humanity and humanity for God' – long before some African political leaders ever popularised the slogan 'Africa for Africans'." This type of framework and thinking links politics to the dehumanisation of Africans and locates a home in Africa for black people and for the rest of humanity, counter-attacking dominion and giving belonging to the dispossessed Africans in Africa and abroad, members of the Black Church. This transcends the injustices of the history of oppression and gives, through Africa as an ambience of things anew and Africans, humanity to the world as the humane face which Biko speaks of in redirecting humanity to God as the true salvation of humanity. Magaziner affirms this as follows:

Humanisms" were widespread during the 1960s and Kaunda had carefully distinguished his own version from "existential humanism", calling it not only African, but "Christian". Faith in the Christian God was the appropriate "faith for man" because he argued it was "faith in people". This was the language that Biko lifted to describe "modern black culture". Faith in people and in their sanctity of relationships, which manifested the divine, was what Africa would give the world (Magaziner: 2010:55)

The above ties in well with the role of Christ in the salvation of humanity. Migliore (1991:176) argues: "... the humanity of Jesus is now humanity that is grounded in God's grace is the point of the biblical and creedal affirmation that Jesus "conceived by the Holy Spirit" and "born of the Virgin Mary". "Conceived by the Holy Spirit" emphasizes that God's grace is uniquely at work in and through his human life by the power of the Holy Spirit. "Born of the Virgin Mary" signifies that salvation comes not from humanity's own inherent possibilities but from God alone" (Migliore: 1991:176). It is for this reason that the church exists, is a representation of God in humanity and resonates the need of service to each other. Klinken (1989:17) argues: "The church is God's robust army, his band, launched by him into this world for mission and Diaconia. Diaconia becomes an impressive repair program; almost everything can be put right for most of humanity, and for the unfortunate remainder there is still the glorious hope of his last day."

It is important to discuss the Spirit when discussing the church, including the Black Church, for both are interconnected and dependent on each other. The church depends on the Spirit to exist in the world, while the Spirit depends on the church to be at work in the world – but more appropriately, in the lives of human beings. Campbell (1996: 183) argues: “The presence and ministry of the Spirit are the presence and praxis of Christ. This is Christopraxis – not a doctrine for which life is sacrificed, but the very being and life of God given for the sake of preserving and upholding human life; not an ideology or strategy which fights inhumanity for the sake of becoming human, but the very humanity of God which seeks the transformation of all that is inhuman in humanity”.

The church is the prime and potent context within which the work of God and human duties to society are to be found. Barnett (1979:3) argues concerning the purpose and functions of service in the church as follows: “... function in the Church is rooted in the nature of the church itself as it was originally founded and lived in the pre-Nicene world. The first principle of that Church was that it was Laos, the people of God. The Church was called into being by God and made “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet. 2:9). All were Laos.” This evokes the aspect of full knowledge that we are the people and children of God, holding onto God’s sovereignty that is only directed by God towards humanity and not for individualistic modes of humanity which are often made up of semi-deities that control human life as demonstrated through class and elites. This implies that among humanity, only human equality should exist. Black people need to grasp that equality is not to be treated or to occupy white positions but quality of life as human beings and not a mirror reflection of seeing black humanity through others.

The Black Church, in instilling pride and dignity in black people, re-instills the faith of black people in God, humanity and the world. This involves spreading an extended hand to others, the *Ubuntu* principle in practice, and is a necessity in a cold materialistic and individualistic age which has the church and the Black Church serving individualistic purposes that are not for the greater good of humanity. The black churches are therefore called from the backdrop of African culture and from the Christian perspective to act on faith in humanity and God. This is based on the role and influence of; Christ, the word, faith and culture have on humanity. Campbell

(1996: 167) argues: "Without passion, Christian faith is pathetic. Without a praxis in which the presence of Christ takes hold of our faith, compelling us with a conviction sense of mission, our memory becomes sentimental and superficial. Christianity was once dangerous and subversive! For many it is now dull and deadly. Without being empowered by the praxis of the Spirit of Christ realized at Pentecost, the church may be well equipped, but it is powerless to move".

As such, the church without the Spirit is bound to be as erroneous as the missionaries. Isichei (1995: 82) argues: "Modern scholars have often condemned expatriated missionaries for their Eurocentricity, their condemnation of indigenous culture. In a sense, though, this was inevitable. The newly-arrived missionary could not be an instant expert of African languages and cultures and the incarnation of Christianity in different African cultures involved a great multiplicity of choices that ultimately, could be made only by Africans themselves".

Hastings (1979:18) discusses the effects of colonial Christianity and its penetration into culture and tribe resulting in the breaking of family and communalism: "It bit into the cultural context of political institution just as it did into marital institution. It may take generations for a replacement of comparable credibility to be found for what was lost with conversion." This point is important in relation to communalism due to the marital institution was the fundamental point in forming societies and communities.

Frazier noted that the black church found the significance of the role of the households. He further noted that the family dynamics were broken up, in that the mother often would be available. While the father would be temporarily available, due to a probability of being sold (1964:31-32). Thus family, society, communities and communal life are the best traditions of a black church and a human meaning rooted in Africa. Evans (1992: 101) noted: "...one of the sources of resistance to the ignominious estimation of the humanity of black people was the African understanding of their humanity. It is ironic that the suffering and oppression of people of African descent involved the degradation of their humanity while their indigenous, religious and philosophical thought is based on the elevation of their

humanity". The oppression and dehumanisation experienced affected every part of their humanity, identity and individuality rooted in the community.

4.3 THE BLACK CHURCH SYNTHESIS: COMMUNALISM

The Black Church, through Black Theology and Black Consciousness, is important to create an ideal situation for humanity. Since it is an African/Black Church it adheres to the African values that are an invaluable necessity in the materialistic, individualism and consumerist. Du Toit (2009:7) point out: "Black Consciousness is intimately linked with the importance of dignity in African Culture, a dignity arising from people's humanness and the respect to which individuals, simply and especially by virtue of being human, are entitled in the community." He also asserts:

Black Consciousness as embodied by Biko is radical humanism. Bernard Zylstra of the Canadian Institute for Christian Studies had a conversation with Biko in July 1977, recorded in Woods (1987:115–126), in which Biko explained black consciousness. Biko (Woods, 1987: 16) said: "The recognition of the death of white invincibility forces blacks to ask the question: 'Who am I?' 'Who are we?' And the fundamental we give is this: 'People are people!' So 'Black Consciousness says: 'Forget about the color!' (Du Toit 2009:9)

Thus the black church fuelled by black consciousness and the situational interpretation of the Gospel, namely; black theology. The black church is then able to create human bonds within humanity as a community. Transforming alienation between humanity, an alienation created by racism. Evans validates this, Evans (1992: 105) asserts: "Racism is also a perverted form of faith that alienates and divides human beings from one another. Its roots run much deeper than the cultural, political, or economic bases of human stratification".

The Unisa Archives on Black Consciousness and Black Theology contains a record of Biko's advocacy of the essence of Black Consciousness. Biko argued: "The realization that Black Consciousness is not whip-back against Whites and that while rejecting ethical values of whites, Black Consciousness should be seen as a means to achieve a new relationship with whites from a position of strength. The rejection of white as the norm; hence the rejection of terms such as non-white. An adoption of African communalism, which embraces a collectivized egalitarian society and is similar to the 'Ujama' Policy of Dr. Nyerere's Tanzania" (Unisa Archives, accession 153, 1976).

This is fundamental in the given context of post-apartheid South Africa and the excesses and obsession of black people with the materialism and individualism of the West – for human meaning that has become the spectacle of black people to constantly recreate themselves to find acceptability as human beings in a Westernised world. Lealt et al (1986:108) argue: “In the main by formulating a clear working philosophy of black consciousness. What was required was a ‘black renaissance’, a new definition of the problem and new ways of confronting it. These could only be achieved by reawakening black people in South Africa to their dignity as human beings, and by their recognizing their own collective strength.” The collective effort currently is what is lacking since narcissism and individualism takes precedence over society.

Such an approach will render obsolete the constant control of the Western world over black people’s life, its meaning and their own humanity. Gibson (2003:33) argues: “Defined in the context of the White, the Black has been stripped of identity and ‘abraded into nonbeing’. What is finally at stake in the colonial situation is the replacement of the indigenous consciousness by ‘an authority symbol representing the master’ who is charged with maintaining order and control.”

The philosophy of Black Consciousness based on human values and holding onto communalism, which as practiced, was for black people to maintain society. Biko said the following about black communalism:

It is evident that in such a philosophy everyman is your brother and cannot be used for private gain of another. On the contrary everyone and society itself is under obligation to ensure that every member shall be provided for. In this society there are no slaves and lords. It is a free society which gives man every opportunity to develop their talents and their means to the fullest but constrains them to exploit others. (Wits Archives-A2177 N/D: 1)

This approach is relevant to Marx’s conception of socialism which Biko and other scholars of ⁹Black Theology found formidable in a capitalistic age. Kolakowski

⁹ Black Theology, through a profound influence from Marxism, had a distinctive ingredient in the form of theology that would come in the context of humanity seen through the spectacles of Marxism, the existentialist position that would necessitate the human condition and the material conditions that have humanity at the centre of it all. As such, the word and the world are involved together, a mix of historical materialism (humanity as a point of foci) and dialectical materialism (the material conditions of the world and humanity). James Cone, a leading and contemporary founding father of Black Theology and liberation of the

(1978b:41) argues: "Marx, as we have seen, did not regard socialism merely as a new system that would do away with inequality, exploitation, and social antagonism. In his view it was the recovery by man of his lost humanity, the reconciliation of his species-essence with his empirical existence, the restoration to man's being of his 'alienated' nature." All this boils down to the urgency of a common consensus of recognition of humanity – commonness reflected in needs, lifestyles and the whole make-up of society that can achieve much in a united and not-alienated state.

The Lord Jesus Christ is thus critical to defining humanity and promoting black humanity, humanity in general and communalism. Jenkins (1967:58) argues: "Here it is sufficient to note that while the fact that there was a Christ made it clear that there was unquestionably a God who saved men from being trapped in themselves and in anti-human features of materiality and history." This is important in a volatile society. Peacock (1996:82) argues: "We have to come to see Jesus the Christ as the distinctive manifestation of a possibility always inherently there for human beings by virtue of their potential nature. This makes what he was relevant to what we might become."

This is true, particularly in a context where society is so far apart and there is a communal need for sharing and connecting with the other. Bartel (2001:8) says that

dehumanised suggests concerning Marxism and Black Theology: "The importance of Marx for our purpose is his insistence that thought has no independence from social existence. In view of his convincing assertion that 'consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence', theologians must ask, 'What is the connection between dominant material relations and the ruling theological ideas in a give society?' And even if they do not accept the rigid causality of so-called orthodox Marxists, theologians will find it hard to avoid the truth that their thinking about the divine is closely intertwined with the 'manifestations of actual life'. A serious encounter with Marx will make theologians confess their limitations, their inability to say anything about God which is not at the same time a statement about the social context of their own existence" (Cone 1975:39). Biko, taking an existentialist stance, argued of a God involved in human oppression and fighting with oppressed humanity. In this context, black people who are oppressed through dehumanisation, dispossession, racism and capitalism, which are all involved in the fascination of black people in the contemporary world with opulence and its obsession with materialism and individualism as a social make-up. Biko and Cone used Black Theology, which depicts the Spirit of God involved in the oppression of humanity (which in this context is black humanity but applicable to others). Biko (1978:34) argued: "Black theology seeks to depict Jesus as a fighting God who saw the exchange of Roman money – the oppressor's coinage – in His Father's temple as so sacrilegious that merit a violent reaction from Him – the Son of Man."

“[w]hen the Bible speaks of what it means to be human, it does so within the context of community”. Waters (2006:85) validates this view: “Humans are free to cooperate with God in creating a more harmonious and humane world, and in Jesus they have a reliable model of the values needed to complete this task, for Jesus fulfilled his own potential by devoting himself to God and neighbour.”

The true message and essence of the Lord Jesus Christ and the aspirations of Black Consciousness, Black Theology and the notion of a Black Church can be found in communalism. As such, communalism is a necessity in the narcissistic, materialistic and individualistic society of an alienated black humanity. For theology, the call is further overlaid in that if human beings cannot attain authentic humanity, then even the authenticity of God and the role of God in human life are lost. Considering the theological connection between God, humanity and the world, Frank (1965:110) argues: “What is man? This question is no less vital to our whole conception of life than the question of the meaning and existence of God. Indeed, it is the same question approached from another side.”

Communalism proposed by the Black Church from a position of a common brotherhood of a true humanity with a more humane face. Suggests that the true identity of humanity lies within humanity, society and community. But that true humanity will be obsolete and latent in a materialistic and consumerist society until society and black people as human beings are redeemed from alienation and class/status to a more unitary and egalitarian society consisting strictly of human beings who are on an equal footing. Here Fanon is relevant in speaking about decolonization and a new humanity, Fanon argues:

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself (Fanon: 1963:28).

4.4 CONCLUSION

The Black Church should be at the forefront of uniting humanity and society. It should manifest the regained strength of black people by the re-affirmation of their humanity. This gives them an advantage in addressing the issues affecting humanity, considering the suffering that they have endured under dehumanisation. Salvation in the Black Church in the current situation of materialism and individualism lays in communalism, which of course contextually begins with black people as human beings for themselves and among themselves but as part of black culture and the Black Church spreads to the greater good of all humanity in what can be called universal communalism.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In discussing what it means to be human for black people, it is undeniable that the obsession of black people with wealth and opulence is associated with their history. It is a historical factor of systematic and institutionalised dehumanisation through white and Western hegemonies. With the reality of the legacy they have left behind and its continual process that continues under reformism and conformity to the structure of dehumanisation in post-apartheid South Africa. A more practical and visible side would be that of a consumerist, materialistic and individualistic black society, the dehumanisation of black people left black without an authentic identity. As such, as people and as human beings who by virtue of being human join into the collective of humanity. This implies that black people have a contribution to make in the world, but also that the heritage of dehumanisation and miss-identity has resulted in an identity predetermined by the Western world. The history of black dehumanisation reflects a robbery of physiological and ontological existence for black people as human beings. Furthermore, materialism and individualism are faulty premises for black people on which to reconcile and authenticate their own humanity. True humanity will emanate for black people from the unity of their ontology and physiology into an autonomous identity. Further their humanity is affirmed in their collectivism and solidarity.

The current context of; postmodernism and post-apartheid South Africa reflects a deep sense of miss-identity regarding the meaning of being human for black people. The question "What does it mean to be human"? has a historical and contextual resonance among black people and their blackness which is fundamental. Based on the historical perspective of black existence in a racist and racially classified world, a world that has functioned by dehumanising black people. This dehumanisation operated as a complex system in diminishing the value of black life and undermining black people as human beings. Dispossession, pigmentation, poverty and disparity were and are still mediums used to transmit an inferiority complex to black people and further denial of their humanity. However, the black organisation of liberation, in particular the Black Consciousness Movement, had a message for black people that articulated recognition of them being human.

Working through the notion of the Black Church and Black Theology in a white racist world., it insists that dignity, respect, value and acceptance of being black and human should be affirmed and practiced at the same time, ontological and physiologically. However, post-apartheid South Africa is plagued by materialism and individualism under the pretence of a global society with its universal definitions of being human. More so since Africa (and South Africa in particular) is now part of the global society. It is important to note that the civilisation that characterises the advancement of the world worked and achieved strength through using black people, particularly as labour products, and dehumanising them through a distorted history, colonial Christianity, etc. Therefore, in globalism are traces of black inferiority and a dehumanised sense of self that are typical of the current era of South Africa characterised by materialism and individualism.

- To a large degree, black people have been made to lack ontological and physiological existence as human beings. Moreover, black suffering and labour are linked to dehumanisation and a sense of being a dehumanised being. Both hold significant meaning of being human to black people, obviously with the poor feeling even less like human beings, both in a historical context under white supremacy and its structured black poverty and contextually as a reality permeating and relevant to today. Those with access to wealth attach human meaning to comparable worth in contrast to the history of black dehumanisation, lack and those who lack today.

Today these value systems stemming from history are contained in modernity and the postmodern age which is built on a Western outlook when compared to black life. Materialism and individualism as Western and white values for black people manage still to undermine the value of black life and human meaning. Furthermore, globalisation seems to assert the long-held belief of the inferiority of black people as human beings and black people are expected to be assimilated into these worldviews with a lack of self-knowledge. This is clearly the underlining issue in the consumerist and individualistic age of the Common Era, which in the case of black people is attached to inferiority. Inferiority, dehumanisation and a lack of a self-authentic definition of true black humanity are further pushed aside by the artificiality provided by “freedom” through materialism and individualism. Mbembe, writing about Steve Biko, argues:

White racism had also engendered a social caste that suffered from self-alienation, he thought. Blacks had been rendered incapable of developing an independent collective identity and had been limited to viewing themselves through the eyes of their oppressors. The truncated consciousness they did possess was suffused with feeling of self-doubt. Further, these feelings had been internalized through racist propaganda, fear, material want and deprivation, and merciless brutality. (Mbembe 2007:135 & 136)

The above reflects the social make-up of South Africa and black human identity that is still dependent on the structures and norms of the Western world. With self-authenticity still being feared by black people and the prevalence of alienation for black people; ontologically, physiologically, culturally and religiously still evident in the black meaning of being human in a materialistic context. That is further strengthened by professionalism; black professionalism can be associated with and accompanies materialism and individualism. It is a faulty premise and a fallacy to authenticate black humanity purely based on the belief that this professionalism depicts how black people still view themselves through the lenses of others, and out of fear of themselves. Black people instead wish to be others in order to find acceptance and pride in occupying the roles and positions of their former oppressors as a seal to being human in a white world. Mbembe also argues:

A meaningful class differentiation among black people is emerging in South Africa, the long-term significance of which cannot be downplayed. Because of growing differences in education, income, occupation and opportunity, there will inevitably be a more advantage group within the black population whose material interests might diverge from those of their more disadvantaged racial kin. Today, we have a proud new black elite based on education, income, occupational status, political connections and, eventually, cultural capital. But for a number of critics, the kind of black economic empowerment pursued by the government and white capital is less than a policy, it is a method perfected by the oligarchy to placate the political elites and to buy protection. What is emerging is an unproductive, comprador class of rich black politicians and ex-politicians who depend on white capital and entertain a parasitic relationship with the government (Mbembe:2007: 145 & 146).

As a conclusion, one ought to argue unequivocally contrary to the outlook and worldview of a life of materialism and individualism associated with human meaning for black people that is usually one-dimensional as it solely focuses on the external and neglects the internal aspects of black humanity. Individualism and materialism are Western worldviews stemming from the former oppressors, contained within

structured externalism of human existence and meaning to people who accepted each other externally from their common bond of colour, privilege and equality as people (white people to be exact). This approach to black people lacks authentic recognition of the humanity of black people and reflects human identity through the spectacles of the Western world and people who have not been dehumanised. Contrary to the one-dimensionalism of materialism that human meaning is external, being human in a volatile society is rather an inherent inner attribute that is complementary ontologically and physiologically. That which is exhibited on the outside can be pointed out as our humanness or humaneness (*Ubuntu*), an ambience where one can explore and put into practice virtues of truth, justice, love, mercy, relationships, etc. Consider that the externality of materialism seems to forget, but at the most radically chooses to reject and neglect, the arena from where the categorisation of human identity and a material outlook emanate from. Scholars, preachers, professionals, spiritualists, economists, etc are all of the mentioned, based on the reality that humanity precedes all these categorisations. So as such, being human is the ambience where all possibilities of being any of the above emanate from.

Being human for black people primarily begins with the recognition of being black physiological and ontologically, and is fundamentally because whiteness has taken precedence over black life and existence ontologically and physiologically. Black people have lacked authentic self-identification ontologically and physiologically, beginning with physiological as a starting point to reflect the manifestations of a lack of self-authenticity. The attack on black people, based on pigment and body structure, properly underpins the nature of materialism and individualism in the South African context and with regard to black human identity. This intrinsically links to a social and ontological defect in black humanity which is covered by “freedom” and an obsession with material gain. The notion of the Black Church, with Black Theology and Black Consciousness, reconciles the seemingly irreconcilable reality of black life and the meaning thereof.

The Black Church functions as the ambience of authenticating the legitimacy of true humanity for black people and their identity. With the aid of Black Theology and Black Consciousness as the only mediums and themes suitable for defining black

people autonomously as human beings, it is in the Black Church where the meaning of being human for black people is achieved and overlaps with all aspects of black identity. This is due to the understanding that the Black Church bears a dual meaning and relevance for black people: Firstly, is that the physiology of black people was created by God as black and thus there is no need to recreate the culture, physical image and likeness of God in black people. This gives rise to an acceptance of black aesthetics, clothes, culture, etc, which are usually replaced and misplaced by materialism and a subjective universality of the global village. Secondly, the Black Church is spiritual and ontological strength to guide black humanity from material wants to an affected sense of self through dehumanisation.

Being human in the Black Church is therefore a definition that bequeaths dignity, authenticity and the legitimacy of the value of black people as people and as people of God. Considering the inhumane history that has eclipsed the value of the humanity of black people, which is associated with being black and is inseparable from them being black and fully human, the truth in the Black Church is that humanity has always been inherent in black people despite the falsified and distorted views of a dehumanising hegemony that has eclipsed and diminished the value of black life from them inasmuch as this insignificance of black life is inherently a fundamental ingredient in the running of that hegemony. It is further exacerbated by materialism and individualism, which are principle ideals of globalism. The system challenges the fundamental aspects of human life which are that of the ontology and physiology of black people that were nearly obliterated by dehumanisation. These have been trodden on by a history of injustices, such as slavery, imperialism, colonialism – and here in South Africa the institutionalisation of prejudice and racism in the philosophy of apartheid.

The error or fallacy of materialism is that in some sense, it equates being human with simply a biological and physiological variation from other specimens. The psyche of white supremacy with regard to black humanity is that black people were perceived as sub-human. Based on the “inferior man theory” which asserts that black people are three-thirds human beings (Rhodes: 1991: 1). As a result, the ontology of black people – their inner being, that nature which God bequeathed to humanity, *Dei Imago* – was and is still negated purposefully. Similarly, the contradiction is that it

was that inner aspect of our humanity (ontological existence) that was targeted more blatantly and explicitly, thus our psychological understanding was more dehumanised than our external self. It is at this point that materialism would capture black humanity in the modern era where there is a chasm between the ontology and physiology of black people as human beings. As a result, the aspect of having a purpose and value is overshadowed by the heritage of dehumanisation, and the role of God in the world and in humanity is eclipsed.

Today the democracy in South Africa has resulted in flourishing of materialism and individualism, and in undertones postulating black humanity to be alienated from the self. Constantly escaping the reality of dehumanisation and the heritage it has left behind. While making black people aliens to themselves (individually and communally) and masking themselves among each other as black people. By disabling communalism, which is fundamental in the Christian faith and black life as a substitute for individualism. Black life is further demeaned in the acceptance of material and artificial pursuits and white norms which seem more important than authentic humanity from both ontological and physiological realities inherent in all human beings. Biko points out the importance of Black Consciousness in redressing the situation of white duplication of humanity evident in the current era through materialism and individualism. He argues:

One must immediately dispel the thought that Black Consciousness is merely a methodology or a means towards an end. What Black Consciousness seeks to do produce at the output end process real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society. This truth cannot be reversed. We do not need to apologise for this because it is true that the white system have produced through the world a number of people who are not aware that they too are people. Our adherence to values that we set for ourselves can also not be reversed because it will always be a lie to accept white values as necessary the best (Biko 1978:55 & 56).

But the main strength of materialism and individualism lays in the fact that it teaches black people to cover up the real issues that are latent and beneath the consumerist culture. This is the dispossession of black people's own meaning of being human and our dehumanisation that are perpetual in globalisation. Instead, materialism and individualism gives black people a human meaning based on escapist patterns of survival, with materialism and individualism. With both serving as the antidepressant and opium for black humanity while beneath, black people harbour a feeling of

discontent and dehumanisation. It is probably suitable for one to particularise materialism and individualism theologically.

Realising the complementary stance of material and spiritual conditions that can imply the transference and influence of the two on each other, black humanity has been attacked on both ends and has been put at enmity with and within black humanity of both spiritual and material substances. Black people, now more than ever, need to aware of the syllogism applied in their destruction through dehumanisation. Similarly, they need to find a syllogism in correcting their condition. While, materialism and individualism are one-dimensional in approach, authentic humanity through materialism and individualism will not work and achieve a true human meaning for blacks. But rather results in opulence at the expense of the inner condition. To maintain both the world of matter and the metaphysical is the very genius of being human, and more appropriately black and fully human.

It would be tyrannical and erroneous to assume that one can draw a perennial definition of what it means to be human. However, that on its own does not make obsolete the need for a definition of what it means to be human to black humanity in the current materialistic and individualistic era. One can assume, based on what has been discussed above, that being human should mean in the materialist era a coexistence of both our ontology and physiology that works in balance. A balance serving as a syllogism of being autonomously and legitimately a human definition in the contemporary era with its one-dimensionalism.

However, if these two realities are at odds and become irreconcilable realities, diametrically opposite to each, they can only repel each other. Such is the condition of black humanity in the materialistic and individualistic age in the quest for human meaning. As the psychological and ontological realities are at war with the physical and spiritual and there exist as a dichotomy in black humanity. However, if optimism is anything to go with, one does have hope that Black Theology, Black Consciousness and the notion of a Black Church can re-affirm blackness in the world, which seems in subtle tones to deem blackness as a crime or treason. This blackness must not be equated in any way with the white supremacy that has been a chief ingredient in the Western world and globalisation. Instead, it should be a

recollection of black authenticity in culture, heritage and way of life – all the values that make up human beings. Biko (1978: 64) in speaking of Black Consciousness, Black Theology and the church, argued: “There is a truth in the statement that many people can say one thing differently because they look at it from different angles. Christianity can never hope to remain abstract and removed from the people’s environmental problems. In order to be applicable to people, it must have meaning for them in their given situation. If they are an oppressed people, it must have something to say about their oppression”. He asserted further:

The time has come for our own theologians to take up the cudgels of the fight by restoring a meaning and direction in the black man’s understanding of God. No nation can win a battle without faith, and if our faith in our God is spoilt by our having to see Him through the eyes of the same people we are fighting against then there obviously begins to be something wrong in that relationship. Finally, I would like to remind the black ministry, and indeed all black people that God, is not in the habit of coming down from heaven to solve people’s problem on earth (Biko 1978:64 & 65)

Since *Ubuntu* is one of the few African belief systems that have been popularised even in the current context, it must be clear by now that it (*Ubuntu*) is not attached to race. Although it is part of black life and philosophy. Instead, it depicts for both black people and white people a transcendence of racialism found in black people even before racism and their encounter with the Western world. This, on its own, must be a point on which the world should give credit to black people for this fruitful and humanely fundamental principle: To facilitate a natural order based on value, worth, dignity, recognition and respect of individuals and communities as human beings. Furthermore, because this *Ubuntu* principle is all inclusive of humanity and is an affirmation of the unitary stance of true humanity, it proves to be timeless. Similarly, it is a long-lost call for a common consensus of the recognition of humanity which has been and is being diminished by materialism and individualism. One must state that the reality is that materialism and individuality are not perennially evil but rather what is evil is the psyche in which we are brought into them. Biko's (1978:108) argument on true humanity depicts this African philosophy but begins with blackness as a starting point for humanity: “We have set out a quest of a true humanity, and somewhere on the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize. Let us march with courage and determination, drawing strength from our common plight and our brotherhood. In time we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible—a more humane face.”

One could suppose that there cannot be a fundamentally perennial image and meaning of being human. Based on the view that contexts vary and the existentialist reality and material conditions of the human condition vary too. As such, every context thus requires a specific definition of the meaning of life and being human. This is based on the struggle people experience and the pertinent issues confronting society and human beings to be able to deal and eradicate those issues that hinder human life and meaning. In South Africa as well as in the United States, the history of dehumanisation and the continuation of it in post-apartheid South Africa require a suitable meaning of being human. More so, since the past injustices have resulted in the need for opulence exacerbated by materialism and the chasm it creates, translated into an individualistic society.

The Black Church, Black Consciousness and the prophetic voice of the two found in Black Theology necessitates in a dehumanised and volatile society a need for human genius to discover true humanity. This human genius can only be found in the realisation that a dehumanised and inhumane humanity can only be remedied by a humane outlook and meaning of life. That has humaneness as its visage and content. This is true in terms of the Black Consciousness view of a true humanity with a more humane face. Furthermore, keeping in line with the Christian faith, it rests on the greatest commandment of "Love one another, love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and the epistles of John that teaches the love of God as an invisible Being without the loving of another who is visible as false. All these give contextual and contemporary resonance to the *umntu ngumntu ngabantu*, a depiction of a unified society and humanity beyond the artificiality created by materialism and individualism.

In a nutshell, black people are to serve as a symbol of humanity and authentic humanity. Firstly, this is due to their dehumanisation and oppression with the near nihilism of their humanity; ontologically and physiologically. Secondly, because that alone qualifies them to reaffirm their humanity and then affirm faith and hope in humanity. Finally, it makes no logical sense to assert true humanity in a society that is inhuman, inhumane and dehumanising. Consider the recent service deliveries problems with the diabolic reaction of the government, through the police; consider Tatane, the Marikana massacre and all the ongoing protests that end violently. As

such, in reaffirming and restoring their humanity, black people should simultaneously humanise the perpetrators and structures responsible for their dehumanisation i.e. police, economy and the social make-up of black people living conditions. Thus making it fundamental that black recognition of their humanity goes hand in hand with the reality of a dehumanised world and people. Being human for black people would then carry a meaning of being human for the world. The notion of a black church thus becomes an analogy of creation and the creation of humanity. The notion of a black church being the ambience for a new humanity to emerge;’ humanity with a more humane face. A humanity that is united and forms a close knitted social fibre for all people but quite fundamentally, beginning with black people then cross boundaries.

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