

**THE REVELATION OF GOD: MEDITATIONS OF THE BLACK
CHURCH IN EXISTENTIAL TIMES**

By

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, Hlulani Msimelelo Mdingi (48295205), herewith declare that, the content of this dissertation to be my original work that has not at any time, totally or partially, been submitted to any other university for the purpose of attaining a degree

Signed..... Date.....

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Writing this thesis emanates from the deep meditation concerning the impact and vision of a future Christian theology in the black world. Academically, the positioning of blacks as the recipients of the Western Christianity is deeply concerning my heart. This is because it is deeply affecting black theological expression. Furthermore, the problem of Western ecclesiastical and theological traditions are fundamental to this thesis. It is as if blacks are only suitable to be followers of the West that is maintaining the pathological “student” and “master” relationship. This is exactly what was uttered by Biko when he said: “blacks are made children who perpetually need Western guidance”. On an existential level, this thesis emanates from the spiritual decay in black communities; provincially, nationally, continentally and internationally. The conversations with my peers paint a horrible picture for Christianity. The diminishing impact of black churches poses a social problem for black youth and for adherence of the message of Christ. Central to this is the role of God and the church in redressing historical justice, suffering and expressing love. Without God and church in this world of turmoil, war, grief, racism, landlessness and suffering, the future is absolutely futile, dangerous and doom. This thesis is also a reflection of one inner struggle between an ontological and physiological experience that is to encounter with the divine in the world. However, the most pertinent issue in my heart is the question of human existence, human fragility and human hope that authentic Christian supports and promotes. I believe in the creeds of the church of *Adonia Yoheshua Messiah*, but fundamentally in the power of his reign and the transformative power of the cross. Black people should meet the Messiah for themselves, to share in the witness of the church in the world and the writing of Christian church history. The thesis emerges from conscious and unconscious self-evident desire for God and liberation. Therefore, it is for this reason one subscribes to an African proverb that asserts the following truth, “it takes a village to raise a child”. This asserts the Christian message of First John (1 John) concerning the love of God, not being rendered to invisibility. Rather, God is urging us to love ourselves in visibility and marking that as loving God.

I thank God and *Adonia Yeshua Messiah* for strength and hope. I thank my supervisor for his efforts and guidance in the writing of this research. I thank those prayers from close and far. I thank my parents, especially my mother’s prayer and my siblings for their support. This is also dedicated to a special woman in my life and our kids, her patience in understanding my absence at times because of my studies. I acknowledge the black community, black churches

and all oppressed people with a solidarity chant and catharsis of; BLACK POWER, ONE
AZANIA ONE NATION and ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

COL 2: 9

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

Corinthians 1: 18

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to
us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

Corinthians 1: 23

*...we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to
Gentiles*

Abstract

The revelation of God has been fundamental in the Christian faith and tradition. It has been much fundamental in African, native and indigenous religions, cultures and faiths. As God in both aspects of Abrahamic and native religions. God represents centrality, communion and relationship to humanity. This lays as the cornerstone for human life and provides an ideal destiny for human existence under the guise and guidance of the divine. God reveals Himself to people for truth, knowledge and justice. Hence, God's revelation carries a purpose for humanity.

In the Christian tradition, God has revealed Himself through Christ for the purpose of soteriology and an alternative eschatos for humanity. Through that revelation and the incarnation, God's assumed humanity has come to have been known that God stands for justice, truth and human freedom and is the liberator of the oppressed and wretched. This view is different from that of colonial and current Christianity, since it helps to sustain a created God revealed and known by whites or Western civilisation and theological reflections, to guide the rest of the world into the "marvellous light". Whites perceive their traditions as the only preference for divine experiences and their theology as the cornerstone of unquestioned theological polity and thought for the; ecclesia and the theologians.

The recounting of casualties, atrocities and black servitude by and awe of white supremacy and Western civilisation has been imploded globally to black people. The history linked to the current existential context is bound by a historic presence, since it reflects a deep theological illegitimacy of Western Christianity. This is especially in light of the given perception of freedom, the doctrines of the West have not been returned, to clearly delineate the theological different worldviews between Europe and the natives' relation, which climax to be the difference of religious experience between oppressor and the oppressed. The return to these doctrines is necessary, especially if Western theological experience comes with alienation of all other alternative voices and historic manifestations of God's revelations.

Through the tools of black theological tradition and the African aspect, the black church has been brought out of the dungeons of ideological allegiance to strengths of power. As such, a difference in power relations and theological experience brings the revelation of God to black humanity. This transcends conception of revelation conceived in thought, interpretation and meaning by the West. Thus, the revelation of God becomes outside the given defective

definitions by the so-called “mother churches”. This is an episteme necessary in addressing the needs and aspirations of blacks and the presence of God in black ecclesiology. The revelation of God is not in question, rather it is a varied aspect of definitions and content that is in question for black ecclesiology and black liberation. For it is in general revelation that God has been said to be discernible through mental faculty, proving God’s existence and revelation. Special revelation resolves that God’s revelation is absolute, metaphysical and historic in Christ.

Even today, the continuing vestiges under white supremacy, blacks, natives and people of colour were deemed subhuman. Thus not warranted the possibility of mental faulty to conceive the existence of God and the revelation, as such, the African, native and people of colour lost their concepts of God coupled with the loss of land and mind. The special revelation also finds the link in the absoluteness of Christ and geared towards heaven, his return, running tandem with slavery, colonialism, imperialism, institutional racism and confiscation of land and worldviews.

The question for the theologian and black believer is geared towards the view that in light of theological discourse on liberation and the conceptions of freedom, is the theological paradigm shift. The shift on the subject of special revelation and general revelation in black liberation theological thought and black ecclesiology. That circumference, the entirety of the black experience and diaspora in a geographical stance, but also the diaspora of mental dislocation of blacks resulting in the perennial maze of whiteness, white ecclesiology and theology. This dislocation of geography and thought (ontology) was captured well in the spirituals to expose both tenets of dislocation geographically and ontologically. Dixon (1976:35) has pointed to the spirituals named: “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child”. 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.

Fanon (1963: 169) rightly points out:

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.

It is significant to grapple with the fact that the religious and spiritual experiences of blacks have been within the confines of white supremacy. This is a supremacy that has marked and allowed a hegemony on both thought and experience of blacks, especially when linked to the doctrine of God's revelation, as purported by the West for the conversion of blacks during colonialism. It is also important to grasp that the colonial project, which is physical, cultural, political, economic and spiritual prevails over blacks, especially since the historic white churches have remained populated by blacks. The revelation should emerge from the margins, while it is a home coming to the black self and God as all the trivia of Western thought becomes null and void. The meditation of the black church in existential times reflects a call to serious reflection of theological thought that is, must take a different route for the oppressed, contrary to the West. It is meditation to pay attention to tools of thought that have not been investigated.

According to the Western church, there is God validated by their views in general and special revelation and the zeal to preach. Surprisingly, they say nothing of the God known by the natives, who too have beliefs that are central to general and special revelation. Christianity and God revealed this through slavery and theological deceit, as they maintain status quo with reform on doctrines and belief to accommodate black. Instead of God revealing Himself to black humanity, the doctrine of revelation as a meditation of the black church in existential times considers the result of accommodation versus revelation.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter one begins by introducing and orientating the reader to the study and the purpose of the study, namely the revelation of God. It also opens up what is central to the study by a way of a problem statement concerning this revelation of God, the black church and the human condition. The aims of the study and the research methodology are set out. The chapter ends with a hypothesis concerning the future doctrine of revelation and the prospects of this revelation in the lives of black people.

Chapter two entails discussion on God and the church, as it pertains to revelation, starting with a historical account of Christian theology on the subject of revelation. The subject of revelation is engaged on an existential level, particularly the main areas of Christian theology, namely; special and general revelation. This is a section that puts both concepts within black experience, to see the viability for a black ecclesiology and black theology. Chapter two moves on to contend that for black church, there is a serious theological insurgent that is necessary and it is part and parcel of God's revelation to blacks and the oppressed. This outlook places a section of critical reasoning in South African context and society concerning God's revelation.

Chapter three engages a philosophical meditation, ascribing meditation as a state of self-reflection for the black church and black theology. This meditation is cognisant of black experience and is self-diagnosis concern God and humanity, particularly the dehumanising, (how it must affirm essence and substance). The meditation of the black church engages the concept of absurdity as Camus (1995) (also see Melancon 1983) has posited the absurd as a malaise in the world and silence of the word to that malaise. The absurd is also linked to theodicy, however, the black experience and the encounter with God transcends absurdity and theodicy. As part of the transcending aspect of the black experience, the research considers Western atheism, Christianity and death of God, whose burial is in the mind, souls and bodies of blacks. The chapter then moves on to discuss the black church as a receptor of God's revelation, the new image of the crucified and the new metaphysics guaranteeing the upliftment of blacks.

Chapter four focuses on the black invisibility and the hiddenness of God, it is seeing invisibility and hiddenness as linked together. The chapter also focuses on the need for black visibility rooted in the ontological and physiological expression and experience of being human; *Imago Dei*. The chapter links black visibility with the concept of whiteness, being a dehumanising

political identity imposed on the people of colour. The chapter then translates into the context of visibility, invisibility and God's revelation within the economic South African context. The final analysis of the chapter is a confession of God's revelation rooted in God's visibility and running parallel to that of black visibility.

Chapter five proposes that the black experience and the use of the Bible *Sola Sriptura*, as it reveals the black church as part of church history. As such, it takes the early church's reading of the New Testament and understanding of Christology through *kenosis*; the emptying of God to be human and using that paradigm to link Christ's human experience and the experience of the dehumanising and humanising that of blacks. The chapter concludes with a Christology and black Messiah, who links the secular and divine, general and special revelation.

Chapter six concerns the findings of the study, recommendations and conclusion.

KEY WORDS : Revelation, special revelation, general revelation, natural theology, doctrine, ontology, existential, black church, Christology, cross, blackness, whiteness, colonialism, Christian, meditation, metaphysics, South Africa, invisibility, visibility, body, kenosis, Bible

Acronyms

AIC (African Initiated Churches)

BCM (Black Consciousness Movement)

BPC (Black People Convention)

CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa)

COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Programme)

FBI (Federal Bureau Investigation)

KJV (King James Version)

NT (New Testament)

OT (Old Testament)

PAC (Pan African Congress)

SA (South Africa)

SOPA (Socialist Party of Azania)

SASO (South African Student Organisation)

USA (United States of America)

UN (United Nations)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The subject of this research concerning the revelation of God and meditations of the black church in existential times, requires the researcher to orientate the focus of the study as primarily based upon the Christian doctrine of revelation. The revelation of God is fundamental in Christianity, it is a base of faith, theological expression and interpretation of human existence and experience. Since the revelation of God is central to faith and belief, it is an ambience for a communion and relation for the human and divine. It is operating as a conveyer belt for the divine in human existence. Part of the revelation is to give meaning to human experience, *Imago Dei*, in which when located in the black experience it reveals an experience that has not been an expression of being human or theological express of *Imago Dei*. This is because of the dehumanisation of black people and people of colour under white supremacy, Western ecclesiastic, missionary and theological institutions.

Despite the inferiority, bewilderment and anxiety that white supremacy has raised on black people, the notion of a black church in the United States and South Africa through black theology has its sufficiency for a Christian, human experience and merit of God's presence. Therefore, God's presence becomes black ecclesiology, black history and worship geared towards liberation and revelation. As such, that is putting pressure to not only glance, even within the confines and comfort of black theology at Christianity's fundamental doctrines, as it relates to belief, faith and black people. As such, the study is prolegomenon and it is an advocate of a deeper inquiry to "universal" Christian theological doctrines, expressions and interpretation. The research seeks an urgent and insurgent need to develop an epistemological tool of a new or distinct hermeneutic, rather than that which has been the normative for Christian theology and its implication for black theology. Perhaps this epistemology links up with an epistemology of liberation built from doctrine, scripture, black ecclesiology and the black experience. Linked to this is a methodological model that reveals some inconsistencies of accepted Christian doctrine. This model is even under the propellant of the ecumenical and theological liberation theology. Deloria (1977: 15) has lamented on how even liberation theology is somehow the creation of colonial Christianity. Thus, their life line becomes futile if liberation is determined by the acceptance of the theological interpretation of the oppressor. In a sense, the Western ecclesiastical tradition, despite liberation theology contains and

maintains the underlining dialectical relationship of Western control over the oppressed negating their spiritual and theological authentic experience. This has the ecclesiastic and prophetic influence on the black faith. Cone (2004: 139-152) noted this, “In theology’s great sin of silence against white supremacy and the persisting exclusion of black theologians on the works of Western scholar that also proclaims theological liberation traditions”. Thus creating a sphere of existential, existence and theology for black faith today, even under post-apartheid era. The meditations of the black church in existential times emanate from the position, which says that despite doxology, commitment and the transcendental God, blacks have found themselves barely moving towards liberation. Therefore, to avoid generalising and sweeping statements, one should consider how at times blacks have continually sought God (i.e. to do things for them because they worship and trust in God). However, a serious meditation by the notion of a black church in forgiveness, the meaning of reconciliation and God’s continual presence requires a paradigm shift in thought and practice. That makes black theology to venture fully both metaphysics and ontological realities in relation to God’s revelation and black people’s location. Therefore, that is to say in biblical clarity as the apostle Paul said to the Athenians in Acts (17: 24-34), where they exist, move and get their being that is part of their blackness. Black theology, metaphysically and ontologically should be cognisant of the pessimism and hope as part of the faith. Jones (1973: 1-22) expresses a pessimistic approach, perhaps links it to Deloria (1977: 1-22). Deloria (1977:1-22) stresses the invalidity of even liberation theological models, while Biko (1978: 10) seems to be more hopeful through the use of black theology. Biko (1978: 104) expresses this linkage well concerning the links of metaphysical and ontological realities, when he asserts:

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.

The emphasis on hope and black theology does not lead to a theodicy that Jones (1975: 4) mentions. However, the emphasis sees fighting an impassive God in the incarnated Jesus and it also diminishes the absoluteness of Western theology concerning their postulations of an abstract God. Biko (1978: 100) asserts that black people should realise that their situation is not a mistake, but a deliberate act by whites and that no amount of moral lecturing will persuade the white man to rectify this situation. He continues by pointing out that the system concedes

nothing without demand, for it formulates its very method of operation on the basis that the ignorant will learn to know. Biko (1978: 100) correctly indicates the way this system of oppression operates with the oppressed. Meditations of the notion of a black church find it necessary to not only grapple with existential problems facing blacks, but rather reveal the urgency to a commitment of God. God's commitment directs the church to realise that thought and the relation that black Christian experience or appeal to the divine, requires a sharp and critical approach. Biko (1978: 64-65) correctly asserted:

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.

This study seeks to grapple with the doctrine of the revelation of God and to put God as a God of justice and not a favour of persons or a race over another. The study further seeks to unveil the self-appointment of Western Christianity for all humanity, specifically people of colour. Therefore, unmasking that expression and theological reflection of West is not a homogenous voice that should be listened to and followed by all. According to the study, while the churches and theologians of the West have spoken on doctrine, it is also fundamental to note that they do not speak for all of humanity. The church does not explain the pertinent truth of God's revelation and communion with humanity. As such, other voices which have been marginalised, perhaps have a more valuable outlook to God's revelation, even between "accepted" or "given" of special and general revelation. The study does not see black theology as a footprint in theological thought encouraged by the black experience. The church rather sees a historical role that the churches of Africa¹, with people of African descent have played in church history in particular as noted by (Pheko 1982: 2). Wilmore (1998: 1) gives credence to this assertion and recorded the invitation of the Ethiopian Abuna in Boston for an *African Study Programme*, he records:

¹ Pheko (1982: 2) and other have often made a case for the unjust aspect of church history which also underlines the racial depth of white supremacy. That has often not only found colonialism plausible, but also to write out of church history of Africa, African and the role of Africa in the development of churches, theology and the home aspect between the relation of early Christianity and Africa.

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!

It is then significant through black theology and notion of a black church, for those who are victims of the black experience and the deceit of colonial Christianity to take up their rightful place in the church history and in matters of church doctrine. This new position will now be more vigilant and reluctant to Western theological reflections, because of the black experience and this is significant to the Bible, doctrine and *Imago Dei* for the Christian church. The black experience has demanded at least for the human and Christian experience of blacks, while black consciousness as a philosophy, rooted in the nature of black resistance, black destiny and the view of the humanity of blacks and their relation to the divine stresses for realisation of the divine and human experience in blackness. Biko (1978: 53) capture this when he asserts:

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.

The ‘*whoever created them black*’ and questioning of that transcendental entity or enigma’s intelligence found in Biko (1978: 53), leads the research to the doctrine of God revelation. This revelation will be seen as having been divided into special and general revelation and also paying attention to the intelligence of blacks, linked in their faith and belief in a God that reveals himself in the world. The general revelation or natural theology as represented by mental faculty in this will be considered in line with the way intelligence is not monolithic or not meaning the need to be Catholic or Protestant, as part of the Western ecclesiastical experience of God and the revelation of God in humanity and the world. The same will apply to the special revelation of Christ, which has meant for blacks; land confiscation and

dehumanisation. All this was done because of God's incarnate absoluteness. Somehow in black theology, the special revelation of Christ ought to mean a different understanding of even Christ crucifixion and soteriology, which is part and parcel of special revelation. The study is aimed at a different interpretation and navigation of ideas within the voyage of thought and experience of both God and black people.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research focuses and stands on the Christian base of the doctrine of revelation. It is mindful of the pitfalls that have not at least been accounted for on the theological thought for black ecclesiology and theology. The research accepts the doctrine of revelation on the surface, whilst on the other hand, it is reluctant to accept it as absolute and with merit and hermeneutical, historical, philosophical and metaphysical credence for all humanity and Christian believers, especially people of colour. The research considers black liberation theology as important for the doctrine of revelation, as it further stands to hold that even the emergence of black theology itself is part of a doctrine of revelation that addresses the revelation of God. The Black Consciousness philosophy is correct in pointing out that:

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).

Mosby-Avery (2004: 36), 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.

The importance of Mosby-Avery's (2004: 36) view is the experience of blacks who form part of the poor. This view also places centrality of experience in contestation with abstract outlook of theology, at least Western theology. Maimela (2005:29) correctly asserts:

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.

Maimela's (2005: 29) point of view creates a specific phenomenology that places the self in a social context. This view places the agonies of the oppressed as apparatus of theological dialogue, praxis and a theological response. This theological response is important in Christian theology, since is the church response to heresy or theological controversy. It is perhaps fitting to assert that with black theology the subject of God revelation makes important realisation of God. Hence, God's continual influence in the world is part of God's immanence and omnipresence of God for blacks. The purpose of this study is to embark on a more analytic outlook of pertinent tenets of Christianity. More fundamentally, the lenses are being placed within the colonial period to investigate more problematic theological undertones. The focus is on the continuum of the problematic nature of Christian doctrines, particularly the doctrine of revelation, to those Biko (1978: 60-61) described as God's step children. The subject that fundamentally speaks to this insurgent study of theological thought and tradition best fits with subject of revelation. It is fitting also to mention that what is sought by this study is to investigate a body of thought and interpretation. Moreover, the study investigates to see its suitability within the black experience, past and present religious experience or encounter with the divine.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Fundamentally, the revelation of God is the nucleus of the Christian faith and the proclamation of the belief in the existence of God. As such, this reflection on the doctrine of revelation does not stem from whether God can or will be revealed to humanity. Secondly, the doctrine is rather not a view that is in question but rather it is the variant implication and meaning of the doctrine. Thirdly, these reflection and meditation questions whether the doctrine of the revelation of God as being articulated by the churches and theologian of the West can rightly suit all humanity, particularly victims of the black experience, voices, lives of the poor and all those who are in the margins of society. This is pertinent after the impact and the continual vestiges of Western and colonial Christianity, those who have suffered at the hands of the recorded revelation of God in the gospels. This is particularly because of white supremacy and the theological credence which was given to colonialism, slavery and imperialism. Pheko (1995: 75 & 78) has mentioned the distinctions between the biblical and colonial teaching and between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that of Western churches. This is particularly highlighting their fundamental

role in the establishment of white supremacy. In a sense, the black experience does not dismiss *Sola Scriptura* as a part of revelation, but accepts it by pointing out the theological and hermeneutical misrepresentation of the Bible by the colonial West. Therefore, in some sense that seems to undermine the recorded and revealed word of God with its context. What is defined as special revelation is important though contemporaneously troubling. Firstly, the most important question is: What meaning does it bear for those who have been victimised, dehumanised, disposed and enslaved through Christianity. Secondly, the meaning it bears for the vestiges of God that has been imposed and still believed by many. In a sense, the encounter with an incarnate God with black bodies that have a questioned *Imago Dei*, but are expected to submit to Christ Lordship. Furthermore, how does one discuss westernisation, Europeanisation and Western civilisation outside the identity of colonial Christianity? Thirdly, how does one discuss colonialism and the accepted God in Christ that has far advanced white theology, Western authority on doctrine and whites in general at the cost of alternative voices of the oppressed? The context and content under which Western theological thought was influential in the conception of views concerning the doctrine of God's revelation, it has a bearing effect in the way black ecclesiology and black theology should be confronted with in the mediation of the black church in existential times. This is particularly special in defining whether special revelation and general revelation is relevant to blacks. Lastly, these questions are of particular importance in the notion of a black church and black people's human experience of the divine under dehumanisation.

The subject of revelation qualifies to take this research to a new voyage in theological thought from the margins. This is because it is fundamental to the Christian faith and more currently, whether the accepted theological creeds and traditions are truly in light with what has been revealed in the incarnation of Christ. As the incarnation is the basis for special revelation; the revelation of God in Christ historically is the starting point and the back bone for Christianity. The Western traditions between Catholicism and Protestant have dialogued concerning the nature and importance of revelation. They are divided to variation of scope and content of revelation between definitions of special and general revelation. The study is not appealing to the theological content of the discussion of Western theological thought, however, it is rather an inquiry, lament and change of lenses to concepts and doctrines that become meaningless to those on the margins. As such, this would hinder the understanding of the divine, as what is sought from the revelation of God is the engagement with these Western traditions, especially in light of colonial Christianity. Secondly, how blacks could and should discern the revelation

of God outside of being “good” Christians, following an ecclesiastical polity, ethic, theology and faith that maintain their powerlessness and a docility of black faith in improving their conditions that emanate from history with Western Christianity as observed by (Biko 1978: 102). In a sense, the Christian faith has been a mutilating and self-defeating purpose and exercise for blacks. In that way, it raises the following question: Can the Christian God be known by blacks who were deemed subhuman and outside God family of humanity?

This study is grappling with the subject of revelation as a whole, especially coming from the West. For the revelation of God, at least for the victims of the black experience should be firstly exuding the single possibility of a revelation rooted in liberation. The revelation would exude a singular principle of revelation that does require definitions of any categorisation of special and general revelation, for the black experience and black ecclesiology and orthodox Christianity. Perhaps it is a call for a theology without set confusion or parameters of distinctions between definitions and content of special and general revelation-- for the blacks which lacks the depth of black spirituality or theology, which is unknown or ignored by Western theological traditions. This outlook is possible, because revelation will be seen from the lenses of the black experience, the *Pneumatosis, ontology and physiology* in the notion of black church, black Christology and black ecclesiology. The revelation will be seen through the history that binds both the reality of special and general revelation for a different understanding of theology and soteriology, for the black people and the oppressed.

Perhaps the starting point in delineating the complexity of the doctrine of revelation for the black church would be to glance with scepticism. This would mean using new methodological and epistemological lenses at their inherent connotations for blacks. Hence, this implies to begin with natural theology or general revelation and then proceeding to special revelation. This pertains a serious reluctance of accepting at face value the validity of these doctrines for black faith and Christian experience and would account for a different understanding within the black experience and black theology regarding revelation. Therefore, to elucidate this, the following have to be considered, firstly, that general revelation has been represented largely by Roman Catholicism from the time Aquinas (1952) points out that reason as a mental faculty, is necessary for the discernment of God’s existence and revelation. This could be linked to Pauline’s writing to the Romans, when said that creation groans the revelation of God, while special revelation that has largely been represented by Protestants speak of an absolute revelation in Jesus Christ and *Sola Scriptura*. The two views are not useful for the black

experience, because in general revelation, blacks cannot under white supremacy be considered mentally fit for this undertaking of discerning God's existence and revelation as they are considered inferior, Fanon (1963: 168) captures this when he asserts:

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.

As such, blacks under white supremacy are not in a mental condition fitting with an intellectual being who conceives God's existence at any level and even by merit of power and pigmentation, which has come to define white supremacy and Western civilisation. Perhaps it is a point to consider that even theologies of liberation and black theology are still linked by name, creed and polity to historical white churches or mother bodies. Thus, there is a continuum of mutilating experience of thought and reflection. Black spirituality, in any form that precedes Christian conversion and the state of conversion, should be useful in revealing a distinct understanding of what the West considers general revelation or natural theology. This is a natural theology, which the people of colour express in their realisation of awe and wonder of nature that is a manifestation of the presence of the divine. This issue also gels out to be a general revelation for black people (the natives of the Americas, Aboriginal people and people of colour) that have always emanated from the awe of the grandeur of nature and its Creator. That is also linked to the feeling of something greater and transcendent than humanity. Thus the large number of creation stories indicates that there is a theological expression linked to Christian theology. This Christian theology of a general revelation does not come from the dictates of Western theology. This theology points of qualifying to speak in theological authority. Therefore, to further elucidate this while intellectual capacity is necessary in Western general revelation, the awe and reverence defines the encounter of indigenous people with the divine. It further goes against Aquinas' (1952) use of mental faculty to discern the existence of God. It is an experience and an unemotional feeling that is at work in this general revelation. As a matter of fact, this suggests the human and creature experience that precedes the exercise "logical tools" use of mental faculty to discern God's existence, Biko (1978: 102) captures this well, when he asserts:

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) points that the radical difference presented by the churches of the West, contrasting Christianity and African religion or theology is a fabric of their human creation. It does not underpin the spiritual experience well within Christianity itself, hence it is not the point of coherence with the world of African spirituality and divinity that all of humanity share. The second aspect, special revelation that advocates for the absoluteness of God's revelation in Christ becomes problematic. If absoluteness of Jesus, mingled with European culture and worldview is fundamental in the confiscation of land by both Roman Catholics and Protestants Christian colonisers, to corroborate this De Gruchy (2004: 1-2) has recorded the existence of both churches during colonialism and contesting for the conversion of blacks and establishment of their churches. Within a special revelation, God manifested Himself in flesh in the man Jesus Christ. What arises is how this Christ was then easily made into metaphysical saviour, whose bodily experience is taken lightly by Western theology, with specific preference for soteriological expediency for black conversions in the passion. Thus creating a pathological obsession of a theology of redemption from their black bodies and rich lands. In that way, Christ is being made the humanly denied saviour of humanity from sin to beyond or other worldliness. In a sense, God's coming to the world as human is undermined and traded for being God and heaven. There is a denial of *kenosis* and *Imago Dei* in Christ, which comes with the division of the secular with the sacred and divine. However, all these are knitted in the fabric of existence created by God. This approach ecclesiastically allowed advancing the cause of white conquest and dominance. This dominance occurred under physical and metaphysical realms, a context that blacks live in. Coupled with this approach was the need for blacks to consider wealth and riches of heaven, while neglecting wealth and resources of their lands and this world. On the other side, the colonisers opened up their coffers and exploited the natives. Biko (1978: 61) is correct in asserting: 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) is correct when considering special revelation, since this is due to the fact that those who propelled blacks to view the "beyond", found both the secular and divine on earth.

Their God was not only in a distant and abstract future, but also with them, while converting unsuspecting blacks. This point is important because colonial Christianity claimed the supremacy and absoluteness of God's revelation. This is recorded in the Bible as parallel to whiteness and a global privilege over those whom they conquered. It is important to point that both the definitions and content of general and special revelation are problematic for blacks, because they both affect blacks and their relationship to God. It affects their worldview even fitting their own Christian experience and encounter with the divine. In a sense, this raises questions such as: how live and living black bodies become absent and invisible in a visible world? Where their invisibility and that of God is shared when it pertains to black Christianity and mapping out their soteriology and liberation? It would seem that if black theological thought would penetrate deep into theological doctrines, the God of special and general revelation would not be known or revealed to blacks. Reason behind this is that their mental unfitness and as human for this exclusive and cultural revelation of God is known by the West. In the context of this study, the concept of revelation should consist of both spectrums that make God's revelation valid and meaningful in its distinct meanings. These meanings will also play into general and special revelation's outlook, while also raising up and solidifying the necessity of a radically different episteme from expression, understanding and manifestation of God. It is this presupposed model of a distinct defined general and special revelation, which black and natives alike kept their lands. The blacks had very little destructive change of ecological crisis of the 21st century. This destructive change is tied to colonialism, urbanisation, industrialisation, white supremacy and capitalism. All these are virtues of the legacies of white supremacy and Western civilisation. Regarding the ontological and existential level, the devaluing of black intelligence in a world discernible by white thought, blacks are bound in thought and experience to a world that warrants and guarantees anti-blackness. A loss of both God and their worldview for the creation of a new God that has been given to blacks at the "benevolence" of white supremacy, Western ecclesiology, Western church history and Western civilisation, West (1999: 70) correctly argues:

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.

The central problematic issues that this research focuses on and hopes to answer is firstly to point that there is no innocence in Western theological thought, as noted by Cone's (2004: 139-152) "Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the face of White Supremacy." This assertion and

reflection is further exacerbated by the manifestation of white supremacy in major areas of modern human life (West 1999: 70). Secondly, through black theology, a tool of analysis and black experience, the theological and logical question should emerge. The question would be whether the God of the oppressed, who is pertinent in liberation theology, is the one who is spoken of also in special and general revelation, or at worst gives credence to it? Thirdly, what is theology and Christian theology for blacks in light of prehistoric colonial Christianity and theology? This question then links up with issues of God transcendence, immanence and the meaning of metaphysics for blacks. Lastly, the research finds it to be problematic for theological traditions of the West, especially in areas of metaphysics or ontology. They are problematic, particularly if they become perennial for the faith and Christianity. Instead, Western theology is playing a transient role in theological thought and reflection of God's revelation.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research is perhaps a prolegomenon into the unexplored doctrinal issues. This is specifically within black theology and the notion of a black church being the methodological tool. The black church, as an excavating tool is excavating the true meaning and message of Christianity for black Christianity and Christianity in general. However, with the doctrine of revelation, the aim is to challenge and reveal its inadequacy in both special and general revelation, for a large portion of the oppressed in South Africa and black people are for example in the USA etc. The aim also is for a new conception on subject of revelation. Secondly, how it should be dialectically accepted for both the black and Christian experience in the existential context that sees the continuity of the bombardment of white supremacy? Surprisingly, there is a perpetual theological guidance for black Christianity by the white churches and theological traditions. This then leads to the final aspect aimed at by this study. This final aspect is a different nature, content, essence and substance of God's revelation, even if linguistic approximate of this revelation sees the use of general or special revelation.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN THIS STUDY

The methodology to be used in this study will be a qualitative research method. It is focusing on literature review that will be a starting point from the classical and traditional theological traditions on the subject of revelation. The access and preference of a literature review opens up historical continuum of engagements of Christian doctrine. This historical continuum is

understood by the West and has been imposed from conquest to the rest of the world, where Christianity is present. On the other side, literature review is contextually linking the subject of revelation to the black experience, as to whether the two realities agree on the given “Christian” concept of revelation. In line with eminent development of new epistemology and indigenous knowledge, the subject of revelation on the part of blacks peeps through Mignolo's (2009: 1-23) new epistemic development of knowledge by the oppressed. Mignolo (2009:1-23) says that there is a need of an epistemic disobedience that points out the guilt of intellectual thought in coloniality of being socio-economic, historic and political power. The method of this research opens up the theological paradigm that emanates from the inquiry in the corpus of traditional Christian theological doctrine. This research method attempts to link the black Christian experience, liberation theologies and existential place for the black church and the social context. This is about God's justice as central for a revelation and Christian doctrine on revelation. The qualitative research methodology on literature study and observation will also use Christian doctrines as primary sources. This is an attempt to use black theology as secondary sources, that is, to be as significant sources, which are on par with traditional theological doctrines, for a new voice and vision of the black church and its contribution to Christian doctrine. It is significant to note that the reason black theological sources become secondary sources is linked with the limitation of sources from a black theological perspective. This is in relation to doctrinal critique of the doctrine of revelation. As such, the accepted views of revelation are reflected on to form a base and need to deal with the subject of revelation for black faith adequately and authentically.

The subject of revelation, especially seen through the guise of the common and normal “Christian” view of God's revelation and a manner to believe is necessary for methodological purposes. These purposes will open catacombs of unexplored theological thought, inclusive of the first believers of Christ also. Thus allowing excavation that may propose outlooks that fundamentally resonate with the content of the black experience. This excavation may be the reverberating reality of God of the oppressed, as espoused by black theology, being an organic science and confession to the understanding of God in black ecclesiology and black Christology. This research operates on three premises, the first being the distinctions between the Western corpus of “Christian” discourse on revelation. It is sufficient to mention it as a methodological point; general revelation, natural theology and special revelation in the influence of Christian conceptions of God's revelation and the theological discourse on the

subject. The second premise is that general revelation, natural theology and special revelation are important. However, there is a need to first consider them in radical epistemological theological independence. This is to give sufficient credence to a position of a radical “transcendentalism” against Western thought, that whose implication in racism is contained in a loud voice though speaking in undertones accepted doctrines and beliefs of the Christian faith.

The second phase implicates how Western theological conception of the revelation of God has dire effects to people of colour. Further, confiscations of lands and worldviews in the world, creating a dialect of an oppressor and the oppressed in God. As such, the danger of a lack of deep meditation allows the persisting negation of liberation in discourse. Perhaps at this point also *Bad Faith and Anti-Blackness* by Lewis Gordon (1995) and *Is God a White Racist* by R Jones (1973), reflect an extreme case historically and existentially to blacks and God. At the same time, there is a need for consideration of black ecclesiology, black Christology and black theology on the troubling effect of Christian doctrine. Therefore, it suffices to mention that the intellectual Christian outlook of the West is deeply involved in colonialism, imperialism, slavery and white supremacy. More fundamentally, it is their involvement, as they can capture thought with a glimpse of assumed innocence reflected in acceptance of doctrines, even in post-colonialism and current South African democracy. Even within the discourse of liberation, Western preservation persists and articulates in existence through the continual presence of the white church. The white church’s polity and fear of vigour and robust debate about the abandonment of its thought and the perennial intellectual navigational lenses in Christian doctrine that it continues to enjoy. Cone (2004: 151) is correct in asserting that even white liberals find it easy to quote each other over black pantheon of schools of theological thought. This could be coupled with Deloria (1977: 15-17) , who points that even within liberation theology, there are large residues of white privilege and Western civilisation, thought and methodology though they came at the native and indigenous people’s destruction.

It is also important to mention that there has been between intellectual developments in the West from Dark ages, Middle ages, Renaissance, Reformation and the era of Enlightenment which are part of western theology racist worldview. Van Niekerk (2005: 98-127) has pointed out in his principle of *theoanthropocosmic* principle, the linkage of an era where God was the focus

of the West. Then leading up to humanity, the humanist period, the Renaissance and lastly in the Era of Enlightenment where the world becomes the object of science and there is a drift away from theology and human centeredness. This has been a point of focus and reflection on human existence, the point is important as it reveals the background to Western theological thought and is a subject of this worldview. Another important thing would be to highlight the division of the Western church from the Constantine era and to the Reformation about God and God's nature. Furthermore, a point of interest is also visible through the Romantics of Europe and this point is also visible in the rise of atheism, as it emerges within the corridors of the churches. Though blacks are not directly part of that history, they become part of it through conquest and colonial Christianity and the expenditure of Western civilisation. This is important, as Thurman (1939: 515) pointed out: "When Africans became Christians they saved Christianity", which has been at the hands of the West. Therefore, by implication, part and parcel of the process of colonising, establishing white supremacy. The establishment of white supremacy was needed in fuelling black inferiority and the domination of the Black or Third world by the West and institutional racism reveals this salvation for Christian authenticity, orthodoxy, integrity and sufficient theological thought.

The third premise in the subject of revelation is to consolidate an understanding of revelation. This is about bringing a coherent view of revelation in black ecclesiology and soteriology. That includes also a Christology in the experience of blackness and orthodox Christianity. This approach fundamentally reveals a soteriology of Christianity from the persisting colonial West while on the other side, a black Christology dismisses the absurdity of a special and absolute revelation of God in Christ. That is tallied by land confiscation, obliteration of systems of the oppressed and the question of being human. Mosala (1989: 87) has pointed out that the colonialist and capitalist must destroy and demonise the native, a view expressed also by (Fanon 1963: 168). The subject of the revelation of God through the lenses of black ecclesiology, black experience and the black lived experience makes soteriology and "Western soteriology". This in truth is the Europeanisation of the world, diametrically opposite to God's revelation. Moreover, this is opposite to the purpose of soteriology as recorded in the biblical texts. Through this methodology one seeks to be exposed to various sources on the topic and one needs to facilitate genuine discovery of the content of God's revelation to the oppressed. The topic of revelation in the black world will definitely use black liberation theology as the point of departure from traditional views of the revelation of God. The methodology is linked

to the literature review. Therefore, it will open up how black theology, black oppression, the notion of the black church, black resistance, black spirituality and black consciousness are a fundamental datum for the revelation of God for black people, to reveal robust insight to traditional accepted “Christian” beliefs. Furthermore, the methodology means to get insight and give a new voice that considers the revelation of God in the black world as necessary today.

1.6 HYPOTHESIS OF THIS STUDY

While having to consider the position of a black church, in light of the revelation of God under black theological reflection, it reveals fundamental issues that emerge from a different interpretation of God’s revelation and to different people. That should see the revelation of God to the black church, as it should be informed by the persisting black experience, as beyond lofty ideals of Western philosophy and theology, especially if their theological views inform ecclesiology. As such, deep philosophical and theological reflection on the subject of revelation moves from metaphysical concept about God (immanence, transcendence, to taking existential concepts as fundamental) and thus reconciliation, liberation and justice become the starting point for revelation. Wilmore (2006: 33) has pointed out that the God worshipped by black slaves during the primordial state (in the slave ship) was not the same God worshipped by slave masters. Boesak² (2011: 5) records the following:

We first met this Christ on slave ships. We heard his name sung in praise while we died in our thousands, chained in stinking holds beneath the decks, locked in with terror and disease and sad memories of our families and homes. When we leaped from the decks to be seized by sharks we saw his name carved in the ship’s solid sides. When our women were raped in the cabins, they must have noted the great and holy books on the shelves. Our introduction to this Christ was not propitious and the horrors continued on America’s soil.

As such, the meeting of the Christian God with Africans and their forceful conversion, which was not always the expected result by the slave masters and colonialists, sets the tone of fundamental theological difference, Christian and human experience with the divine. Black oppression by whites points to two Christian spiritualities that are; the oppressor and oppressed.

² This is recorded in Boesak’s article on “*The divine favour of the unworthy: when the fatherless son meets the Black Messiah*”. He mentions also the following: “Van Aarde’s Jesus of History and faith, the revolutionary, healer, teacher and helper has long been at the heart of Black Christianity. However, this truth did not come automatically to Black people in their encounter with the Christian faith; it is truth they had to discover themselves despite the Christianity White people brought. For, as Vincent Harding writes, speaking for all conquered, colonised and enslaved people

The Christian experience born out of the oppressed has a dual head seeking both to be a human being and a Christian. The human links more fundamentally with general revelation that has a rational, intellectual and intelligent being, while this intelligent being knows and has been created to receive God's revelation.

The Christian aspect speaks more to a special revelation of God in Christ and the absoluteness of Christ. This absoluteness of Christ serves a different meaning to the oppressed, as it seems to suggest a different Jesus than that of conquest, land confiscation and dehumanisation. One wants to posit and postulate that these two realities and reaction between the slave and the master, force a constant theological and epistemological disagreement. However, to push away the perpetual teaching of the oppressor to the oppressed, to change the lenses of thought and dogma is to change conventional and traditional theology. This is creating the need and desire of discomfort, fairness and for Western theology to learn and know the God of the oppressed. This is due to the fact that God of the oppressed is revealed in liberation and not in lofty ideas. Thus the discovery and revelation of the God of the oppressed is an end to the theological hegemony and abstractionism of the West. Therefore, this is the beginning in discussing and seeing what special and general revelation would mean to black ecclesiology and for the doctrine of revelation. Wilmore (2006: 33) and Boesak (2011: 5) give insight to the desire of knowing and seeing Christ's specialness, sacredness and authority in experience and on earth.

Wilmore's (2006: 33) view of the different God between the slave and slave master is explicitly applicable in South Africa. This is explicitly practical when investigating structural power in South Africa. Lastly, this is also obvious in the implication of white supremacy over brown, red, yellow and black bodies in the world. The God of black Christians should have and maintain different theological; existential, metaphysical and experiential dictates from the God of white Christians. Boesak (2004:10) rightly asserts:

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.

Biko (1978: 96) rightly argued:

The Black Consciousness approach would be irrelevant in a colourless and non-exploitative egalitarian society. It is relevant here because we believe that an anomalous situation is a deliberate creation of man.

Thus a thorough investigation and new reflecting of the revelation of God in black ecclesiology dismisses black oppression. This is understood as being the work of God in as much as in today's context and its persistence of tolerance. This tolerance helps the mutilation and humiliation of blacks as they tolerate a place which whites have given them in the world (poverty and ghettos). Raboteau's (1978: 290) writing on the turning of the tides in black conversion resulting in slave rebellion and Christianity asserts: "Revolutionary interpretations of the Bible by such slaves as Vesey and Turner were proof to American slaveholders that slave Christianity could become a double-edged sword". He (1978: 295) further asserts:

Nowhere is the slaves rejection of the masters religion clearer than in their refusal to obey moral precepts held up to them by whites, especially commands against stealing. While white preachers repeatedly urged "Don't steal", slaves just as persistently denied that this commandment applied to them, since they themselves were stolen property.

Thus such narratives force a change in dialogue and theological doctrines and creeds. These creeds speak of God's revelation, which becomes dialectical, instead of being abstract and fixed on a metaphysics, which exudes racial preference. The starting point for a doctrine of revelation for the black church begins with God expected to liberate urgently and the death of God and white ecclesiology. This white ecclesiology kept slaves to escalate and exacerbate privilege, extension and deepening of white coffers and perennial suffering of blacks as noted by (Isicher 1995: 25). This is in reference to the white church and state. Further, this then requires delineating of the reality and truth that indeed either one of the Gods or at best the theological tradition is either to be accepted or totally rejected. The realness of God could only be established by the impact and influence God's exacts in the real world. It is where whites and blacks live, blackness and whiteness are realities in contemporary human existence. If one follows this approach, indeed the God of whites as a racist is more evident in material existence than a God worshipped by blacks. God of the blacks is expected to be a fighting pacifist, docile and has gone total oblivion for His people. This happens even in the democracy that celebrates the role of the church, despite fundamental theological differences that are not explicitly expressed. This brings the question of how can now suddenly in blindness and under the spell

of historical amnesia begin to pray together for the same things, same doctrines—at acceptance of interpretation- and see and feel God’s presence the same? Cone (1986: 87) asserts:

If worship is inseparably connected with life, then we must assume that the worship services of slaves could not have had the same meaning as the worship services of slave holders, because they did not share the same life. They may have used the same words in prayers, songs and testimony, or even preached similar sermons. But slaves and slave holders could not mean the same thing...because their social and political realities were radically different.

Therefore, such approach of forged unity ends up with whites on top and blacks at the bottom (wrestling for crumbs and cheese). Surprisingly, when questioning what blacks and the poor fought for and what are fighting and struggles for? There is no answer. It is not understood with the authentic Christian experience that pushes away Christianity that undermined and compromised new black episteme, confession, prophecy and theological independence. While white privilege is then maintained even in black people’s prayers, theological discourse, peace, progress, pacifism, Christian ethic, democracy and experience of the divine is under attack.

God’s new doctrine of revelation to black humanity and ecclesiology is a necessity. It is simultaneously linked to the revelation of God in Christ for salvation, as the God of the oppressed. Fundamentally, the revelation of God to black humanity is soteriological, cultural and political in nature. It is therefore a humanising force for the dispossessed and dehumanised, as seen in the black church. Materialism, opulence, service deliveries and protests should not be seen as symptomatic and unconscious outcry for the dispossessed. The black theologian, the notion of the black church and true reconciliation stand in the gap for this revelation of God to truly play out. Cones rightly asserted: "The task of the theologian is to probe the depths of Scripture exegetically for the purpose of relating that message to the human existence" (Cone 1997: 8).

In the final hypothesis, the revelation of God in the existential level through black theology remains a reminder of blacks not only to know God of the oppressed, but to adequately see the power, victory and pride given to them by God. Since God is being revealed to them in a new doctrine of revelation, this doctrine will give credence to the Christian theological corpus, to overturn even pessimistic views concerning black theology and ecclesiology, Gordon (1995: 144) argued:

It should be noted that a presupposition of racism is a state of war between superior and inferior races. Thus, as contended by Reverend Payne, whatever benefits one race hurt the other. Hence Jesus historical choice of being white, from the antiblack perspective, entails the rejection of blackness. This rejection is borne out, from such a perspective, as historical fact. God is not, as thought by black theologians, in those who suffer. God is in those who benefit from the world God has created for them.

A new doctrine of God's revelation from the black church fundamentally rejects what Afro-pessimists say about black theology and God, as stated by Gordon. As such, blacks and the oppressed will not ask theodicy questions of why a good, loving and benevolent God allows suffering, slavery and oppression. Rather the source of black oppression is the creation of other human being; whites in particular as noted by (Biko 1978: 96). As such, God of the oppressed in special revelation, namely; Christ can only be divinely mandated, rather the God of the oppressed requires not forgiveness and naiveté. Furthermore, the God of the oppressed requires confrontation with Western ecclesiology and Western theological reflection.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focuses on the research and the methodology to be used, while problematising the theological doctrine of the West, particularly the revelation of God. Thus it places an emphasis in reviewing of these doctrines, especially in light of the black experience. This chapter opens the discourse needed in the establishing of a revelation of God. This occurs in light of the black experience and biblical texts that lead to a new consideration, which is informed by experience on the disclosure of God to the oppressed. The following chapter will discuss the "given" conceptions on revelation and will engage the doctrine of the revelation of God and the pertinent areas to the doctrine of revelation. That will require a fundamental point of departure for the church born out of the black experience and the implication of the given and accepted conceptions of the doctrine of God to the oppressed.

CHAPTER 2

GOD, REVELATION AND CHURCH

2.1 THE INTRODUCTION TO THE REVELATION OF GOD

The revelation of God in Christian theology is understood as an encounter with God and the revealing of God's will and purpose for human life. Within the scope of Christian theology, revelation is the cherry that exudes the theological basis for human uniqueness as a creature of God. Revelation happens not out of the need of the extraordinary or seduction of the transcendental power (to appeal and dominate over mortals). However, revelation is a regularity in the very ambience that necessitates its manifestation, parallel to regular human existence and the immanence of divine existence and the enigma. Wyman (1998: 54) argues: "Psychological analysis discloses that the religious consciousness of divinity. The primary phenomenon of all religion is mysticism, that is, belief in the presence and influence of supernatural powers and the possibility of an inner connection with them."

The concept of God's revelation is seen predominantly as content for main and traditional monotheist religions and faiths. Edwards (1967: 189) asserts: The notion of revelation is central to three of the major world religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Through Christianity in particular it has long been important element in the religious thought of the West. Further, Edwards (1967: 189) also argues:

A particular conception of the nature of revelation involves a particular conception of the nature of faith, as man's response to revelation; of the Bible and its inspiration as a medium of revelation; and of the character of theological thinking, as thought that proceeds in the basis of revelation. When revelation is conceived as the divine disclosure of religious truths, faith is necessarily understood as the obedient believing of these truths.

The belief in revelation from the biblical text should then tally with the history and context of the text and the daily living experiences of its believers, past and present. The revelation of God is also a reflection of a God, who acts deliberately in human life. God should by His own nature take need of their well-being as creatures of God. He should be a confirmation of a God whose transcendence necessitates benevolence for a revelation to humanity. Myers (1987: 883) records on revelation as:

God's deliberate disclosure to mankind of true knowledge of himself and his purpose and actions on behalf of mankind. The biblical idea of revelation is an indispensable element of the gospel of the self-giving God, and has always been a centre of theological discussion.

Thus the revelation of God is dialectical in nature, dialectical in that the "revealer" seeks an audience who is willing to listen, see, understand and act. The audience should act to His revelation though aware of the act of disobedience and ignorance to the revelation. This revelation of God surely does not emerge as impositions to the audience who are forced to listen to God. This revelation is rather an affirmation of the dialectical relationship between God, the world and humanity knitted in the rubric of existence. The question of obedience is dependent on how the audience of God's revelation is taken seriously. This is a point to be discussed fully in light of the black church and God's revelation. Myers (1987: 746) rightly pointed out:

The revelation of God was not in statements or propositions, whether those of the Bible or the traditional theological documents, but in acts of history. The Bible witnessed to those acts and was in this sense a book of history, but its narratives were not intended as exact and objective history. Rather, they were theologically informed history, and it was wrong to make faith depended on their historical accuracy.

One again has to highlight that the relevance of the Bible as an act of history is seen in the black church and the revelation of God. This revelation of God is recorded therein, but as living words that are meant to inspire, Evans (1992:115) has asserted:

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.

In line with the Bible being a record of God's revelation and God's truth, which strangely and purposely disregarded by the West during colonialism, 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.

As such, perhaps the West has not taken both the revelation of God and Bible seriously. The point made by Myers (1987: 746) is of significance in understanding the revelation of God, not

as simply a recording of verses inscribed in the Bible. The most significant aspect is rather the stimulus of why those particular verses exist. Additional question is; to whom did the verses first exist and their relation of those words to whom they will be communicated to. The Encyclopedia Judaica (1971: 117) records:

Revelation, an act whereby the hidden, unknown God shows Himself to man. To be sure, this phenomenon belongs to the realm of human reality, but it is experienced by coming from God. Phenomenologically, every religion finds its starting point in a revelation.

As one has sought to point out that the materiality of human existence is the very ambience of God's intended revelation to humanity. Thus human reality is the only applaudable and seemingly the only adequate realm of the reception of this encounter. Audi (1995: 793) also asserts: "Reliabilism, a type of theory in epistemology that holds that what qualifies a belief as knowledge or as epistemologically justified is its reliable linkage to truth." Audi (1995: 775) also holds the following to be true concerning reality:

Reality, in standard philosophical usage, how things actually are, in contrast with their mere appearance. Appearance has to do with how things seem to a particular perceiver or group of perceivers. Reality is something said to be two—way—independent of appearance. This means that appearance does not determine reality.

The point mentioned that appearance and reality are extremely different and are not interchangeable, but rivetedly and extremely extricated realm in relation to the human gives insight to the real vision of revelation. Considering the divine, divine's engagement and commitment to and with the mortal, there are instances where all is said to be good and just (socially, politically and in economic orders), but in truth the surface show a greater threat of decay and danger. Perhaps it then becomes valid to hold to the difference between appearance and reality, a position which the revelation of God seems to suggest.

Smith (1995: 926) asserts: "Revelation, the transmission of knowledge from the divine to the human." Further, Smith (1995: 926) extends the scope of revelation by also pointing out: "In Scripture, revelation routinely is marked by God's physical manifestations Gen (12: 6-7) and numerous instances." A view which he adds is that rabbinic thought on revelation sees revelation somewhat as a voice and none physical, as such rabbis consider revelation ended with the prophets leading up to today having no physical revelation of God. Rahner (1975: 1460) records:

Revelation as the self-revelation of God in the OT, in Jesus and in the Apostles does not define either God or man simply as non-world. It announces that God is in the world so that men may be ordained to God in history and be able to criticise their inherited traditions in the light of his orientation.

To the receptors of this revelation he (1975: 1460) records:

God is immanent in the world yet precisely as such is absolutely superior to the world. He endows the finite being with a truly active self-transcendence in its becoming. He himself is the ultimate future and final cause, which is the true efficient cause operative in all becoming.

It is important to understand the revelation of God from the predecessor of Christianity namely; the Hebrew's religion *Imago Dei*, as such the salvation and revelation of God is not only ecclesiastical. However, this goes beyond just textual inferences and pronouncements, but is precisely interwoven with reality that is experienced and known to the human as a self-transcendent being. Martin (1964: 698) on the revelation of God asserts:

The act or process of revealing that which has previously been unknown; specifically, God's disclosure of himself or his will to man. God is both the subject and object of the divine revelation. Man can know nothing of God save that which he chooses to communicate to us. Happily God has revealed himself in a number of ways in the course of history and has enabled man to apprehend that revelation.

Further, Martin (1964: 699) notes:

He revealed himself in various phenomena of nature such as wind, thunder storm and earthquake, and in a less direct way in splendour and intricacy of the universe. But God's primary mode of revelation is through his word.

One should add that the Bible has been understood in traditional Christianity. This implies that it is a record of His revealed word to humanity. Therefore, to the Hebrews it would seem in the face of archaeological evidence³ and biblical history⁴ that it is His will that the oppressed be

³Inside Judaism documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW9x-Z3u2Lo> accessed 2017 March 8. The importance of such documentaries assist in the reading of the Bible and Hebrew history. Which in convenience saves colonial Christianity, western theology with its abstractions from the biblical story of struggle and the encounter of God with oppressed people.

⁴ Inside Judaism <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW9x-Z3u2Lo> Accessed 2017-03-8

freed and by their freedom. He became their God who then would do these wonders as part of God's revelation. This expression is easily perceived in the parabolic Edenic era that had begun with their forefathers. McKeown (2008: 273) asserts:

Genesis opens up God's character to the reader showing not only how God acts, but why he acts in a particular way. While some of the actions attributed to God are shrouded in mystery many of his acts in Genesis are related in the context of a clear moral rationale.

He furthermore argues that God has made Himself known in various ways and manner in the first book of the Bible (Genesis); he revealed Himself in dreams, he walks and converse like a human a human being and he is sometimes represented by an angel. His character is also revealed through divine speeches that add further details to the characterisation of God and reveal his thoughts to the reader" (McKeown 2008: 273).

It is significant to note from the above narratives that the nature of a general view of God's revelation that specific themes arise in the doctrine of the revelation of God. This revelation of God defines revelation and there are persisting ideas concerning revelation. These ideas can emerge from being metaphysical in nature, to religion and language. Actually, a clearer capturing of this concept of revelation is that it entails revelation of; knowledge, truths and the genesis of monotheistic religions. Additionally, it entails God's transcendentalism enclosed in enigma and hiddenness and that revelation is also existential. The existential nature of God's revelation is important, because it defines God as part of existence. Moreover, it seems to give God immanence and transcendence their logical place in reality and human existence. Martin (1964: 698-699) and McKeown (2008: 273) observe that God's revelation manifested in epiphanies, phenomenon, dreams and the natural elements of nature. The significant thing about God's revelation, especially at the start of Hebrew faith and scriptures is the existential character of God. That is slightly different from the God's revelation in creation and particularly the Edenic era, since identity of humanity is rooted in innocence and *Imago Dei*. It seems that the role of such phenomenon becomes embellishments for growing human faith and it is pointing to the transcendental distinction between God and humanity. Therefore, to hold the view of existential character of God's revelation, the Hebrew scripture, biblical archaeology and history are fundamental in seeing this reality.

2.2 EXISTENTIAL REVELATION PREAMBLE TO REVELATION IN BLACK CHURCH

After having given the accounts and beliefs that qualify for the revelation of God from a Christian perspective, it is important to engage the topic of revelation as being provided by the Bible and its narratives to the Hebrews. In the biblical text, the Hebrews are oppressed people and they are in constant engagement with neighbouring powers, which seek to dominate the Hebrews and subdue their kingdom. The judges, kings, minor and major prophets in the entire biblical canon, all outcry a similar condition of oppression and invasion. As such, the religious life of the Jews is contained in their oppression. The spiritual experience is only deducible and felt within the political, cultural, societal and economic orders.

The religious and divine experience of the Jews is thus an existential response; even the very revelation of God is one of existential character. Jewish religious experience is to a certain extent what West (1999: 62) describes as black experience and reasons for blacks being Christian. West (1999: 62) asserted: “Black people became Christians for intellectual, existential and political reasons”. West (1999: 101) correctly pointed out that 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: 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.” Thus oppression and liberation goes hand in glove with Hebrew spirituality, making the revelation of God not a story of romance, but from the divine for the human being as a creature of God. Therefore, to further elucidate on the issue of revelation and its links to the themes of oppression and liberation, prominent biblical scholars agree on the pertinence of these themes—in a documentary entitled *Inside Judaism-Jewish History*⁵. The biblical scholars agree on the threat that Judaism and early Christianity posed on the status quo of the time. This is fully affirmed by the very biblical writings that consist of; Babylon, Persian, Greek and Roman invasions, an encounter that leads to the political direction of our time. Through an explicit example of using the information from the documentary the *Hebrew story of the*

⁵<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW9x-Z3u2Lo>“Inside Judaism-Jewish History ‘. The scholars involved in this research retrace through biblical archaeology the history of the oppression of the Jews and the validity of the Exodus accounts outside the text.

Exodus. The account from biblical scholars and archaeologists' (documentary *Inside Judaism*) findings reveal a different but yet a logical narrative to the story. In their research they found that the Exodus was an event that occurred because of class differences. The poor were ruled by elites who allowed poverty, slavery and injustice to perpetuate to the oppressed.

Scholars seem to believe that Egypt and Canaan were empires that were possibly interwoven because of power relations between the Egyptians and Canaanites. The slaves who left Egypt to Canaan were the oppressed, who sought a better life and experience of their humanity. If bondage was in Egypt it operated parallel to Canaan. Scholars also suggest that the Promised Land found by Hebrews in Canaan, came also from an internal decline in Canaan. Rebellion led to the poor attacking the rich and their deities in Canaan, similarly, the Hebrews and other slaves that left Egypt were left with a prospect of deliverance from oppression. Thus the revelation of the God of the Israelites is surely existential and serves as guidance to even the doctrine of revelation. Thus one can draw a conclusion that while deliverance guarantees freedom in Canaan for the Israelites, their promised land; masses wanted freedom in Canaan also. On both accounts, it seems that God operated between the oppressed and prepared a promised land that had freedom as its cornerstone. Scholars agree also that the Hebrews who left Egypt actually had their heritage as Canaanites. Actually, they were all Canaanites and mingled with other wandering tribes to become the biblical tribe of Israel (the chosen people of God). They received freedom and God revealed Himself by making them free (*Inside Judaism*). In order to elucidate the case for a true meaning and definition of God's revelation, one has to consider the God's revelation to Moses.

It is important to note that Moses first went to the places that Hebrews went to as wanderers. Scholars point out that among the tribes that the Israelites met were *Sashu* tribe, located in Medina in a location named YHW. This is the same place where God revealed Himself to Moses as YHWH, a name of a Hebrew deity with the same root meaning of the *Sashu* or YHW tribe. The conclusion being YHWH was the God revealed to the disenfranchised, marginalised and oppressed. One of the scholars points out: "those who chose to be free became God's people, the chosen"⁶. Such an encounter of revelation to the Hebrews is linked with a

⁶ *Inside Judaism* the choosing of God by those wanting to be free dismisses the use of the bible on oppressing the world. It also fosters a need for serious dialogue on God revelation, rebellion of slaves in oppression and the centrality of God's justice.

soteriology encompassed between social, religious, political and economic systems; it is a change of order. This revelation then leads to the logical position of a series of revelations from the God of Hebrews, who in the biblical text are oppressed people in most of the time. This relationship is fundamental particularly to black faith, Boesak (2009: 56) correctly 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 it also speaks of hope, of conversion, of redemption. It is a message for the whole of life. And it is our task to bring this message to our people in such a way that it makes sense in the de facto situation.

In the same way, Thurman (1939: 515) has pointed out that black Christian conversion to Christianity was the redemption of the faith to its orthodoxy. Moses who had been active in their delivering from Egypt, prophesied about another who shall come, whose word they must harken too. In Judeo-Christian theology, such a figure is seen as the Christ, the Messiah. According to Christianity "Messiah" is the borrowed Hebrew term that designates an office of anointment or the anointed. The concept of the "Messiah" begins from the time of oppression and prolongs the idea of the God of the oppressed, whose revelation saves at all times the oppressed. Moses (1982: 4) asserts:

The term "Messiah" derives from the Hebrew, *mashiah*, meaning anointed. In the traditions of the ancient Hebrews, it signified the belief in a future great deliverer—a priest, king, or prophet—who would come with a special mission from God. Usually this mission was seen as politically revolutionary but culturally reactionary. The belief in a messiah grew out of the Hebrews' experience of oppression at the hands of the great Middle-Eastern empires. It symbolized their hopes for an improvement in the fortunes of their nation and the restoration of their ancient ideals. The Messiah would usher in a messianic age. The chosen people would revolt against their political oppressors and revitalize the conservative values advocated by the prophets.

The Old Testament portrays God who speaks, delivers and loves the chosen people who are oppressed. The rebellion in Egypt or in any instance when God delivers is all divinely inspired against regimes. Moses (1982: 5) asserts: "Divinely inspired rebellion against the social order is, of course, a traditional aspect of Judeo-Christian messianism." Moses (1982: 4) also asserts:

The messiah would usher in a messianic age. The chosen people would revolt against their political oppressors and revitalise the conservative values advocated by the prophets. Messianic ideas were adapted by the early Christians, who saw Jesus of Nazareth as the long-awaited Messiah (*Christos* in Greek means the anointed one). After the death of Jesus, the early Christians began to await his second coming, at which time he would inaugurate a messianic era of a thousand years duration.

Though such theological positions are not what are at play currently, they nonetheless validate a fighting God as opposed to a God of pacifism, individualism and bureaucracy. As such, one can then assert that unlike colonial Christianity, God is based on self-love. Boesak (1977) is correct in asserting that all normal people have regard for themselves, have self-respect and are aware of their worth as people created in the image of God. At the same breath, self-love and self-esteem are not sinful, but signs of human dignity. They pointed out, that self-love can be mentioned only within the context that Jesus himself had placed it, namely, the context of love for the other human being (Boesak 1977:28).

The idea of a God who reveals Himself to wanderers, the marginalised and slaves, reveals God who is not only the beauty of metaphysical romance. These metaphysical ideas being of an immutable, transcendent, omnipresent and omnificent God are true. However, they should be accepted in conjunction with an image of a God, who is existential and material in the content of His being existence and engagement, particularly the encounter with the oppressed. Thus fully rendering the idea of a revelation of God's nature and love for humanity as true. This is evident in numerous incidents of God's revelation to the marginalised, wandering and enslaved. Dods (1901: 12-13) rightly asserts:

Man is dear to God because he is like Him. Vast and glorious as it is, the sun cannot think God's thoughts; can fulfil but cannot intelligently sympathize with God's purpose. Man, alone among God's works, can enter into and approve of God's purpose in the world and can intelligently fulfil it.

Dods (N/D: 13) on matter and the adequacy of humanity asserts:

Without man the whole material universe would have been dark and unintelligible, mechanical and apparently without sufficient purpose. Matter, however fearfully and wonderfully wrought, is but the platform and material in which spirit, intelligence and will may fulfil them and find development. Man is incommensurable with the rest of the universe.

This entails the fundamental role that humanity plays in God's creation, as implicated by the virtue of intelligence and the spirit which makes humanity distinct from matter and nature. As such, suitable for conceiving, receiving, understanding, accepting and rejecting the disclosure of God unveiled in God's revelation.

Humanity is thus synchronised to the realm of God and thus human beings confirming their humanity and existence in the existence and the being of God. Therefore, to validate this view there is a need for a slight oscillation from biblical history to contemporary black history, the black experience in particular. Cone's (1997:169) pronouncements to understanding the God of the oppressed and their relationship to God is appropriate when he asserts: "The more black people believed that God is a God, God never change". The more difficult thing was for them to reconcile their religious faith with their bondage. What Cone (1997: 169) points out is a confirmation of two histories that are typified by one condition and event; oppression and bondage. It is an indication of how systems should change, especially when bondage is the way of life. The God who liberated the Hebrews could not sit silent when worshipped by the oppressed. The Encyclopedia Judaica (1971: 118) records: "It may reasonably be inferred, therefore, that, according to the Bible, history is the milieu of God's revelation." In the Biblical narratives God reveals Himself in his plans. Further (1971: 119) it records:

In relation to modern theology, it must be emphasized that both revelation and wisdom phenomenologically proceed from experiences of life. Wisdom characteristically classifies the elementary experiences of daily life, whereas revelation results from "prophetic" interpretations of exceptional events in the life of the "prophet" himself." The Hebrew verb *nirah* "He let himself be seen, showed himself" (usually in holy places) *nada* "he made himself "known" which avoids the anthropomorphic connotations of the root meaning to "see".

The issue mentioned in this section provides a fundamental base for discussing the doctrine of the revelation of God. This is especially a contemporary theology that has defined God's revelation as linked with general revelation and special revelation. The base is set to show a point of departure to the Judo-Christian faith and beliefs concerning the revelation of God, as to what the true sense and face of revelation should be. However, in light of the context and content of this research, it is significant to note specific theological conception of God's revelation as understood within the confines of accepted theological thought.

2.2.1 Perspectives of revelation

The doctrine of revelation as it pertains to traditional and mainstream Christianity has come to grab the imagination, commitment and spirituality of many devout Christians. This is one of the doctrines that is central in the survival and truth of the Christian faith. Wyman (1998: 59) asserts: The concept of revelation in the introduction to *The Christian Faith* is structurally parallel. Here original revelation is located in a universal structure, the feeling of absolute dependence, which is the essence of all religions.

More fundamentally, this forms the caricature and methodological tools to the Gospel, as its articulation and its profound relation to its converts and Christ's lordship. It is significant to begin with the inquiry in the subject of revelation of God. Further, it is significant to have an understanding of some specific concepts and even themes linked to revelation that are part and parcel of God's revelation, particularly in the field of *Systematic Theology*. This is necessary for the build-up into the true inquiry of God's revelation. From a classical perspective, revelation has been broken down into various degrees, levels, conditions and interpretations. Berkouwer (1959: 13) asserts:

Anyone who reflects on divine revelation in the world, and permits himself to review the history of the church and theology, quite naturally encounters a frequently expressed differentiation between general and special revelation. This differentiation has played an important role in eras of all kinds, and has even precipitated much discussion and strife. Quite understandably the question has often arisen whether theology, in pressing this distinction, has not gone beyond "what was written," and whether or not this differentiation permits a proper view of the wonder of the one divine revelation.

It is significant to engage the vital point that Berkouwer (1959:13) puts forth when linking divine revelation and the review of history of the church and theology. As one would argue that revelation finds credence in history and existential conditions. Through this historical and existential view, one wants to crystallise the view point from the biblical text such as the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt in *Exodus*, though this is not full detail hermeneutics to this text. However, the point that stands out is the bondage the Hebrews experienced. This is an element of an existential context informed by a history and the intervening hand of God, which later defines Hebrew faith and scriptures. It is fundamental to point out that revelation is divine and thus to given an extent that suggests a sense of independence of God. Revelation has a sense of dependence, conscious or unconscious of humanity on God to direct and

influence human relation. Though Christianity is built among the emergence of God's revelation, others hold top revelation as universal and not necessarily independent from other revealed truths. Wyman (1998: 56) has mentioning of Troeltsch's position on revelation in a plural context is found among their religious founders, Wyman (1998: 56) asserts:

Revelation occurs universally in the depth of the human spirit. Troeltsch, consistent with the principle of analogy, makes no distinction in principle between the revelation in Jesus and the revelation in other founders of religions. It follows that *all* religions rest on revelation. Schleiermacher 'position is more restrictive: there is a distinction in principle between the "original fact" at the basis of Christianity and that at the roots of other religions. The God-consciousness of the Redeemer gives Christianity a unique foundation.

It would seem that Troeltsch's position as noted by Wyman (1998: 56) on revelation is an open outlook that allows other authorities on the subject of revelation, not the absoluteness of Christianity alone as the substance of God's revelation. Thus in a sense a dogmatic approach of Christianity, but more so of Western Christianity in particular would later prove problematic to those it seeks to convert. Since this Western Christianity attacks all other so-called revealed revelation. It is therefore fundamental to delineate and unpack various facets to the concept of revelation. This should begin with whether it is general or special and even informs conscious and unconscious receptor of this revelation. Berkouwer (1959: 14) pointed out that Christian approach within religious circles on revelation was the viewpoint of seeing revelation as special, since it was the viewpoint of an outlook and confession that incited criticism. Based on what assumed as generally revealed, Berkouwer (1959: 14) argues:

Thus the concept of a "general" religion arose, corresponding to a "general" revelation; on this basis the teachings of the church were subjected to sharp criticism. Christianity, it was argued, set far too many boundaries to God's revelation by calling it "special" and by localizing it. Did not all religions contain elements with hidden indications of a revelation of God? Was it still possible to accept the specific of God's revelation in Israel and in Jesus Christ?

Berkouwer (1959: 13-14) also mentioned the fact that the general revelation means something distinct from what other mean. It is important to point that within the context of this research, one does not have to delve in the debates on subject of revelation, but make mention of them. The points of revelation are too highlighted purely by way of familiarity with the theological discourse. They are not highlighted from the fundamental basis for this research, as this research is directed at taking a different approach. Perhaps direction and orientation of this

research is to put forth what Berkouwer (1959: 13) is meaning, concerning the very distinction and varying meanings of choosing either special or general revelation. Truly, this was going beyond what has been written in scripture and a misunderstanding of what has been revealed. This position has to be highlighted especially in light of European enlightenment and colonial Christianity. It would also be important to mention other aspects of revelation, though the general focus is usually between special and general revelation. The aspects of revelation are as follows: personal revelation, salvific revelation, covenant revelation, trinitarian revelation, Christo-centric revelation, revelation in word and deed, historical revelation and final revelation.⁷

Perhaps as the discussion of revelation is central in laying the ground for the research, one should mention critical areas to general revelation. Berkouwer (1959: 20) asserts: “General revelation has no significance for life beyond establishing the impossibility of man’s guiltlessness. It would then point to the guilt of the closed eye, but have no effect in actual life.” It seems that within Christianity and its doctrines, general revelation does not contain a soteriological and eschatological worldview on God. General revelation seems to be an opening to the divine and personal revelation of God. Furthermore, it is transformative to the world and humanity through soteriology. Berkouwer (1959: 24) asserts:

The distinction between general and special revelation does not posit a rupture in the unity of God’s revelation, but points out rather the revealing acts of God in history in the way of creation, fall and redemption. In the revelation of God in Christ Jesus—saving and propitiating—the Light rises once more *over the world*. Jesus Christ is Saviour of men, but he is also Light of the *world* (John 8:12) and he has come as a Light in the world (John 12:46). The world has come into existence through Christ (John 1:10) and without the Word, without him, was nothing made that was made (John 1:3). But the world knew him not (John 1:10), even though the Light shone in the darkness. Because of this Light, however, the world and human life are still possible.

Berkouwer is correct in pointing that the division between general and special revelation does not posit a rupture in the unity of God’s revelation, instead it links creation, the fall and redemption. Subsequently, on “Christ being the light” it seems to suggest that even the use of special and general revelation for categorical purpose of God’s dealings manifested and entailed

⁷These distinct but yet connected ways of seeing revelation are contained in the Doctrine of Revelation, UNISA STH study guide.

in God's revelation. However, the doctrine of God's revelation is unnecessary if one conceives of a God who creates, manifests and continues being immanent in the world of human existence. Psalmist in Psalm 8 speaks of his meditation in poetry, on creation's grandeur and the uniqueness of humanity reveals two important factors. One is that David had not seen the incarnated God of special revelation; Christ personalises God nonetheless without a misconception of worshipping nature. Secondly, in an impersonal manner of an unseen God, David's ponder reveals from an impersonal view point of creation of a personal God conceivable without being localised or special. Thus it seems that God's revelation is clearly understood without unnecessary categories and merits. What is sought to be explained by special and general revelation and reveals not the unity of God's revelation, but a knitted rubric of God in the world where human being exist, live and experience. Berkouwer (1959: 24) further asserts:

It is the Psalmist who sings "The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament is his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Men have known these things for generations. They have glorified in the glory of a God manifests himself in his wondrous works. Neither speech nor language is spoken; it is not in the words of Greek or Hebrew or German or English; yet everyday speaks and every night shows knowledge. The apostles add in a later day, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse." Psalmist and the apostles declare what no man can deny; that there is a God who can be known through his works, and when we refuse to see him there we are without excuse.

It is correct to say that there is no excuse to the knowledge of God. On the other side it is necessary to say that what the biblical texts in the New Testament on the life of Jesus suggest. God has been central in revelation, much to be identical to the intended revelation. This is not another aspect of God's revelation, but a consummation of the relation, which God desires to have with humanity. The relationship is as important as the viability and appropriateness of this creation. It is to be inhabited by creature and more fundamentally human existence. The universal love of God in revelation is evident in the cross of Christ for human redemption, it is therefore evident in the world which enables life to continue for all humanity and creatures, from creation as an ambience of the out play of life. Wyman (1998:39) on the other hand posits another dimension on the subject of revelation and the doctrine of faith; he describes the doctrine of faith in two aspects. Firstly, the doctrine of faith pertains to a description of a Christian way of believing and uncovering complex mode of consciousness. The second aspect

is a historical theology. He (1998: 39) begins to venture into an area of interest especially in the context of this research which is the issues of the relevance and nature of revelation. The issue of relevance of revelation is linked with the question raised by him (1998: 40) on the need of a firm concept of revelation. Pannenberg according to Wyman (1998: 40) holds: “we cannot know God unless He makes Himself Known”, thus the theological discourse concerning revelation is initiated, authorised and mandated by God, Wyman (1998: 40) argues:

It follows that revelation plays an indispensable role: “theological discourse” is “discourse about God that God himself has authorized.... Talk about God that is grounded in humanity...as an expression of human ideas about divine reality, would not be theology. It would simply be a product of human imagination”. For Pannenberg and those who agree with his assumptions, a secure concept of revelation is epistemologically necessary.

Wyman (1998: 40) continues:

Gordon Kaufman, on the other hand, argues that theology is, from the ground up, an exercise in imaginative construction. All religions are interpretive perspectives on reality, and Christianity is no exception. It follows that, if revelation means the disclosure of a transcendent divine reality, then theology must learn to do without it. But this is not to say that theology can do without history.

Part of the discussion of general revelation holds revelation as the intuition of the universe. Schleiermacher noted by Wyman (1998: 41) holds to the revelation within the confines of the institution of the universe (between institution and feeling) holding the view that feeling is the subjective side of the sublime moment of remorse and guilt (Wyman 1998: 41). This aspect of subjectiveness of feelings (which brings about remorse and guilt) is also viewed as a doorway to the aspects of special revelation. One can mention that the remorse and guilt emerging from this feeling of dependence is to be problematic to the natives, blacks and oppressed. The blacks will develop a pathology of dependence on the colonial project. Thus it emerges as a sense of dependence imposed and part of socialisation and ecclesiastic experience. Wyman (1998: 42) asserts the following, through the words of Schleiermacher:

All intuition proceeds from an influence of the intuited on the one who intuits, from an original and independent action of the former, which is then grasped, apprehended, and conceived by the latter according to one’s own nature.

Wyman (1998: 42) further argues:

Intuition is not entirely projection, for it is a response to what is undoubtedly there: the activity of the universe. But because the subject is active as well as passive, “grasping” what is intuited “according to one’s own nature,” different people will intuit the universe in different ways. It is for this reason that Schleiermacher can say religion is “infinite.” The plurality of religion is “necessary,” “unavoidable,” “rooted in the essence of religion” because the acting universe is grasped in differing ways. For example, polytheistic religions arise in the intuition of the universe as “a multiplicity without unity,” whereas monotheism and pantheism arise when the universe is intuited as “unity in multiplicity.” “Whichever of these intuitions of the universe we appropriate depends on our sense of universe... Whether we have a God as part of our intuition depends on the direction of our imagination.

Within traditional Christian theology, the subject of revelation is about God, for without God there is no doctrine of God’s revelation to humanity. Perhaps what is necessary in Schleiermacher’s view of God and intuition is that people see the world or universe differently. As such, the subject of this research is motivated precisely by the difference oftenly discouraged in theological thought. This theological thought is represented by the West as a vanguard to human thought and experience. In order to give an idealistic picture of the whole universal understanding, the inquiry of this research seeks to investigate the subject of revelation. The research will further narrow down the commonly accepted areas of Christian theology, which ought to be revisited in light of white supremacy and the black experience.

2.2.2 Key Areas of the doctrine of revelation (special and general)

The fundamentally accepted views on the subject of revelation (for a Christian doctrine) lay between general and special revelation. Berkouwer (1959: 14) posed the question of distinguishing between types of revelation, particularly the thin line between general revelation and Roman Catholic Church, Berkouwer (1959: 15) asserts:

This natural knowledge of God, so it was taught, came forth not from the special revelation of God in Jesus Christ; rather, it preceded this by way of the natural light of reason, through which it was possible to know God. This teaching is found not only in Roman Catholic theology as such; it was also declared an infallible doctrine of the Church at the Vatican Council of 1870, when it was announced that God could be known with certainty from that which had been created through the natural light of reason.

Berkouwer (1959: 15) further adds:

Over against those currents in the nineteenth century Roman Catholic Church, which taught that God could be known only through and by a special revelation in Christ, the Council maintained the possibility of a true even though incomplete knowledge of God apart from the revelation in Christ.

Berkouwer's point is that general revelation must be clarified in the 21st century. This could be achieved by clearing the misunderstanding on general revelation and natural theology, usually seen as meaning the same or being interchangeable. A fundamental point to be understood is that general revelation is not a direct attack on special revelation in Jesus Christ. Though that should be the case, it also linked to the view of the absoluteness of Christianity over other religions, implicating even a distinct meaning of natural religion and natural Christian theology. Berkouwer (1959: 16). He asserts:

Therefore, neither the church nor theology can ever speak of general revelation if in so doing it fails to do justice to the absoluteness of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, who was (God revealed in the flesh) (I Tim. 3:16). Scripture speaks much too plainly to allow such error, for it points us to the great mystery revealed at the end of the ages, which had previously remained hidden (Rom. 16:25; Heb. 9:26). Whenever the church and theology speak of general revelation, no shadow whatever must be cast over special revelation. Certainly such shadowing has never been the purpose of the church's exposition of general revelation.

Natural theology when conceived from the theological tradition of the West is said to be the grasp of humanity on the knowledge and the existence of the Creator from nature. The natural theology from the West sees this position of the knowledge or revealed God accessible through reason and perception. Natural refers to arguing by God's existence, based on natural facts, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015: 1) records the following:

The term "natural religion" is sometimes taken to refer to a pantheistic doctrine according to which *nature* itself is divine. "Natural theology", by contrast, originally referred to (and still sometimes refers to) the project of arguing for the existence of God on the basis of observed *natural facts*. In contemporary philosophy, however, both "natural religion" and "natural theology" typically refer to the project of using the cognitive faculties that are "natural" to human beings—reason, sense-perception, introspection—to investigate religious or theological matters. Natural religion or theology, on the present understanding, is not limited to empirical inquiry into nature, and it is not wedded to a pantheistic result. It does, however, avoid appeals to special non-natural faculties (ESP, telepathy, mystical experience) or supernatural sources of

information (sacred texts, revealed theology, creedal authorities, direct supernatural communication). In general, natural religion or theology (hereafter “natural theology”) aims to adhere to the same standards of rational investigation as other philosophical and scientific enterprises, and is subject to the same methods of evaluation and critique

It is also significant to note that the Reformers had a belief in general revelation, but understanding its limitation to the true knowledge of God. Berkouwer (1959: 17) mentions that both *Article 2 of the Belgic Confession and Romans 1*, point to the existence of a revelation of God in all the works of God’s hands, though the limitation of general revelation discernible in nature opens up other reality to God’s revelation. God’s revelation found that the view of humanity comes daily into contact with the revelation at least for blacks. Biko articulated that African religions do not need sacred days of worship and assemblies, because the black worldview sees humanity in the presence of the divine daily. It is therefore fundamental to mention especially general revelation and natural “Christian” theology. The follow up on Berkouwer’s (1959: 17) point of nature or general revelation linked with Christ. The point creates a theological link, which places general revelation as an emphasis on the guilt and lost condition, darkness and the blindness of the fall of humanity. The theological link places the antecedent, which is a lack of seeing the works of God and God’s benevolence (Berkouwer: 1959: 17). By the same wavelength, it is also important to consider creation as linked to general revelation and to the redemption in Christ. The point that can be discerned from this view of revelation, that is, special revelation does not make general revelation super flux. The link between the two possibly finds relevance in a revealed God in creation. The creation is leading to guilty and unrest of the heart that finds peace in God (Berkouwer: 19659: 17). This point of unrest is linked to the desire of knowledge. Leith (1971: 1) captures this as he discusses the existence of God and the revelation of God, he asserts:

Knowledge of God forced on us by the world around us has been recognized and accepted by believers in every generation. In some fashion it is the approach of Plato, as he moves level upon level to his supreme Idea, an idea which, according to Plato's thinking, necessarily has moral qualities which can be defined as an Ideal. In some fashion it is the approach of Aristotle, as his system carries us from utter matter to perfect form or from the inanimate world to the high reaches of the Unmoved Mover. More specifically, in the Christian tradition, men have discovered in the world around them "proofs" for God, reasons for faith, necessities for believing, and, at least in the direction of their thinking, they have been forced toward some knowledge of God.

Berkouwer (1959:17) also pointed that central to the idea of general revelation is also the need for the evidence of the existence of God, which has also been sought or found in the Plato's *Ideal* or Aristotle's *Prime Mover*. These are ideas that are valuable in scholarship, but in the context of the research with black experience, they become problematic, as it will be shown revealing that they are vague and somewhat superfluous in the historical and existential context, that blacks are in through the history of colonialism, slavery and imperialism. Pink (1975: 21) points out that though God is invisible, God is neither the incredible nor the unknowable", but rather in God's invisibility has placed invisible things before humanity to be visible to humanity. Pink (1975: 21) asserts:

The church of Jesus Christ does not idealize the world. It is aware of the curse of the fall (Gen. 3:17) and with Paul it knows the creation as subject to vanity and subjugated to the temporal (Rom. 8:20 f.). It hesitates to fraternize with every convenient theodicy that tries to justify God's direction of the world to the judgment bar of human reason. But at the same time the church confesses that God maintains and rules the world. Thus we confront the fact that it is precisely the believer who becomes conscious once again of the universality of the acts of God in the world. It is striking that *Article 2 of the Belgic Confession* contains no mention of "nature."

Wyman (1998: 57-58) asserts:

The central, founding revelation of Christianity is to be sought in Jesus. But Christianity rests on foundations laid prior to Jesus, in the central monotheism of ancient Israel, which produced the idea of God as creative will, and in the conception of the divine holiness and the demand for humanity's moral obedience. Moreover, Christianity has a career after Jesus, as other creative religious individuals, starting with the apostles, reshape and reinterpret the impulses received from him. For this reason, Troeltsch calls his conception of revelation "dynamic." Revelation is not limited to the consciousness of the founder but is an ongoing process that continues throughout the historical career of Christianity.

The view expressed above indicates the absoluteness of special revelation in Christ, though pointing the transferral of revelation to the disciple of the founder. However, an important aspect of special revelation is not the centrality, lordship and authority of Christ in Christianity, but a direct point of Christ's importance over all religions, as understood by the church of the West. It is also significant to note that the distinction between general and special revelation by the churches of the West is an ambivalence or an oxymoron to theological thought, or what has been recorded. This is important because Berkouwer (1959: 24) has noted that in general revelation there is also a link to Christ being the active Word in creation, a view confirmed

with certainty in *Pauline Christological* writings, so in a sense stressing the point that the churches of the West have gone beyond what is recorded by Paul's theology and this is noted by Berkouwer (1959: 13) on the subject of God's revelation. The confusion and contradiction is trying to distinguish the revelation of the divine against itself.

2.3 NATURAL THEOLOGY AND A PROBLEMATIC GENERAL REVELATION

The reflection on the history of revelation seems to be significant for theological discourse, as it entails ecclesiastical confession of the Christian faith and dogma. However, there are fundamental issues from the given concepts of revelation within the theological discussion. This is especially through the lenses of black theology and the notion of a black church. Leith (1971:1-4) and Berkouwer (1959:17) have pointed to the relationship between general revelation and special revelation and how the former leads to the latter if it appeals to consciences. On the subjects of, natural theology and special revelation, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015: 3) argues:

A related question concerns whether natural theology exhausts the domain of truths which we could even in principle have access. Some practitioners (call them *rationalists*) argue that only propositions that can be justified by unaided human reason are candidates for permissible belief. Others (call them *hybridists*) allow that our natural faculties can take us a certain distance—to knowledge of the basic nature and even existence of God, say—but argue that we must ultimately appeal to *faith* when it comes to more specific doctrines regarding the divine nature, acts, and intentions. This is the canonical Roman Catholic position on faith and reason developed in authors such as Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and revived in the natural scientific context of the Renaissance.

Natural theology based upon reason and faith, use mental faculty and philosophical reflection of God, as seen from the authors mentioned above, however, natural theology goes hand in hand with cosmological argument. Cosmological argument entails cause and effect on its classical Aristotelian and Aquinas on the manner in which prime mover and the effect of the prime mover has on objects, including creation and even the question of existence. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015:9) on natural theology and the cosmological argument asserts:

An *a posteriori* argument involves at least one premise whose justification essentially appeals to some sort of empirical fact or experience. The main demonstrative *a posteriori* argument is

what Kant dubbed “the cosmological argument”. It is motivated by the familiar question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” and goes from the empirical fact of the existence of something (or of the cosmos as a whole, perhaps) to the existence of a first cause or ground of that cosmos that is, at least in part, not identical to that cosmos. Cosmological arguments of this sort are found across almost every human philosophical tradition, and find prominence in the West in the writings of Aristotle, numerous medieval Islamic authors, Maimonides, Aquinas, Locke, Leibniz, Samuel Clarke, and David Hume. Here again we will focus largely on the early modern period.

One of the major arguments posed for natural theology is teleological argument, especially in areas of human experience and the divine. It can be divided to have influence in the spectacles of inquiry of the black experience. Though the argument might be an old theological argument, it carries weight for argumentation and for the *Imago Dei* of humanity, particularly for black humanity. The Sanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2015:11) asserts:

The Greek word “telos” means “end” or “purpose”. The *a posteriori* arguments in natural theology that are referred to as “teleological” claim that the natural world displays some sort of purposive or end-directed design, and that this licenses the conclusion that the natural world has some sort of very powerful and intelligent designer (see entry on teleological arguments for God’s existence). Earlier authors dubbed this sort of non-demonstrative, inductive argument a “physico-theological” argument.

The point of significance and validity from the angle of classical teleological argument is an acknowledgement of the divine discernible by human reason. It also seems to suggest a lingering voice in the vastness of space, time and the human in the created cosmos, created with a beginning, aim and an eschatology that is knitted in human purpose and sums up a deliberate act of human creation on the part of the Creator. It is within the same wavelength that Paley’s (1805) natural theology’s argument of the watch and the watch-maker emerges to stress purpose, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015: 11) asserts:

In Paley’s famous analogy, the relationship between a watch and a watchmaker is taken to be saliently similar to the relationship between the natural world and its author. If we were to go walking upon the heath and stumble upon a watch, a quick examination of its inner workings would reveal, with a high probability, that its several parts were framed and put together for a purpose by what must have been an intelligence (1802: 1–6). Likewise, with nature as a whole.

The Stanford Encyclopaedia's records concerning the theologian and philosopher Berkeley, who raises the bar to the human mental faculty, perceptibility and experience of the divine, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015: 11), Berkeley asserts:

A different kind of teleological argument is developed by George Berkeley (1685–1753), for whom natural, physical objects do not exist independently of minds, but consist solely in ideas. Given the regularity, complexity, and involuntariness of our sensory ideas, their source (Berkeley argues) must be an infinitely powerful, benevolent mind that produces these ideas in us in a lawlike fashion. God's existence can also be demonstrated from the harmony and beauty that the ideas of the world display (Berkeley 1710: §146). Since according to Berkeley our ordinary experience is a type of direct divine communication with us, our relationship with God is in this respect especially intimate. Thus he frequently remarks, quoting St. Paul, that "in God we live and move and have our being" (*Acts* 17:28).

The discerning of God's existence in nature through mental faculty is more problematic to the black Christian faith and Christian experience, since blacks were thought not to possess any mental capabilities or the ability to have profound thought (Biko 1978 & Fanon 1963). As a matter of fact, the systems of blacks as inclusive of their religion and theology were destroyed with their belief in God. The aspect of special revelation assumes centrality because of Christ and the soteriological mission to be fulfilled by him in the world. This revelation of God in Christ that assumes centrality has at its heart love and God acting in the world. Dulles (1980: 51) correctly argues:

With a fair degree of unanimity theologians would be willing to describe revelation as the action of God whereby He communicates to intelligent creature's knowledge or awareness of what normally lies beyond their ken. Generally speaking, Christians agree further that such a disclosure on God's part is a free action motivated by love.

There is a need to discuss general revelation as distinct with natural theology and their implications to the special revelation (Berkouwer 1959:14). The research captured in thought and tradition on general and special revelation however discerns that there are areas and questions, which should arise from the conversion of the natives, from both the Americas and Africa. The questions would point out the importance of natural theology and general revelation to particular people. The questions would to a certain extent problematise special revelation, especially being advocated by churches of the West. In this regard, Christ is being chief in the colonial project of Western churches. These Western churches have found in practice and silence, the importance of special revelation, particularly in relation to

Christianity. Firstly, the use of absolute Christianity to conquer the world and a special revelation of Christ, as this would be to place people of colour on the realm of metaphysical obsession with the divine or being good or an escape from materiality to heaven, while their lands, culture and identity are encroached upon. Berkouwer (1959: 21) is discussing the meaning of general revelation as follows:

In sin itself lies a driving power that estranges man from God and from his neighbor. But in the preservation of human life there is still community, marriage, love, justice, mercy. Because of the existence of sin, because of apostasy, these are wonderful phenomena in the fallen world. Here God still holds fast the world and human life, even in the fall.

Berkouwer (1959: 21) mentions that there are things humanity enjoys, which are not necessarily the content of special revelation. Berkouwer (1959: 21) further argues:

General revelation is not concurrent with the special revelation in Christ. This general disclosure puts the world in the middle of the glorious works of God's hand; it does not detach and disengage the world. For God still binds man to his neighbor and preserves human life even in its most extreme individualism.

These theological positions are correct if one takes them from the premise of Western ecclesiastic confession. However, the point to this general revelation would emerge from the position, while black humanity saw God revealed in nature, but by a deep sense of awe (typical of the Psalmist 8) they held on to their land, culture, identity and humanity. Deloria (1977: 15) captures a reality within theological discourse and liberation theologies. This seems to suggest a sense of comfort for those in the historical white churches⁸, though fighting for liberation theologically, whilst they remain stagnant to the metaphysical and existential doctrinal implication of the churches of West, especially in light of colonialism and black and Indian experience. Deloria (1977:15) asserts:

Liberation theology assumes that the common experience of oppression is sufficient to create the desire for a new coalition of dissident minorities. Adherents of this movement indiscriminately classify all minorities-racial, ethnic, and sexual-in a single category of people seeking liberation. Such classification is an easy way to eliminate specific complaints of specific groups and a clever way to tum aside efforts of dissenting groups to get their particular goals fulfilled. For instead of listening to their complaints, observers-and particularly liberal observers

⁸ By historical white churches one wants to point to the church which came with the missionaries and are now tied to the Christian experience, doxology and confession of black believers in those churches.

who pose as sympathetic fellow-travellers---can tie up the conversation endlessly by eliciting questions, framed within the liberation ideology, that require standard and nonsensical answers. Liberation theology, then, was an absolute necessity if the establishment was going to continue to control the minds of minorities. If a person of a minority group had not invented it, the liberal establishment most certainly would have created it.

The researcher takes serious the point raised by Deloria, particularly the context of a native's outlook into liberation and its meaning. The fundamental point in Deloria's (1977: 15-17) view is that the ecumenical outlooks occurring even within the paradigms of theology are limited. The ecumenical outlooks are limited in its tool of analysis, particularly as Christian virtues seems to absolve others (whites), who in the former engaged processes of dehumanisation. While liberation theology has been of benefit to Christian discourse on justice, it too has its limitation, particularly as it cannot influence doctrine that has a character deeper than written records. For instance, white churches with the exception of abolitionists and Quakers have not addressed fully the loss of people of colour. Evans (1992:99-100) has also pointed to the separation of colour from the human and Christian, hence this is also coupled with the question of how people of colour, African in this regard have been considered inferior, savage and other degrading realities. Deloria (1977: 15) further adds:

Liberation theology is simply the latest gimmick to keep minority groups circling the wagons with the vain hope that they can eliminate the oppression that surrounds them. It does not seek to destroy the roots of oppression, but merely to change the manner in which oppression manifests itself. No winner, no matter how sincere, willingly surrenders his power over others. He may devise clever ways to appear to share such power, but he always keeps a couple of aces up his sleeve in case things get out of control.

Factually, to have a church that has blacks or other people of colour under the guidance of a black preacher has come to mean a lot. Stewarts (1999:100) has asserted:

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.

De Gruchy (2004:1-2) has mentioned important thing about the missionary church of the settlers and other white churches contending for Africans; "to civilise the heathens". This position of ecclesiastical control through conversion reveals the in depth issues that should be

exhumed in the theological discourse, especially in liberation and black soteriology. This is especially regarding the revelation, specifically special revelation of Western churches linked to conversion, Eurocentric soteriology and land confiscation. In that regard, this is a valid problem, considering that if God is revealed in nature or creation that confiscation of lands and worldviews or cultures is the confiscation of the revealed God known or spoken about in Christian general revelation and explicit in natural theology, shared by the indigenous people, groups and other natives who are victims of white ecclesiastical superiority. This position problematises the entire Christian experience, training and existence for black theologians and believers coupled with people of colour. De Gruchy (2004: 40) asserts:

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.

What De Gruchy mentions is worth reflecting in the 21st century and the theological legacies of the past. Further, Gruchy (2004:40) 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.

Colonial Christianity, though emerging from the loins of historical theological discourse, is the marred reality of slavery and conversion, since it is as historical to the acceptance of the black body, which reveals another realm of the suitability of theological tradition and doctrine. Garnet (1843: 3) asserted:

The first dealings they had with men calling themselves Christians, exhibited to them the worst features of corrupt: and sordid hearts: and convinced them that no cruelty is too great, no villainy and no robbery too abhorrent for even enlightened men to perform, when influenced by avarice and lust.

The approach that Garnet points regarding Christianity and the silence of the church (with false priests prophesying) should incite a deep inquiry to the doctrines of Europe that have proceeded by death before doctrines, Garnet (1843: 3) asserts:

The bleeding captive pleaded his innocence, and pointed to Christianity who stood weeping at the cross. Jehovah frowned upon the nefarious institution, and thunderbolts, red with vengeance, struggled to leap forth to blast the guilty wretches who maintained it. But all was vain. Slavery had stretched its dark wings of death over the land, the church stood silently by—the priests prophesied falsely, and the people loved to have it so. Its throne is established, and now it reigns triumphant.

Garnet (1843: 3-4) raises fundamental concepts of Christianity, especially the doctrine of soteriology in which liberty is deeply rooted and should be linked to the precepts of general revelation and natural theology. This liberty brings a different discourse that emerges from the experiences of those who are in bondage, whereby liberty is given to all of humanity. Liberty is linked to native and indigenous cultures; it is rooted in nature and liberty being the main caricature of the theological express and experience. It is further persisting between the absolute revelation of Christ and exclusivity of colonial or Western Christianity, cocooned as special revelation or general theology. Garnet's (1843) speech to the slaves raises fundamental realities that are Christian, but violated by the Christianity of the West, (issues of God's justice, ignorance and deceit that fall flat in the face of liberty), Garnet (1843: 5-6) argues:

Brethren, it is as wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery, as it was for the man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors, when the bloody footprints of the first remorseless soul-thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland. The humblest peasant is as free in the sight of God as the proudest monarch that ever swayed a sceptre. Liberty is a spirit sent out from God, and like its great author, is no respecter of persons.

Far from the quest of demonising white people, the point that Garnet raises is a reminder of the black experience and its contact with Christianity, which is inclusive of weeping, torture and disgracing. All these injustices link to seeing this effect as a substance of incarnated devils (Garnet 1843: 6). The black experience if curtailed in an epistemic disobedience, should take serious reminiscent of the past that should engage the theological discourse on the validity of doctrines and episteme for those doctrines. Garnet's (1843: 7) disobedience to slavery at the hands of a Christian faith is inconceivable for liberty of black existence, but disobedience to slave masters is connected to liberty, he argues:

Inform them that all you desire is *freedom*, and that nothing else will suffice. Do this, and for ever after cease to toil for the heartless tyrants, who give you no other reward but stripes and abuse. If they then commence the work of death, they, and not you, will be responsible for the consequences. You had far better all die—*die immediately*, than live slaves, and entail your wretchedness upon your posterity. If you would be free in this generation, here is your only hope. However much you and all of us may desire it, there is not much hope of redemption without the shedding of blood. If you must bleed, let it all come at once—rather *die freemen, than live to be the slaves*.

Black theology has taken the exodus account as central in pronouncement of theological discourse and the grand gesture of freedom and liberation and the love of God, for the oppressed. Garnet (1843: 7) reveals another aspect of the exodus account, which might be declined in traditional and established doctrines. His assertion posits reluctant acceptability even in the doctrine of revelation itself, Garnet (1843: 7) further points out that it is not possible, like the Israelites, to successfully make a grand exodus from the land of bondage, where the blood-red waters were occupied by the Pharaohs in both sides of the sea. People cannot move in masses to the dominions of the British Queen, nor can they pass through Florida and overrun Texas and at last find peace in Mexico. Garnet (1843: 7) stresses that the propagators of American slavery are spending their blood and treasure; they may plant the black flag in the heart of Mexico and riot in the halls of the Montezuma. In this regard, Garnet (1843: 7) ties his analysis by positing what he termed the language of the Rev Robert Hall addressing the volunteers of Bristol, rushing forth to repel the invasion of Napoleon, who threatened to lay waste the fair homes of England, said: “Religion is too much interested in your behalf, not to shed over you her most gracious influences.”

This observation by Garnet leads to a number of pointers to conceive, concerning the two pharaohs in the case of blacks and exodus. The first point is that the doctrines of revelation as discussed in their theological context seem innocent at face value and on the other hand, the practice and interpretation of the biblical texts have destructive results to the converts. It is possible that strides have been made on the change and transformation of attitudes of the West ecclesiastically, but what remains is a deep sense of epistemic bondage that cannot be transcended. Deloria’s (1977: 15) writing on liberation from a *Native American perspective on liberation* is linked to Garnet’s (1843: 7) two pharaohs that signal the failure beneath the efforts or the pretext of inclusion of those previously marginalised. Deloria’s (1977: 15) position

questions why multitudes advocating for liberation and freedom even after liberation theologies continue to seat in comfort that has been provided by Western civilisation. Deloria (1977: 15) points to the fact that liberation should in some sense be not difficult, if we have rejection or no participation with its values and systems. What serves as a credible example to this view is the point that Deloria (1977: 15) raises by the concept of Santa Claus that loses value once people grow from adolescence to maturity. Deloria (1977: 15) asserts:

Liberation, in its most fundamental sense, requires a rejection of everything we have been taught and its replacement by only those things we have experienced as having values. But this replacement only begins the task of liberation. For the history of Western thinking in the past eight centuries has been one of replacement of ideas within a framework that has remained basically unchanged for nearly two millennia. Challenging this framework of interpretation means a rearrangement of our manner of perceiving the world, and it involves a re-examination of the body of human knowledge and its structural reconstruction into a new format.

The point that Deloria raises brings not only the damage done by colonial conquest, but also the lack of innocence of the Western school of intellectual thought. This school of thought also speaks to the subject of revelation within the ecclesiastical and intellectual aspect on thought. Mignolo (2009) has pointed to the lack of innocent disciplines, with the academia and the embedded white supremacy as the navigator of thought and respectability. However, what is crucial in light of the subject matter of this research is Mignolo's observation on how conquest resulted even with current "democracy", which preserved white supremacy and respectability in all other avenues. This respectability is found within the Western episteme of thought that already exists in the knowledge. Such knowledge cannot be countered or attacked by other schools of thought, especially from the indigenous people, Mignolo (2009: 2) argues that such expectation will not arise if the author 'comes' from Germany, France, England or the US. In such cases it is not assumed that you have to be talking about your culture, but can function as a theoretically-minded person. As we know: the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture; native Americans have wisdom, Anglo Americans have science. The need for political and epistemic delinking here comes to the fore, as well as decolonialising and de-colonial knowledges, necessary steps for imagining and building democratic, just, and non-imperial/colonial societies.

Mignolo mentions that geo-politics of knowledge goes with geo-politics of knowing, who, when, why and where? Mignolo (2009: 2) asserts:

Asking these questions means to shift the attention from the enunciated to the enunciation. And by so doing, turning Descartes's dictum inside out: rather than assuming that thinking comes before being, one assumes instead that it is a racially marked body in a geo-historical marked space that feels the urge or get the call to speak, to articulate, in whatever semiotic system, the urge that makes of living organisms 'human' beings.

The point of significance in Mignolo's (2009: 2) thought is primarily that the race has marred many of the aspects of human life and more especially on thought. The epistemic disobedience that Mignolo proposes is fundamental for both faith and thought:

Places of non-thought (of myth, non-Western religions, folklore, underdevelopment involving regions and people) today have been waking up from the long process of westernisation. The *anthropos* inhabiting non-European places discovered that s/he had been invented, as *anthropos*, by a locus of enunciations self-defined as *humanitas*.

Mignolo (2009: 3) further asserts:

The de-colonial option is the singular connector of a diversity of de-colonials. The de-colonial path has one thing in common: the colonial wound, the fact that regions and people around the world have been classified as underdeveloped economically and mentally. Racism not only affects people but also regions or, better yet, the conjunction of natural resources needed by *humanitas* in places inhabited by *anthropos*. Decolonial options have one aspect in common with de-westernizing arguments: the definitive rejection of 'being told' from the epistemic privileges of the *zero point* what 'we' are, what our ranking is in relation to the ideal of *humanitas* and what we have to do to be recognized as such.

Deloria (1977: 16) corroborates this by asserting;

A general attitude toward the world that underlies the Western approach to human knowledge. The basis of this attitude is the assumption that the world operates in certain predetermined ways, that it operates continuously under certain natural laws and that the nature of every species is homogeneous, with few real deviations. One can trace this attitude back into the Western past. Religious concepts, which have since been transformed into scientific and political beliefs, remain objects of belief as securely as if they had never been severed from their theological moorings.

The views that have been raised in Mignolo and Deloria seek to point out fully that within the humanities, at least academically there is a need of breaking of ranks for the vocality of the voice and muted body, which has been silent far too long. Decolonial thinking pressures issues that are pertinent to the human substance and valid for liberation. This is a point that is crucial for decolonial thinking and for a prophetic church that perhaps did not tie or bind itself by pronunciation to decolonisation, but in its nature and origin has been in an engagement of unbinding itself from conquest and matrix of power. Mignolo (2009: 20) correctly asserts: “Decolonial thinking presupposes de-linking (epistemologically and politically) from the web of imperial knowledge (*theo-* and ego-politically grounded) from disciplinary management.” Mignolo (2009: 20) further also asserts: “de-colonial thinking and the de-colonial option place human lives and life in general first rather than making claims for the ‘transformation of the disciplines.’” This point is significant in reflecting that most knowledge produced by the West should be taken with a pinch of salt. The most problematic thing is how it easily moves towards transformation without changing the inherent racism in the academy. The subject of revelation is also not to be excluded, even the interpretation of general revelation. The problems inherent in general revelation can also be found in special revelation.

2.4 THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF SPECIAL REVELATION

The theological issue relevant to the doctrine of revelation, especially special revelation (with its soteriological connotation) as it pertains to the blacks is a paradoxical one; because soteriology as the fundamental tenet of the faith, is necessary and acceptable to all believers. Special revelation is said to mean an absolute encounter with God that is distinct from nature or God’s discernible existence to nature, since it guides the believer to a clear and understandable truth. In contrast to natural theology or general revelation Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2015:3) in reference 4 asserts:

Opponents of natural religion or theology, by contrast, deny that reason or our other ordinary capacities can justify religious beliefs. Some of these opponents are *fideists* (e.g., on some readings, Tertullian, Blaise Pascal, Pierre Bayle, J.G. Hamann, and Søren Kierkegaard) who hold these same beliefs as articles of faith rather than as teachings of reason (see the entry on fideism). Pascal, for instance, was a preeminent mathematician with strong interests in natural theology, but ultimately concluded (during what he called a (night of fire) in November 1654) that unaided reason is more likely to lead us to the false god “of philosophers and scholars” than to the true (God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob). The 20th century reformed theologian Karl Barth opposed natural theology for much the same reason.

The paradoxical position of special revelation in the absoluteness of Christ is that there is a need for salvation of the human soul, therefore, in the context of the black experience this should be accepted and rejected. This realisation of rejecting special revelation and soteriology, as espoused by the white churches and theology, is based on the view that is not within the confines of biblical clarity and truth. This is mentioned by Pheko (1995:78) when he noted the difference of colonial Christianity and its relation to the Bible or what is revealed. This view runs side by side with Berkouwer's (1959: 13) view of going beyond the revealed in the Bible. In order to elucidate this position, there is a great deal of validity for the universal Christian ecclesia and the world. This validity is on the matter of special revelation and the absoluteness, unique and historic revelation of God in Christ. However, the disjuncture emerges in a genealogical state⁹ from the fact that the division of revelation is leading to special revelation as a normative for the Christian faith. Perhaps this division is from the corridors of Western theological reflection. Though at this stage one will not discuss fully the problematic nature of special revelation as universal truth, it is however necessary to mention that from the missionary and evangelical position. Special revelation and absoluteness of Christ and Christianity is marred by misfortune and injustice, however, it is marred for those who were not part and parcel of the entire "white" theological reflections and debates. The debates of special revelation is however more definitive of the Western version of Christianity. There is confusion between Christ and Europe being the absolute Christ, because of seeking fashion and save the world or heathens according to their desires. It is important to grasp that the religiousness of West should not be conceived as innocent, especially in the current era. The history of the colonial church and doctrines on Christianity should be taken seriously, considering the following argument captured by De Gruchy:

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 (De Gruchy:2004:1).

⁹ By "genealogical state" what is meant to be conveyed is the point of origin that has led to the current view of revelation as accepted by theologians and Christians who subscribe to it.

De Gruchy (2004) further argues:

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 Christianise 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 (De Gruchy: 2004:2).

De Gruchy (2004:1-2) points out that the theological premise, understanding and differences of the churches of the West are already carried into the South African context. The black believer who is to be either Catholic or Protestant will have to be assimilated in belief, dogma and interpretation to the theological disputes and definitions of the West. Another fact to be considered is that these were colonial churches and their legacy remains problematic for blacks ontological, ecclesiastically and historically experience. Boesak (2004:9) correctly pointed out:

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.

It is then significant to point out that special revelation and the absoluteness of Christianity or Christ is directly at play in the entire colonial project. It is significant also to argue that soteriology from the Western approach perhaps becomes problematic for the doctrine of revelation, homiletics, doxology and hermeneutics. This problematic character of Western Christianity has to do with power and control. Boesak (2004: 9) reveals this intent of colonial Christianity in the dialectical purpose and link of conquest and "conversion", especially the link of ecclesiology and politics. The conquest seems to carry much more weight than conversion, since it is bringing a fundamental issue into doctrinal matter of the Christian church. It is significant to point that special revelation, a concept and hermeneutic propagating the uniqueness of the incarnate of God, has a level of innocence to its conceivers namely; the white ecclesia in Europe. However, it becomes fundamentally corrupt when it assumes speciality and dominance by advocating the absoluteness of Christ. Therefore, that is not sincere religious zeal, but useful for dehumanising the world. Special revelation is fundamentally soteriological in its content as it pertains to sin and salvation and also those who

came to the black world to save or convert sinners (bringing them to the light). On the other side, it pertains to preach sin that is not of so-called “native pagans” and “heathens”, but the burden of white people through special revelation as inherently fundamental to the Christian doctrine. Additionally, for the very birth and survival of Christianity and the role of Christ, which becomes the absoluteness of Christ, became the sins that they are charged with. As Ture¹⁰ (1966) had lamented at this burden placed upon blacks being uncivilised, savages, destructive and heathens. Ture (1966) pointed out to all these charges being precisely what white people are or have proven to be to black people. Ture (1966) goes on to assert that whites are in need of being saved and civilised, not blacks.

Special revelation becomes problematic because the speciality of God revealed in history through the man, Jesus, brings more loss than gain to the converts. In light of what has been revealed, the special belief in this kind of revelation is rooted in the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church and its natural theology. The critic found natural theology as problematic because Christ seems to be evasive in this kind of theology. Critics of natural theology and natural religion emphasise on the language particularly. The advocates of special revelation find it important to know the identity and name of the divine, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015: 2) asserts:

Critics of natural theology sometimes challenge these semantic presuppositions. They provide reasons to think that our thoughts, concepts, or words are incapable of referring adequately to the transcendent entities that play an important role in many religious doctrines—entities such as Judaism’s YHWH, Neo-Platonism’s One, Vedanta’s Brahman, Mormonism’s Heavenly Father, and so on. The debate surrounding these issues is often designated “the problem of religious language”, but it is usually as much about human *concepts* as it is about sentences in actual languages.

Special revelation becomes an addition to Christian doctrine against the intellectual or philosophical approach of medieval Christian theology. However, special revelation too, becomes a burden as Christ becomes located in the realm of the “special” or lofty (what?), a somewhat deistic view of personal God. The absoluteness ascribed to Christ by the Western churches creates intolerance to other faiths that part of the general revelation of the God known by the Hebrews. The realm of proclaiming the absoluteness of Christ through European

¹⁰ This he said in an interview with Mike Wallace in 1966, The CBS NEWS Special: “BLACK POWER/WHITE BACKLASH.

supremacy and tying the Hebrew faith to the West fuels this intolerance that led Europe to civilise “heathens”. It would be intolerance against others who are not of European descent, because Christ absolute and unique as the West would view themselves as absolute in this Christ and Christ is the only God who is known and understood by the West.

It is significant to note that the biblical text does not separate God revealed in Christ in the solitude of creation. It is important to note that dialectical theology on revelation also fuels the distinction between the revealed God in creation and in Christ. It is fitting to discuss the issue of revelation and special revelation in particular, to refer back into German theological thought. It should be considered that Germany was the home for Protestantism and the Reformation. A point of interest is unveiling the neo-orthodox or dialectical theological tradition, that emerged as a reaction to philosophical theology emerging after the Enlightenment of Europe. The chief proponent of this philosophical theological tradition (Thomas Aquinas), held to the view of natural theology and God’s existence, discernible in nature and through human reason. Natural Theology Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy¹¹ (2016: 1) asserts:

Natural theology is a programme of inquiry into the existence and attributes of God without referring or appealing to any divine revelation. In natural theology, one asks what the word “God” means, whether and how names can be applied to God, whether God exists, whether God knows the future free choices of creatures, and so forth. The aim is to answer those questions without using any claims drawn from any sacred texts or divine revelation, even though one may hold such claims.

The wave of Protestantism tradition between Lutheranism and Calvinism is definitive to the reformation and reaction to Catholicism of Aquinas. This is especially in areas of revelation changes, because revelation should be God’s act alone as understood by them. It is fundamental to capture the disputes and solidarity of Western theological thought, since this is significant in the colonial and missionary era in the black world. The 19th century presents a different view in German theological thought, which will stress as the Reformation did the fundamental point in Christianity, which is of God’s revelation. God’s revelation is only willed by God alone and is an act of the Self of God. McCormack (2012: 14) asserts:

The concept of a divine Self-revelation can be found in John 1:1 and Heb. 1:1. But the phrase itself is first employed by the German idealist in the sense of the strict identity of subject and

¹¹ See Natural Theology Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy Accessed 12/12/2016.

content. To say that God is both the subject and content of revelation is to say that God is one who acts in revelation and is himself the act. God's being is a being in the act of revelation.

Furthermore, McCormack (2012: 14) adds:

There is more than one way to explain the significance of this claim. It could mean that the being of God is constituted in and through the process of Self-differentiation and reconciliation. Hegel, for example understood the "becoming" of God in his Self-revelation in time to be "necessary" to him in the sense that his becoming is the result of a "determination" that is intrinsic to the being of God as such. God cannot be God in any other way than through this becoming. But the claim could also be understood as the consequence of an eternal (in the sense of pretemporal) act of Self-determination that constitutes God's being as a being for revelation in time. This is the view of Karl Barth.

The likes of Barth in light of McCormack (2012: 14), stresses the transcendence of God, which is fundamentally distinct from the human. The transcendence of God is a necessary rejection of natural theology built upon human reason. Though this position of special revelation does not find credence in God's pronouncements in the Bible, but it is through human reason to hold on and reach the conclusions it reaches. On special revelation, it seems formidable for reformation tradition of orthodox and authority of scripture, in what has been revealed and how it is revealed in Jesus Christ. It then became imperative despite neo-orthodox or dialectical theology influence in theologies of liberation. This is also to further disobey tradition of God's revelation, solely by God's will and an excess of distinct transcendence, coupled with natural theology that sees God discernible and knowable in nature through human reason.

Perhaps the neglect of such ideas is based upon a different constituency, culture and experience of people with the divine. While God's revelation is willed by God's own free, self and defined moment, it should fundamentally resonate with the human condition. Within the belief of those victims of the black experience, God's transcendence should mean a completely different thing. The privileged can talk about metaphysical transcendence of God's distinction with the human and even an excess of God's revelation through human reason. One should add that the use of black refers to the philosophical concept of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). That does not appeal to dogmatic racial or ethnic modalities, but challenges privileges and power bestowed upon the giver of privilege. Biko (1978: 52) asserts:

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.

Furthermore, for white human beings the *Imago Dei* has not been put under pathological forensic scrutiny by racism, colonial Christianity and white supremacy. This is an experience at play, not only in confines of thought alone, but ontologically and existentially. This happened even in the questioning of the human experience and the dialectical relationship with the land, resources, culture, history, worldviews and faith. Therefore, to elucidate this further, the black experience should view this in light of this history God's transcendence. Black experience should be an act of self-revelation with reluctance and scrutiny, as this is for the reason that to be Christian and human for blacks under theologies of West was broken down when it comes to blacks. You were black, thus not human and expected to be Christian as a sub-human being. It is sufficient to even say that the self-revelation of God, transcendence and absoluteness cannot be separated from Western thought and white supremacy. In simple terms, for the black experience and a reluctant gesture of black theological thought is based on that God, this could mean whites and a church and theology could mean white definition of theology.

In black theological thought there should emerge a need to transcend ecclesiastic narratives and traditions of Catholicism and Protestantism. This should emerge especially if there will be a conception of the subject of God's revelation. The starting point being the unloosening of the intellectual tradition that defines discourse, which would even penetrate the pockets of ecclesiastic experience, confession and livelihood of black humanity, encountering with the divine. God's revelation, as willed by God's own acting, should not mean qualitative distinction, but an inseparable dialect of oscillating between the human and the divine. The point of the incarnation validates this link; to say that God has been transcended in order to save humanity. This incarnation is to be confronted by the paradoxes that God became human to save humans. Thus the point of God's transcendence does not lie in the vivid line of qualitative distinction between God and humanity, but the lines blurred between God and the human. Thus then becomes a germination of a theology of transcendence exuding from a theology of God's descending on earth and numbered among the living. This God's descending ushers in after the crucifixion and the ascension of God on high with a human face and human

body, a twist in the nature of God. This outlook becomes the consummation of God's revelation to the black ecclesia and it forges an understanding and solidarity of the oppressed and their God, since their God is not concerned with proclaiming transcendence and absoluteness. This is to demean or showcase a relationship between self-sustaining, omnipresence, omnificent and omnipotent versus the inadequate, weak, sinful and vulnerable human. Maimela (2005: 34) asserts:

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.

Fanon (1963: 36) is fundamental when he asserts:

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.

These points are important, especially to critics of black theology that still cannot formidably and practically show case the God of the oppressed. This is because of the learnt and maintained theological traditions of the West. It is also significant to note that historically, the Christological controversies discussed before Nicea and after Nicea share part of the revelation of God, especially in the man Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This historical context provides room for both the discussion of the divine and matter, general and special matter definitive of the human in Christ. However, more fundamentally a Christology free from Western thought should surely be quite different in understanding that of the West. Firstly, one should assert that black believing people would be able to draw a Christology that gravitates on the surface. They would do this apart from doctrinal disputes, to the Arius contention of the humanity of Christ. Secondly, this humanity to be known by black Christians as seen in the Negro spiritual and Jesus Christ's Gospel in the social context, leads to a special revelation rooted in the full physiological realness of the suffering of Christ, (i.e. the wounds and the piercings on his body). All these sufferings qualify him to be the God of the oppressed, who share scars and whips experienced by slaves. Jesus also shares the necessary need of solidarity of people of colour

under the cross. Thirdly, when considering the humanity of Christ and the need of a physiological encounter with God, the special revelation that emerges is beyond the confines of theological disputes of the West, between general revelation and special revelation—that advocates the uniqueness of Christ and absoluteness of Christ to black spirituality and theology. However, it becomes a special revelation of God who has been revered, revealed and present in nature and the customs of indigenous people has a face that is not white. Christ is the consummation of a God who is unknown, but God who is known and fights with those at the margins of society. This realisation of such revelation is free of the theological disputes between Protestants and Catholics, as this pertains those who have been the prize to be won by either side. De Gruchy (2004: 1-2) has noted among the settler churches, but this avails a voice, hermeneutic and confession rooted in their metaphysical, physiological and ontological experience of black people. Therefore, to make this vivid, one can point to the misunderstanding of the culture, theology and customs of native and black people. This is a similar case of understanding Christ by white hermeneutics lenses and tools of analysis which takes him out of the Hebrew religion, custom, culture and social context into being a European man and God. Raboteau (1978: 9) asserts:

European travellers frequently identified African gods with demons or devils and accused Africans of devil worship. Or they mistook the image of the god for the god himself and called them fetish worshipers. However, the representation of the gods as fetishes is a mistake. A fetish, properly, is simply a charm or amulet, and the place or object where the god dwells is properly called a shrine; neither should be confused with the gods themselves. Africans refer to these spirits by various names; the Ashanti know them as *abosom*; the Ewe-speaking Fon of Dahomey name them *vodun*; the Ibo worship them as *alose*; and the Yoruba called them *orisha*.

Kaplan (1986:166) rightly asserted that many issues confronting African Christians currently, nobody would appear to have received more thoughtfulness than the problem of defining the precise connection between Christianity and Africanism. While what Kaplan (1986: 166) points to is true, the point of difference lays bare in that the black soteriological understanding should not be a dialectical mimicry of Western theological thought, but perhaps transcendence in thought and praxis. This is fundamental because special revelation and the absoluteness of Christ are fundamentally problematic in Western theological discourse. This is because Christianity now and then is still identifying with white values. A portrait of white Jesus Christ in glass of the church windows or Sunday school book in the black community is not considered fetish worship or idolatry. It escapes history and becomes innocent. One is moved to grasp the

transcendence of African or Black Christianity on theological subjects Daneel (1999: 209) solidifies this point by asserting:

In some respects the AIC prophets of Africa probably understand and experience the life-giving power of the outpoured Spirit better than either Calvin or Moltmann does. Their knowledge is shaped by their non-Christian forefathers, who sensed as well as any Old Testament sage that the *mweya* (spirit) imparted by God the *musiki* (Creator) was the source of all life. This intuition ultimately blossomed into an all-pervading testimony to the life-giving power of the *Mweya Mutsvene* (Holy Spirit) in the Spirit-type churches, especially in their healing colonies.

While Maluleke (2004: 190) also asserts:

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.

These points are important to the subject of God's revelation, that if free of theological monopoly, hegemon-ised logic and in line with epistemic disobedience) exposes the illegitimacy of God's revelation known and even articulated by historical white churches (Mignolo 2009). Furthermore, it might be unpopular or unorthodox to hold the view that even the doctrine of special revelation emerged to the context of the crisis of the church in the West. Perhaps this is an invention of the West, which was adequately transported by the colonialism, especially in the uniqueness and absoluteness of Christ, to dominate and destroy other. Contrary to the Bible's view from the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John "I have come not to destroy the law and prophets." Daneel (1999: 218) argues:

Contextualized sacraments of Africa, whether interpreted magically or symbolically, we eathkeepers declare ourselves, under the kingship of our elder brother Christ, his fellow guardians of creation. Likewise, in the therapeutic sweep of the Holy Spirit over all the world we are fellow healers without pretending that we ourselves are the saviour of creation.

Daneel's (1999: 218) point is important, especially in relation to Western Christianity that has taken a persona of becoming Christ, the saviour for black "heathens" and the "uncivilised". The aim of this section is to argue that both general revelation and special revelation are not important for the black church, because it is born from experience of the soul in the world. Wyman (1998: 57) in discussing Troeltsch's view of revelation somehow can rightly define

the revelation of God to black. Wyman (1998:57) asserts concerning the source and nature of revelation and founding of religions:

Revelation is, in Troeltsch's sense, inaccessible, except to the one who experiences it. Troeltsch's solution to the problem is in terms of revelation's effects. The inner experience of revelation is externalized in religious ideas about God, the world, humanity, and redemption. Revelation becomes faith, understood as a religion's "conceptual world" (*Vorstellungswelt*). In traditional theological language, this is "the faith which is believed" (*fides qua creditor*). But this is only part of the picture. A religion is more than ideas; it is also a practical disposition, a stance, a piety, or, in Christian terminology, "the faith by which it is believed" (*fides quae creditor*). While revelation remains a matter of private, inaccessible experience, faith—in both senses of the word—is both transmissible to others and the appropriate object for dogmatic reflection. Thus the founding figures of religion, including Jesus, start out with a revelation in the depths of their consciousness, but they externalize it by articulating a worldview and teaching a way of life.

It is perhaps fitting to also state that what Wyman (1998: 57) mentions on Troeltsch's conception of the revelation of God as a beginning in the depths of a leader's consciousness. The leading of the spread of the teachings is important for the black church and black theology. Firstly, because it suggests at least in this section concerning the problematic nature of special revelation that God's revelation does not remain in dogma (leaders teaching). However, God's revelation also ascends and transcends to the followers who, then share in this revelation. Also, Wyman (1998: 57) mentions on Troeltsch's view of revelation rescues it from some mystic or enigmatic mythos, to rather an inner experience of the divine. That can include the encounter of the divine in light of oppression; it also then takes on an existential context because that inner encounter with God requires an externalisation of this encounter. Such an outlook becomes fundamental to the notion of a black church and black theology. As it links to words of Jesus for the oppressed and how inner reflection and external factors of white supremacy informs the theology of the oppressed. As such, there is an insurgent that breaks away from the traditional positions imposed by colonialism, (slavery, imperialism and institutional racism).

2.5 THE BLACK CHURCH AND THEOLOGICAL INSURGENT FOR REVELATION

After indicating through discussions and arguments the invalidity of accepting the general and special revelation at face value, it is however significant to reflect on South Africa and the need for a different theological conception of God and revelation. The World Council of Churches declared apartheid as a heresy, hence this may seem as a remarkable achievement at least for the black people and the role of a black church within the social context of South Africa. This is also a glimmer of hope from the liberation struggle, as it is revealing the piercing and commitment of the church and theology in the deliverance of the oppressed. This does not address the totality of white supremacy, since it charges apartheid as a heresy, as though it does not have a genealogy in white supremacy. White supremacy is the dominance and privilege of whites and their imposed civilisation, as coupled with being special people than the rest of humanity as noted by (Mills 1997: 98 & 100). This white supremacy and its imposed polity still continue to exert force and power in the lives of black people (ecclesiastically, politically, economically, intellectually and spiritually). The term heresy is a theological definition of a specific condition within Christian theology. The *Catholic Encyclopaedia* according to Wilhelm (1910: 1) records the following about the meaning of heresy:

The term heresy connotes, etymologically, both a choice and the thing chosen, the meaning being, however, narrowed to the selection of religious or political doctrines, adhesion to parties in Church or State.

St. Thomas (II-II: 11:1) defines heresy: "a species of infidelity in men who, having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas". "The right Christian faith consists in giving one's voluntary assent to Christ in all that truly belongs to His teaching. There are, therefore, two ways of deviating from Christianity: the one by refusing to believe in Christ Himself, which is the way of infidelity, common to Pagans and Jews; the other by restricting belief to certain points of Christ's doctrine selected and fashioned at pleasure, which is the way of heretics. The subject-matter of both faith and heresy is, therefore, the deposit of the faith, that is, the sum total of truths revealed in Scripture and tradition as proposed to our belief by the church. The believer accepts the whole deposit as proposed by the church; the heretic accepts only such parts of it as commend themselves to his own approval.

The assertion such as apartheid being a heresy without the theological reflection in light of the black experience has been characterised as theological in as much as it is colonial. The searching of the corpus of Christian theology and dogma and if it has not been excavated or at least transformed after this “realisation” is problematic. The problematic nature is revealed in not being true to the history of theology and Christian doctrine developed precisely because of heresy. As such, this doctrine developed to deem apartheid and white supremacy as a heresy means much and requires such statements, theologically not to be left hanging, but yet understandable when one considers that justice has not been won on the part of blacks. Linguistic and rhetorical jargon and ear tingling are deceiving the mind, body, soul and the world of blacks. This linguistic and rhetorical jargon reveal how far black theology and the notion of a black church should begin, when seeking the revelation of the divine, or when are in search of an authentic ecclesiastical Christian and human experience of the divine. Therefore, the acceptance of apartheid as a heresy opens up a number of questions for Christian theology that is fundamentally based on Christ as the historic and absolute revelation of God, apparent in special revelation.

It also points to the fact that the conceivers of the theological definitions and distinctions on the subject of revelation have not only chosen narrowness of dogma-- the dogma to colonise the world as a mistake, but a deliberate act of disobedience, to what has been revealed. The evidence of this disobedience is evident in colonialism, colonial Christianity and what the Bible records on Christ and the Gospel. Pheko (1995:78) rightly 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.

Pheko's argument that delineates between colonial intent and the message of the Bible defends orthodox Christianity from the perversion of the West. Pheko (1995: 75) further asserts: “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. As such, the heresy is deep and has long term effects that reveal the intent of missionary work and evangelisation by whites, which was domination and economic advancement of Europe. There is also a need to question the theological reflections, as to how and why (in the current era) rigorous discourse does not emerge, which strips away Western Christianity's methodological truths for the Gospel. As part of this stripping away of God's revelation as recorded in the

Bible, the intellectual definitions of Western theologians comes to the fore, especially since directly and indirectly they equipped colonialism, slavery, imperialism and racism through Christianity. Boesak (2004: 10) correctly 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.

It is fundamental that apartheid is a heresy, but of what practical significance does this realisation mean? Particularly, for those victims of the black experience, their Christian experience has long been prelude for the realisation of the World Council of Churches that apartheid is a heresy. This is not proclaimed, at least in the “institutions of prestige” where white has long been developed to define revelation and a different theology for the world. Anyway, to elucidate this point, one can mention the withdrawal of membership of black ministers from the white historical churches, the reason being the variant experience of the Gospel and the church. Dwane (2004; 75) records:

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).

It is also possible to grasp that the rejection of Western theology and colonialism under the guidance of the “gospel” (as espoused and represented by the historical white churches) has ingrained the rejection of slavery and pseudo-Christian ethic imposed on blacks. Raboteau (1978: 290) make a reflection on slave rebellion and a new expression of how blacks experienced and interpreted their Christianity, he asserts: Revolutionary interpretations of the Bible by such slaves as Vesey and Turner were proof to American slaveholders that slave Christianity could become a double-edged sword.

He (1978: 295) further asserts:

Nowhere is the slaves rejection of the masters religion clearer than in their refusal to obey moral precepts held up to them by whites, especially commands against stealing. While white preachers repeatedly urged (Don't steal), slaves just as persistently denied that this commandment applied to them, since they themselves were stolen property.

Erskine (1981: 37) pointed out:

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. The they live is experienced in 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.

It is significant then to note that the mode of God's revelation in the hearts and minds of blacks antecedes conversion. It is rather marked by a direct rebellion to colonial Christianity's precepts and faith. Firstly, moral ground that engaged the ideal of the liberty for the human soul and the second aspect is linked also to reading of scripture that makes Christ and God alive by creating context and a faith anew, Hopkins and Antonia (2012: 21) have posited:

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.

The rise of Ethiopianism fuelled the African awakening in the writings of divine scriptures and in experience. The very experience saw the founding also of African Indigenous Churches (Lawson 1993:57). Dwane (2004:75) correctly records the encounter of Ethiopianism, scripture and the conversion of the African with the conversion which has been imposed on blacks:

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.

The awakening brought forth by Ethiopianism and the departure of leading black preachers from the mission church is an indication of their interpretation with God and the scripture. While seeing the point of fundamental difference between their faith in God and the continual suffering of their people. What Dwane (2004: 75) records on Mokone's departure and the grievances which he had with the Methodist Church is an indication of challenging the base of

power. The base of power in this case is ecclesiastical, cultural and informed by white supremacy and not scripture and the Gospel. He (2004: 76) further asserts:

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 maintain their human dignity.

It is important for the subject of revelation in the black experience to note from Dwane’s (2004: 76) point of view, which is about humiliation of black African religious leaders when they refused the missionary’s church precepts and pretexts, as these precepts were driving them to the wilderness. Also linked to Dwane’s (2004: 80) reflection of these newly separated and founding of African Christian bodies is the link in expression, experience and metaphysical, natural, cultural and spiritual character of a black church.

As the context of the wilderness has more historical, spiritual and natural link to the African before colonialism and even reveals the context of African Christian monasticism and monks who believed in Christ, but found nature as linked to the knowledge of the saviour, this then is underpinning the form of expressing a general revelation that precedes and antecedes colonialism and colonial Christianity. Furthermore, it fortifies the discovery of a God who they can relate to, outside Western Christian and theological expression alien or hostile to the material world. Dwane’s (2004: 80) reference to this separation can extend to the realisation that left the black church alive in practice. This black church is alive in the wild away from the God and iconography or pictorial depiction of the white saints enshrined in glass of church windows, Dwane (2004: 80) is correct in asserting the context of this experience when he asserts:

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.

These developments fall within the black Christian experience and a revelation of God from the black experience, which cannot be contained in Western ecclesiastical experience and

thought. Thus this is seen even with what Frazier (1964: 11) records about the nature of the black church as he asserts:

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.

This is noted also by Billingsley's (1999:7) view of the character of the black church, Frazier (1964: 12) also 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 characterised the sermons of the Negro preachers and the sacred folk-songs of the Negro.

Thus reflecting an ever persisting voice; advocating for a difference in datum and continuum of the revelation of God for the notion of a black church and Christian dogma, since the black church is an ecclesiastical institution born out of black suffrage, rage, loneliness, injustice and despair, West (1999: 113) correctly pointed out:

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.

These points raised on the black church do not become monolithic definitions of theological development for blacks alone. They however reflect a life line or pulse for the oppressed and also for Christianity and its doctrinal developments.

2.6 THE CRITICAL REASONING FOR REVELATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The revelation of God for blacks in the post-apartheid can only be meaningful if it is viewed as synonymous to freedom and dignity for black humanity. This could as well address the dislocation of blacks under white supremacy. This revelation is through black spirituality from a historical and existential position. However, in this context it is reflected as contained and expressed in black ecclesiology that should link the absoluteness of Christ and God, as understood in creation. The character of resistance found in *Black Liberation Theology* defines the black church and the prophetic tradition. Stewart (1999: 103) argues: “In speaking of the black church, we are not saying that it is some monolithic, homogenised institution devoid of diversity and variety”. What is meant in the uniform sense of the word of the black church is the consolidated effort of resistance of black people, black experience and an immanent call for new epistemologies within the black and African Christian religious circles.

Stewart (1999-104) rightly asserts that 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.

Thus the notion of a black church carries within it the presence, revelation and experience of God for black people and the oppressed. It further represents a radical faith and theology relative and relevant to blacks, the oppressed and dispossessed. These oppressed should find validity of God’s revelation (in general and special) to be meaningful to them.

There is a significant role of radical theologies both in practice and in creating or adding of new insights to the corpus of Christian doctrines for the present and future. These new and radical theologies necessitates reflections from the black world’s own Christian experience with the divine, both in colonial times as well as in the quest for liberation. Black theology, which will be considered as part of God’s revelation is a carriage of the revelation of God. This God’s revelation is necessarily present under pacifism and democracy that have neutralised radicalism and substantiated epistemic stimulus of black suffering. This is leaving; thought and definition of God’s revelation and fighting for the oppressed at the “mercy” of Western theological beliefs. God’s revelation at the mercy of theological dictates and deterrents of the

revelation of God as special and general revelation, whereas in the black world, that has been affected fundamentally by white supremacy. These definitions and dictates of what and who constitutes special and general revelation become subjects of historical, lofty romanticism and idealism of Western civilisation.

These aspects of the revelation of God (special or general) are universal and occupy a special and classical in the body of theological knowledge and tradition on the Christian subject of revelation. This is especially when accepted by the black theological intelligentsia and ecclesiology, if not guised upon with suspicion of the inherent and latent vigor of colonial and racist thinking. This is fundamental, since the white world in its “missionary and evangelical zeal” destroyed the lives of indigenous people and people of colour. The contention of this research is that concepts are irrelevant to the black existential and metaphysical context, because they do not delve into the context of the West, through colonial Christianity and the remnant effects of the revelation of the colonial God. Weisbord’s (2003: 35) writing on evangelisation and missionary efforts and goals supports this point, he further asserts:

Camouflaging their greed and ethnocentric arrogance with sanctimonious language about a civilizing mission to uplift the downtrodden, to enlighten the benighted and to Christianize the heathen, a handful of European countries forcibly portioned the African continent.

Thus such a revelation of God—through deceit, greed and subjugation-- in the black world poses a serious historical account of how things became what they are and remain as they are. This implies that things will remain with black perpetual and perennial inferiority in the world, among each other and before God. There is a deep problematic reality of denial of the past and race cocktailed in reconciliation and various versions of freedom that help to mislead liberation. Biko: 1978:55 rightly argues;

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.

As such, there is still significant amount of the past, which has not been dealt with, such as the issue that blacks have not been associated with God’s revelation. This point rightly leads to

Mugambi's (1989: 8) view that is linked to Weisbord (2003: 35) and the missionary, Mugambi (1989: 8) asserts that 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. Based upon understanding this idea of God's revelation and missionary work (special revelation that is absoluteness of God's revelation) it is significant then to note that colonialism was not a Christian project, but a cultural, economic and political project.

Modern Christianity is packaged with values, principles and ethics that tend to favour white supremacy and this leaves whites unaccountable, especially in their conceptions of general and special revelation and how that applies to the religious, social and economic experience of the revelation of the divine. Bearing in mind that the conception of black people in understanding religious experience and reception of God's revelation. The God's revelation has been overturned by the absoluteness of Christ, as it is in the mind of the West. Christ became an oppressor instead of being a liberator in the Western theological tradition. This is contrary to what Pheko (1982:77) asserts when he argues: "The Gospel accelerated the political awakening of Africans as a whole."

It is important then to understand that perhaps in the advent of democracy in the South African context, black theology and religious experience of an ever revealing God understand European influence. They take it serious that the European influence in the world was not an act of God, but a global agenda for black oppression, which in the past could be rightly stated as white supremacy. Presently, it is called civilisation, modernity and democracy. Mills (1997: 1) understood white supremacy as white dominance and he further (1997: 98) argues that it refers more broadly to the European domination of the planet that has left us with the racialised distributions of economic, political and cultural power that we have today. It can be phrased as global white supremacy. Mills (1997: 98) further notes: "White supremacy and global white supremacy, in contrast, have the semantic virtues of clearly signalling reference to a system, a particular kind of polity, so structured as to advantage white."

Such an understanding cannot dismiss conditions as they exist for blacks and the oppressed people. Thus also questioning the role of the church, church history, Christian doctrine and an omnipotent and omnipresent God. Gordon (1995: 144) made a clear and provocative observation on the church, including the black church's escape, evading the issue of black

perennial suffering that runs tandem with Christianity has been given to black by the colonialist, he argues:

If we respond that black suffering is but a minute period of God's plans, the problem, from the existential perspective of actions, is that we have no more reason to believe that God will help black people than that God will continue to be indifferent to, or perhaps even relish, black suffering. Verification for that question can only be sought under some circumstance that will itself be subjected to multi-evidential interpretation. What God seems to mean yesterday and today is black suffering.

This is an adopted incitement to the black church on justice, but more especially the fundamental implication of Western theological thought and their persisting tradition that is revealed in the influence of historical white churches. That proceeds forth with accounting to black confrontation in thought, religious experience and an encounter with the God of the oppressed. Doctrines such as the doctrine of revelation both special and general, if they are not exhausted properly, they can have a dire propensity of siding with the oppressor instead of the oppressed. This is a propensity of causing the issue of race to have a metaphysical presence that guarantees the prevailing of the West over other voices. This is true, especially with doctrines that cannot be overlooked by lenses of radical thought, Gordon (1995: 143) records:

Divine racism is characterized by the basic presupposition of mankind as a "two-category system" of an "in" and "out" group, the two-category system's being correlated with an imbalance of suffering for the "out" group and less suffering (if suffering at all) for the "in" group, God's being responsible for the imbalance of suffering for the "out" group, God's favor or disfavor being associated with God's radical preference, and God's being a member of the "in" group. Antiblack divine racism suggests that God is part of the "in" group (white) and blacks are part of the "out" group.

This dominance of white supremacy over land, the human soul, ontology (being) and religious or divine experience is even attired in vestiges of freedom in post-apartheid South Africa. This post-apartheid South Africa is supposed to have obtained freedom, but remains powerless from the impositions that are directed by the West in maintaining power. These impositions that guarantee power are in the form of the; Apartheid debt, the IMF, World Bank and all institutions of white power established through colonialism, imperialism, slavery and institutionalised racism. All those continue to serve the white global privilege and polity as noted by Mills (1997: 98) that they render blacks powerless and in bondage to the West. Pilger

(2006: 177) records on the 1976, June 16, Soweto uprising which shook the foundation of white international power and interest. This uprising logically shaped the present condition of putting international or white interest over blacks. Pilger (2006: 177) asserts:

White privilege, which conferred one of the highest standards of living on earth, was at risk, especially as English speaking capitalists decided secretly to get out of bed with the white supremacist, whose rapidly growing status as international pariahs was becoming bad for business. A series of meetings both clandestine and well-publicised, between white businessmen and ANC leaders in exile would be critical in turning the 'struggle' to the advantage of white business and beckoning the ANC's embrace of the ideology of international capital, neo-liberalism.

Pilger points concerning international capitalism, neoliberalism and the surge to save white business is intrinsically linked to the model that the black world, South Africa in this context, follows to govern to date despite black suffrage. Approaches that cannot ameliorate historical injustices of the dispossessed who are left to fend for themselves, Fanon (1963: 35-36) rightly points out:

It is true that we could equally well stress the rise of a new nation, the setting of a new state, its diplomatic relations, and its economic and political trends. But we have precisely chosen to speak of that kind of *tabula rasa* which characterizes at the outset all decolonization. Its unusual importance is that it constitutes, from the very first day, the minimum demands of the colonized. To tell the truth, the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being change from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded. The need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the lives of the men and women who are colonized. But the possibility of this change is equally experienced in the form of terrifying future in the consciousness of another of "species" of men and women; the colonizers

Fanon (1963: 36) further asserted:

Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons.

The era of democracy in which apartheid as an institutionalised racist power is supposed and believed to be conquered, reveals that very little has changed. In that stronghold of white interest, still remains a new established diplomatic relations and indeed with minimum demands of blacks being obtained. This aspect is recorded by Doxtator (2001: 224) when investigating the outcomes of reconciliation, Doxtator (2001: 224) records:

In all of its forms, South African reconciliation has generated substantial interest and significant controversy. What is the nature or substance of reconciliation? Did it play a meaningful role in the South African transition? Was reconciliation a constitutive element of a peaceful transition, noble garb for a distasteful compromise, or a tactic designed to preserve white power?

Doxtator (2001: 225) further asserts: “There is also substantial debate over how reconciliation shaped the form of the transition and whether it produced a political dispensation that ignored the needs of those who suffered under apartheid”. One’s contention is that indeed blacks remain where they have been, indeed if God was made part of the process then unlike black theology that would believe God is not on the side of the oppressed, but the oppressor. What is problematic is that certain influential individuals in the church were responsible in ushering the reconciliation process that has amounted to nothing else, but solidifying white privilege, theological hegemony and supremacy. Maluleke (1997) asserts:

The presence of prominent church people in the TRC – especially the chairpersonship of the charismatic African ecumenical giant and veteran anti-Apartheid campaigner, Desmond Tutu – as commissioners and as members of sub-committees may tend to make many people feel that the church is “well represented” in the TRC. But this could be an erroneous assumption to make. We must never forget that the TRC is a juridical entity with a political rather than a spiritual or theological agenda. To that end all those appointed to it are appointed not by churches, nor to serve the cause of the churches.

Though what Maluleke (1997) is raising is true, it is also symptomatic of even a bigger problem, which is the silencing of the church. Another problem is that it inhibited serious theological dialogue to locate God in the existential level of the oppressed furthermore, it gives credence to an urgent need for a distinct revelation of God for the black people and believers. The use of religious leaders serves as deceptive, because it gives an idea of legitimising compromises, while giving the impression of God’s seal upon the process. While this aspect

of using religious leaders neglects the Christianity that came through colonialism, there is a need for black Christianity to consider for blacks what forgiveness, justice, democracy, freedom, reconciliation and the subject of revelation mean. This should be done without appealing to them from the lenses of colonial Christian definitions. Cone (1999: 38) asserts:

Because black liberation is the point of departure of black theology's analysis of the gospel of Jesus, it cannot accept a view of reconciliation based on white values. The Christian view of reconciliation has nothing to do with black people being nice to white people as if the gospel demands that we ignore their insults and their humiliating presence. It does not mean discussing with whites what it means to be black or going to white gatherings and displaying what whites call an understanding attitude remaining cool and calm amid racists and bigots.

Failure to do this will end up appearing as if the entire process of two opposing forces, noted by Fanon (1963: 35-36), becomes a godless reconciliation and godless revelation. Furthermore, this will end up without the characters and attributes of God that are; truth, justice, freedom and righteousness. God's revelation is a dialect of both special and general revelation. The serving debt, white internationalist and few black elite interests, hence they question the role of the prominent individuals in the black church today. They incite the black church and possibilities of God's presence. In the South African context, the CODESA negotiations maintained white privilege as noted by Pilger (2006: 189). This is in reference to private talks that result in white economic booming, whereas Western dominance reveals an unexcavated and docile black church. Rodney (1973:90-91) gives insight to the reality and relationship of the black world, black people and the West, Rodney (1973:90-91) asserts:

Colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profit to the so-called 'mother country'. From an African view-point, that amount to consistent expatriation of surplus produced by African labour out of African resources. It meant the development of Europe as part of the same dialectical process in which Africa was underdeveloped.

This point is significant because missionary work concerning total subordination to God through his revelation in Christ has benefited the whole of the West. Thus raising the bar of thought that a God revealed to the poor should have an opposite effect for the oppressed and a change of roles and status is unavoidable. Saul (2001: 429) asserts:

A tragedy is being enacted in South Africa, as much a metaphor for our times as Rwanda and Yugoslavia and, even if not so immediately searing of the spirit, it is perhaps a more revealing one. For in the teeth of high expectations arising from the successful struggle against malignant apartheid state, a very large percentage of the population—among them many of the most desperately poor in the world—are being sacrificed on the altar of the neoliberal logic of global capitalism.

He points out that this approach is considered a global programme of realness. Saul (2001: 429) further asserts:

One does not know whether to laugh or cry at this kind of realism—‘magical market’ realism, as I have termed it elsewhere. For there is absolutely no reason to assume that the vast majority of people in South Africa will find their lives improved by the policies that are being adopted in their name by the present African National Congress (ANC) government. Indeed, something quite the reverse is the far more likely outcome

Bompani’s (2006: 1138) writing of “Mandela Mania”: *Mainline Churches in Post-Apartheid South Africa* rightly notes: “The end of apartheid defined the end of churches engagement in the political arena, although not as actors supportive of the ANC project of nation building”. Also in reference to civil society and the religious groups and churches that opposed minority rule, Bompani (2006: 1141) notes:

In South Africa the comparatively high degree of organisation achieved by such groups during the long struggle against minority rule represented a potential conflict between these groups and the ruling party’s elites. The call for unity in the name of the past anti-apartheid struggle impelled the different voices of civil society to abandon criticism and differences in the name of nation building.

In a sense, the truth of the revealed God of oppressed is set aside for a God who supports docility, white privilege and ephemeral injustice. Thus creating a fundamental problem that God’s revelation, as defined by the poor and black, cannot be overlooked, especially in engagement and in power relations. The point is that both politics and the church are rightly responsible in the past for the oppression of blacks; they are responsible for the manner in which “white” Christian God came to be known and revealed to blacks. Isicher (1995: 25) rightly asserted: “Nowhere perhaps in Africa has there been a more 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". Isicher (1995: 24) further states:

After the nationalist victory in the 1948 South African general election Die kerkbode 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.

Today also seems to point back a direction which church, the influential individuals and the state are inseparable, making it to seem that the notion of a black church and government have taken a position of compromise to legitimise the order set by the white church. This implies a belief in their God and government over black people. Day (2012: 107) is right when she asserts:

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.

Gibson (2005:96) rightly asserts:

In a current multicultural South Africa, people forget the fact that 90 percent of the poor people are blacks, this simply indicates the allude the fact that relate poverty to race moreover black 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.

It is thus clear that race, economy, society and power have not been fully seen by the black church. Black church has not seen the articulation of a God of the oppressed and a new wave of conceiving God's revelation and dictates, which are inseparable with colonial Christianity interpretations. The base of God revelation with the oppressed (as the stimulus and direct receptor of God's revelation) gives insight that God of the oppressed is revealed in struggle, dehumanisation and in justice. Maimela (2005: 34) rightly points out:

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 the black community itself is precisely where Christ is at work.

The aim of this section was to give an overview of what Western theological traditions of the West can result if not unchecked, with the fact that at times God's will and plans can seem synonymous with what the white world wants from blacks. The *Letter from King Leopold II of Belgium to Colonial Missionaries, 1883* also reveals the creation of the white God and the intents of white spirituality. This white spirituality makes it impossible for white and black Christianity to simply get along even in matter of doctrines and Christian virtues. Considering that the division between blacks and whites are; physical, social, political and fundamentally spiritual.

The effects caused by white superiority and its assumed divine racism has and is making blacks to accept their position of being the oppressed—settling with the set and best traditions of racist oppressive institutions. This is further validated by the new dispensation that prides itself with democracy, equality and transformation. Blacks still remain to feel the sting of the lash, while whites get along just fine both in church, society and theological discourse. Tshaka (2012: 168), when addressing Afro-phobia, rightly argued on the lack of understanding power and the sudden amnesia of whites about not knowing how apartheid devastated black life and continues to.

The concept of God today in both historically white churches and black churches seems to have allowed normality of black injustice and imbalances in black communities and societies, whereby the black world remains under colonial control of the West. This is because the black world and South Africa in particular are deliberately indebted to the West through apartheid debt, World Bank, global markets, neo-liberalism and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as noted in *Cry the Beloved Country* (2001: 429-460). It is also not clear whether integration and reconciliation were only for business and not for political change and for God's presence. It is here that one can clearly see a theological compromise, 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. 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.

Martinez-Roca and Vazi (2012:3) further argue that the display of wealth by South Africa’s new black elite is raising eyebrows among the poor majority. God’s revelation mingles as both special and general, is necessary to purge the betrayal of the masses by the intellectuals, governments and churches under democracy. Fanon (1963; 1760) 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.

European cultural, political and economical way of life is what is used in the South African context with its much celebrated democracy. Julian Benda (1941: 693) writing on *Pacifism and Democracy* asserted:

In all countries there are democrats who maintain that a democratic state must, because it is democratic, refuse any kind of war—a war of defence just as much as a war of conquest. Their thesis is that a democracy must abstain from any international action which is liable to cause war. In short, it must be for peace at any price.

The following holds true in the South African context, as well as in the ecclesia that faces the problems mentioned without following or choosing to avoid internal and international imposition and power in determining freedom. While the church wants and sings praise to God in changing South Africa, instead they have made God a smoke screen for business interest and exploitation. Soteriology linked to special revelation at least (from a black theological

position) should move from the altar in the church to the altar of social, cultural, economic and political power. Redemption of black people in the church and society is interlinked if the two are not one thing. As part of the revelation of God, there is a need for a doctrine of God that comes from the black church, black spirituality and black suffering and freedom. This also emerges from the bottom up and is grounded in a God of meaning and sense. The revelation of God to blacks is not an ecclesiastical manifestation or phenomenon, rather a social and historical justice informed by black suffering and black ecclesiology. Thus this revelation of God should lead the black church to be in existential and mission to consider black people first, before inclusivism of other Christians. West (1999: 10) points out that blacks became Christians for existential reasons, hence he asserts:

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 difficult challenge, but also to exercise a demanding discipline.

There is a serious need to reinvestigate doctrines, creeds and even the work of the Spirit of God and this should be done to have an encounter outside of colonial thought and its vestiges. This study wishes to map out a doctrine of revelation for black ecclesiology that transcends the given and accepted versions of what the revelation of God is.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on discussing the general overview on revelation and the implication of revelation, especially those who were not part and parcel of the discourse on the general or special revelation. The chapter sought to force deep reflection on the revelation of God. It further raised valid suspicion to theological doctrine as articulated by the West and accepted at face value. This Western doctrine is accepted without an in-depth doctrinal inquiry into the inherent emasculation to black people. A reality of the rejection of Western theological guidance is reflected in the birth of a black church, which is not born within debating on God's revelation. However, the black experience gives God a voice and dialect which is heard by the poor and oppressed. The chapter concludes by using South Africa as a case study, to reflect the damage by Western theological interpretation on forgiveness. In essence where is God's love when He usually favours the oppressors? The next chapter deals with a different perspective of God's revelation within the notion of a black church through the lenses of black theology.

CHAPTER 3

PHILOSOPHICAL MEDITATION FOR BLACKS' STATE OF AFFAIRS IN RELATION TO GOD'S REVELATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is a deep reflection or a meditative state for blacks. This is for their definition of the self, their Christian expression and experience of the true self and God's revelation. The chapter wrestles between the condition of black humanity's existence, coupled with concepts of God and the death of God in relation to the God of the oppressed and a doctrine of God's revelation. The chapter uses a minimal level of Camus's absurd, also theodicy and the Romantic period in Europe that ushers in the proclamation of the death of God. This chapter advocates that the use of such a period brings rejection of God in the West and the transferral of that God being part and parcel of colonialism, though having been rejected. Finally, the chapter proposes a different metaphysics cognisant of the transcendental character of God, but a God who assumes a different outlook and revelation for the black believers. The role of Christ's suffering and the wounds of Christ link life and the grave that is giving birth (as a prolegomenon) to a different special revelation in both Christ and black people.

3.2 PHILOSOPHICAL BLACK MEDITATION

Meditation is a concept and practice in spirituality to human individuality, self-actualisation and identity. It has been central to the self, implicating existentiality and ontological substances of reality that are coupled with the self. Meditation offers time, space and ambience for the question of one's essence and substance. The engagement in an ontological voyage is cognisant of existence in the world of materiality; it is also cognisant of the centrality of depths of one's identity of metaphysical essence and transcendence. As such, meditation provides a place of coming together with the self and this is occurring in the context of various essences and substance of the material world. This process is coupled with physiology and ontological experiences that form the human. In the context of this research, meditation of a black church is a reality of those oppressed, enslaved, colonised, dehumanised and dispossessed; grained of ontological substance and physiological emblematic worth of being black. The meditative gesture is reflected in the very birth of the black church, which does not emerge from great theological discourse of the Western thought, dogma and the Reformation of Western theology. As such, it is not marked by a theology of history or advance theological academic discipline

in the bastions of higher learning, but rather born in between developed and debated and accepted doctrines, creeds, ecclesiologies and doxology. In the context of this research, the meditative element is a change in optical apparatus to existence especially for blacks under white supremacy. The meditative aspect addresses the metaphysical, which deals with the ontological experience of human embodiment, it is inseparable to the existential context that pertains the pertinent question of being human or the meaning there of. Another aspect to the meditative gesture of the black church is that the concepts of revelation; special and general revelation are to a certain extent linked to meditation of the Western Christian theology. It is concerning a Christian understanding to the nature of God, creation, Christ and of God's revelation. Though this meditation varies fundamentally to the Christian meditation of other groups, it is especially of people of colour who are victims of white supremacy. This to a certain extent, it is a meditation of the lofty, special and privilege of people who can speak of a romantic nature of God, uninformed by centuries of dehumanisation experience. It is also significant to note that an inquiry that results in a breakage of previously accepted theological doctrines, results in a meditation on God, creation, Christ and the revelation of God.

In order to elucidate this position, one ought to consider both special and general revelation. For instance, if general revelation is not restricted to Aquinas' (1952) point of discerning, the existence of God in nature (through reason and intellect of general revelation if seen from differing optical apparatus) can reveal an aspect of meditation ignored by the West, especially their encounter with black people and their faith. Biko's (1978:102) reflection reveals this reality when he asserts:

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.

What Biko (1978: 102) reveals is a God who is known, revered, in commune with and worshipped by blacks without man made theological creeds in place of God's word and revelation. It is sufficient to say that Aquinas' (1952) position is important for understanding the role of mental faculty linked with the ability to discern the existence of a God and the knowledge of God. This links through the intellect is essential and important, but is not the

absolute approach for all humanity, especially the oppressed. Since it leaves out the importance of enigma that is inherent in religions, especially the idea of conceiving God. In the context of Psalm 8, the Psalmist begins the Psalm from the position of amazement that validates the enigmatic. Hence, from the Psalmist there is a reality of human finiteness and a great sense of awe that leads to the realisation of the knowledge and benevolence of God, as a transcendental being that baffles the intellect and evades the conception of mental faculty. As such, the sense for creation's great grandeur is a meditation that cannot be reducible to simple dogma or reason, but an experience of finiteness, humility and human uniqueness before an infinite God. This is precisely what indigenous people on both South Africa and the Americas share in common about God outside Aquinas' (1952) view of the importance of mental faculty. The God who is known and worshipped through the sense of awe in nature that begs notice of a transcendental being, who created the world and humanity is inherently significant for religious and divine experience. Solidifying the Psalmist confession of soliloquy when asserting; "when I look at the heaven the works of thy hands what is man that thou art mindful of him". Such a position reveals a change in optical, mental and spiritual lenses useful to know and comprehend the existence and revelation of God. The black experience on the other hand reveals what is opposite to Western Christianity, blacks and their faith begin to ask the question in theological terms as to what it means to be human?, what it means to be a just God and what it means for God to be made flesh? Evans (1992: 115) captures this well when he asserts:

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) point is correct especially in reference to the elusive accepted—especially in the Western theology concerning the physical image of God. This is a Christian view of a God who is without a physical body, though in Western art God is presented with a white body. Christian doctrine according to Western Christianity latches on to a God who created human beings in God's image and likeness, but a likeness that finds expression in whiteness. This monopoly of interpretation leads to seeing what usually Western Christianity claims to

represent. That is usually at odds with their praxis such as a God without a body, but remains without colour, except being white in representation and presentation even in the realm of metaphysics and transcendence. Burkett (1978: 46-49) records that for the black nationalist and Pan Africanist Marcus Garvey, the representation of God as white was idolatry which black believers should not be guilty of, he records concerning Garvey's conception and representation of God as follows:

If the white man has the idea of a white God, let him worship God as he desires...We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no color, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles, and since the white people have seen their God through white spectacles, we have only now started out (late though it be) to see our God through our own spectacles.... We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia, the everlasting God—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, the one God of all ages. That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship Him through the spectacles of Ethiopia.

It is clear from Garvey's point of view that the doctrinal basis of the doctrine of God for blacks has to do with a change of spectacles, this change is not unorthodox to the fundamental tenets of Christian doctrine, and moreover, this is a vision for the oppressed. It is deducible from Burkett (1978: 46-49) that Garvey maintained the metaphysics and transcendental character of God not being identical to the material world, in that the confession maintains that God is without colour. In this regard, one is concerning the knowledge of God, which dictates depiction of God's revelation. As Ethiopia and Ethiopianism in both contexts of the United States of America (USA) and South Africa (SA) maintain the black Hebrew and Christian experience of the God spoken about in the Bible. Through the lenses of Ethiopia, this God is black and not white as mandated by white supremacy and colonial Christianity and that sees God as being white and on the side of oppressors and the brutal dehumanising conquest. The idea of a God without colour, who is black in black theological thought, reveals a thorough and normal understanding of God. Therefore, if God is revealed to the Jews, they are likely to call Him God of the Jews and localise Him. In a similar fashion, the black Christian experience dictates a black God and the God of the oppressed as being revealed, this is because of colonial Christianity and white supremacy. Garvey's orthodox view remains important, because if God created all humanity irrespective of colour the idea of a white God is fundamentally problematic. Such idea is an idol that black Christian experience has been left with, to navigate their encounter with God. Western ecclesiologies act as surrogates wombs for black faith, as such, the credence of accepted theological dogmas and creeds makes the notion of a black

church. This is expressed in various manifestations as the slave religion and African Initiated Churches (AIC), a phenomenon and a realm of mediation between history, experience, metaphysics and the existence of blacks under white supremacy. Thus culminating in a dialectical revelation between a denied creature of God (blacks) and the assurance of being a creature of God, the God the Creator being on the side of the oppressed. Thus the black experience, the black church and black theology are born outside the comfort of special and general revelation. Even the interpretation of general and special revelation changes in articulation, that is to say the encounter with God is of a different source and substance. It also considers the substance, essence and totality of “Being” that blacks have lost through the colonial and theological express. Whereas general revelation in Western discourse is God’s existence and transcendence over creation that demands the mind and intellect to comprehend God. The black experience reveals a general revelation rooted in seeing lands and resources, which are seen as central to the benevolence of God who is known in nature, not through mental faculty alone. This God is rather known through experience and feeling of an “imposed” humility caused and such humility is imposed by the great grandeur of a creation that underlines the colourless God, who created the universe and all of humanity. This understanding of God is lost in translation and interpretation by the mode of Western theological thought. The philosophical outlook of Western thought on God’s existence and revelation is linked to cosmological argument. This is noted in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015: 9), with the centrality of the cosmological argument that places the cause of things or the reason for something to be present instead of nothing as expressed by; cause and effect. While this position seems logical and reasonable, it is problematic in that despite the ground of all things and existence can be un-identical to the cosmos in Western theological thought, the transcendental being is identical to whiteness. This is despite the Spirit-ness of God, spirit-ness descriptive of “God” physic, is seen as above the cosmos.

The Black experience and theological outlook use a cosmology that can be the source of all of existence. Hence it should not at any time assume whiteness as a colour of divinity and for God description. Turner (1898) asserts that *God is a Negro*, this rejects the suggested whiteness of Jesus or whiteness used for representing Jesus and. Turner (1898) posits that even if blacks could find out that God was white in the bodiliness of Jesus Christ that describes God’s special revelation. As a result of this, they shall cease to preach or rather believe God is nature or be atheist and believe in no God if God is white. Turner concludes by stating that God was shrouded in darkness before calling light, as such blackness is far older than light. As noted by

Burkett (1978:46-46), Turner and Garvey stress the same sentiment concerning God not having colour, Turner stresses this point in asserting that blacks are not stickler on God's colour, for it is possible that God might as well be blue like the sky and seas. Turner (1898) asserts: "we certainly protest against God being a white man or against God being white at all; abstract as this theme must forever remain while we are in the flesh." In this regard, Turner is rejecting the idea of God being white, as the Supreme Being and also the rejection of God being white. This statement reveals the root of black discontent with white and Western divinity, white ecclesiology and even the interpretation of Western Christology that abstract Christ. As a result and consequence, the discontent is between the realm of the spirit (metaphysics) and matter, implicating God in both general revelation and special revelation. However, to further elucidate this point, God in general revelation is revealed in creation and Jesus Christ is God's special revelation. The discontent is in the white God, who lives in the clouds and a white God who has had an earthly manifestation. This God has given the burner of the cross to whites to subdue the people of earth, rather than save them. Thus the expression of divinity in a general sense and its particularity as incarnation and Christology for a special revelation and unique role, reveals a different reading and experience for the oppressed. This is all concerning the man Jesus Christ and the God revealed in and as Jesus Christ. Meditation of the notion of a black church requires a careful change of lenses in vision and articulation, which will be dealt with in the context of this research.

3.3 ABSURDITY AND THEODICY SUBJECT OF REVELATION

Revelation of God has been understood as communications of God in light of human history as noted by (Rahner 1975: 1460). Martin (1964: 698) says that happily God has been revealed in history and God has willed it for humanity to grasp the scope of revelation. As such, humanity is central and is at the heart and mind of God in God's revelation. It would not be an underestimate to suggest that the world has been an absurd existence at least for people of colour. This particular absurd existence results in hopelessness and human obsolescence. This occurs in the universe, particularly when hope and aspirations are lost and hindrance of quantum leaps to a new orientation inside the confines of racialised existence. The lack of hope, equality and justice hinges upon the leadership and uniqueness of humanity, especially in theological terms where the human is a creature of God, Kolakowski (1978: 25) is correct in saying:

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 with the divine source of all Being.

What Kolakowski (1978: 25) sets forth in terms of humanity, being the all-encompassing of the visible and invisible world rooted in the divine substance. While source of *being* brings to bear the preconditioned and predestined will of God's revelation for all humanity that form part of *Imago Dei*. That is linked to what Kolakowski (1978: 25) says about the visible world called into existence for humanity's sake. In a sense, revealing the necessity and grasp of what it means to be human under divine guidance and divine creation of the material world. This outlook flies across and directly to white supremacy that has sought to dehumanise the world. It is thus fitting to mention the concept of absurdism and theodicy in light of the revelation of God, since these are concepts that are expressing suffering of humanity or even nature itself in the world of a good, powerful and benevolent God. This God is seen as somehow a contradiction in God's nature, might and proclaimed revealed loving-kindness and benevolence. Rowe (1988: 119) in speaking of evil and theodicy says:

Many people feel that some of the human and animal suffering going on in our world makes it difficult to believe in the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being (hereafter referred to as 'O'). Why, for example, would such a being permit the awful extermination of the Jews in Europe? Clearly, it is very difficult to understand why an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being would permit this evil.

God in the doctrine of revelation and the doctrine of God, has been seen as a good God, who has revealed Himself to be known in history, materiality and human life. Perhaps more in human existence, because of what the Genesis account of creation suggests; uniqueness of humanity, *Imago Dei*. As such a religious, ontological and spiritual relationship beyond biological existence and relation between God and humanity is established. The divine and theological dialectical relationship is established between Creator, creation and the creature of God. Thus the benevolent and just God is fundamental in human affairs. Additionally, the issue of suffering and theodicy become pertinent in the black experience, the relation of blacks with God, a God they met by force and colonial Christianity, Sharma (1973: 347) speaking on theodicy and the doctrine of karma argues:

The idea that religion can primarily be seen as a means of comfort (spurious or genuine, according to one's view) in a world of suffering is not a new one. One of the earlier sociological

versions of this idea was suggested by Marx; religion reconciles the oppressed to their uncomfortable roles in this life by dignifying their suffering and promising spiritual rewards in a world to come. But apart from the psychological problem, the existence of suffering also poses a cognitive problem, albeit in practice the two are often closely related or even confused with each other. Religion does not only have to the promise of some kind of escape or salvation from suffering but also some kind of moral vindication of its distribution in this world.

The importance of Sharma (1973: 347) is that colonial Christianity has done precisely what Marx and others have pointed. They have pointed out docility and reconciled oppression as the revelation of God to blacks. While the concept of absurdity has been represented by the existential philosopher Albert Camus and has importance on the subject of revelation and human existence for black people, Melancon (1983:16) speaking on Camus records: “Two fundamental notions underlie Albert Camus’s thought: absurdity and revolt.” He further adds;

Absurdity plays the role of Camus’s initial metaphysical position. What is this absurdity? It is the state of contradiction that exists between man and the world: there is a dispropotion, a divorce between the two that constitutes a sort of “sin”, but without God. “Absurdity, which is the metaphysical state of conscientious man, does not lead to God.

In a sense, Melancon absurdity (1983: 16) explains absurdity as both a feeling and notion, hence the feeling has to do with perceptibility to the malaise facing the world, while the notion of absurdity is human reason leading humanity to recognise the world’s madness. It is important to mention the point of theodicy and absurdity when dealing with the revelation of God. This should be particularly mentioned when both the doctrine of the revelation of God and the doctrine of God are placed within the black world. This is more fundamental to the black experience and colonial Christianity and this continues to accept vestiges of colonial Christianity. The questions of theodicy and absurdism are pertinent in both black and human existence, black spiritual strivings that for God to reveal Himself requires a sociological, existential and ecclesiastically ambience. More appropriately, these concepts are applicable within the continued vestiges of colonial Christianity. The flamboyance victory of white supremacy is validated through Western civilisation or as Carmichaels¹² (1967) puts it on

¹²Stokely shows in Mike Wallace in 1966, The CBS NEWS Special: “BLACK POWER/WHITE BACKLASH a serious problem concerning seeing whites as a civiliziers of the world. The importance of this insistence of savagery and civility is part of a misreading of history and the great deception on indigenus people concerning their advancement and achievements. That have now amounted to nothing because of veneration of white norms and western life.

Western barbarism/savagery and the exacerbated black suffering. However, what is more crucial is that within the history of the Hebrew, the black experience and biblical texts matters, therefore, absurdism and theodicy are not fully valid, because God is revealed as a rebellion. God's chosen or worshippers are rebels of social order, a tale extinguished from biblical history for the purpose and success of colonial Christianity. Albert Camus (1956: 13) asserts:

What is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion. A slave who has taken orders all his life suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command. What does he mean by saying "no"? He means, for example, that this has been going on too long, up to this point yes, beyond it no, you are going too far, or, again, "there is a limit beyond which you shall not go. In other words, his no affirms the existence of a borderline. The same concept is to be found in the rebel's feeling that the other person is exaggerating, that he is exerting his authority beyond a limit where he begins to infringe on the rights of others.

Rebellion within biblical revelation and the doctrine of God is not separated as a form or major premise of worship. Hence, obedience to the deity recorded in the biblical text, is expressed in black theology as a God of the oppressed. It is also a reality that has been translated historically in praxis in the modern era, through the black Christian conversion and experience and black spirituality. That served as litmus paper to God and the experience of human bondage, slavery, humiliation, sadistic acts of rage of racism and dehumanisation. 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.

Cone (1997:169) also asserts: "The more black people believed that "God is a God, God don't ever change, the more difficult it was for them to reconcile their religious faith with their bondage." As such, worship and the response of rebellion to the oppressed worshipper validate the Hebrews and black people's oppression and their God. Thus absurdism or theodicy cannot fully be generalised in reference to black, because of structural racism and oppression, since that which one might call absurdism or theodicy has a point of origin. It would seem from the biblical stance, its adherence should be a freed humanity, hence that humanity has a responsibility to the will of God that requires humanity to only be human when one is free. Cone (1997:169) further says:

Thus the movement of rebellion is founded simultaneously on the categorical rejection of an intrusion that is considered intolerable and on the confused conviction of an absolute right which, in the rebel's mind, is more precisely the impression that he has the right to . . ."Rebellion cannot exist without the feeling that, somewhere and somehow, one is right. It is in this way that the rebel slave says yes and no simultaneously. He affirms that there are limits and also that he suspects—and wishes to preserve—the existence of certain things on this side of the borderline.

Melancon (1983: 21) records that Camus saw three terms applicable to the absurd, what he termed "the three character of the drama". Firstly, that is man himself, who is intelligent yearning for unity and clarity. Secondly, there is an unreasonable world, an inexpressible universe, where contradictions, antimony, anxiety and impotence reign. Thirdly, there is confrontation between man and his world, a process of divorce, tearing, fracturing and is a restless struggle. As such, absurdity is between man and the world, Melancon (1983: 21) asserts:

Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within himself a desire for happiness and reason. The absurd originates from the confrontation between this human longing and the unreasonable silence of the world. Thus the absurd is not to be found, strictly speaking, in the world or in the human mind, but in their presence together.

Melancon (1983: 22) explains that the relation of the absurd is a relation of metaphysical inadequacy between man and his world. It is important to mention that absurdity is valid in the history and condition of the world today. However, what is important to note is that what Melancon (1983: 22) asserts three character of the drama, which is an intelligent human being, an irrational world of contradiction and finally the confrontation between humanity and the world. The contention of this study is to say that black people do not even enjoy the chance of being characters in the drama. Firstly, because Western epistemologies have perennially maintained; metaphysically and ontologically, to set the bar for black physical and mental inferiority in comparison to Europe and whites. Thus the black race is not an "intelligent" race at least according to white supremacy's standard and even acted out in the missionary and evangelising process. Secondly, blackness does not even enjoy the privilege of knowing an irrational universe, because black humanity is currently acting out of a borrowed existence. Thirdly, since "intelligence" is "obsolete" in blacks, blacks cannot even confront the world because he/she has not seen its face and even the image of God's face is white. Thus, blacks as slaves are to be pessimistic in order to confront the world, the real world of metaphysics and

ontology. Blacks need for existential change, which in theological terms rests on God's revelation to blacks. The pessimism of blacks is also expressed in Afro-pessimism, Brady (2015: 2) asserts:

Afro-pessimism does not posit a death sentenced to what blackness could be, but recognizes the world's death sentence as a structuring condition for black life. This theory embraces the unembraceable aspect of blackness as a mode of theorizing: the question of suffering, but a desire to speak to the unimaginable of our suffering—to see black suffering as a profound site of interrogation

The Afro-pessimist view is fundamental to the black church's motivation, especially in relation to the concept of the divine or divinity. Through divinity, whiteness has been instrumental in using it as the only valid mode of "being", (being human and how to exist in Western civilisation). What Melancon (1982: 21-22) notes concerning Camus has pointed out that humanity is to face the absurd in its face, can be linked to recognising the death seen by afro-pessimism and the question of black suffering. Dussel (2003:54) says: "Modern subjectivity develops spatially, according to the Eurocentric paradigm from the Italy of the Renaissance to the Germany of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, toward the France of the French Revolution."

Dussel (2003:54) points out how Europeans both epistemic knowledge and conquest place whites on the centre stage. Thus making others being living under a borrowed existence forced upon them in a European planetary horizon of European centrality. It is fundamental to assert that whites are not only the centre stage of existence, but even ecclesiastically the idea of God. This is God who is white or revealed only to whites at the centre stage for theological experience of the divine and even for theological expression. A point which Garvey, Garnet and Henry Turner have refused by seeing God as black, Dussel (2003: 54) points out:

Europe, as a diachrony that has its premodern antecedents (the Renaissance Italian cities and Portugal), will go on to constitute itself as "center"—as superhegemonic power that passes itself from Spain to Holland, to England, to France, and so on—over a growing "periphery": Amerindia, Brazil, and slave-supplying coasts of Africa; Poland in the sixteenth century; consolidation of Latin Amerindia, North America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe in the seventeenth century; the Ottoman Empire, Russia, some Indian reigns, sub Asian, and the first penetration to continental Africa until the first half of the XIX century.

Dussel (2003: 54-55) further says:

The centrality of Europe in the world-system is not sole fruit of an internal superiority accumulated in during the European Middle Age over against other cultures. Instead, it is also the effect of the simple fact of the discovery, conquest, colonization and integration (subsumption) of Amerindia (fundamentally).

According to an African context, conquest and colonisation overrides discovery and integration. Such a statement emanates from the view that colonialism brought civilisation (modernity) and Christianity to blacks. This position is a fundamental point of departure in black theological thought between black theology and “white” theology. Since a meditating black church should place people of colour as central to modern day existence and in the doctrine of God’s revelation. However, the centrality of Europe at any cost (slavery, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid and capitalism) guaranteed a victory for whites over black bodies and souls. As such, the modernity/civilisation proposed by Europe needed both the body and the souls of blacks, so that they could direct the physicality of blacks, while being masters of the metaphysical express of blacks. 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.” Gordon (2005: 1) asserts:

The modern collapse of Reason and “History into all things European represented a *failure* of Reason and History that required self-deception regarding Europe’s scope. Put differently: Europe sought to become *ontological*; it sought to become what dialecticians calls Absolute Being. Such Being stood in the way of *human* being or a human way of being. It thus presented itself as a theodicy.

Gordon’s (2005: 1) theodicy questions an omnipotent, omniscient and God of goodness in the face of injustice and evil. In a sense it questions an immobile, immutable and transcendent God as to why God does not act in human history. Martin (1964: 698) has posited God’s revelation as a joyful endeavour, where God is seen as revealed in history. Theodicy and the absurd make human existence to take seriously the question of; white metaphysics and its ontological structures that are pertinent in running the global existential order of things. This order of things has perpetuated injustice and evil in the world where people of colour are found. It is important to note the significance of the absurd and theodicy, but understand them in a limiting fashion when dealing with the black experience and the black Christian experience that form the black church. 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.” Gibson (2003:24) 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

One can then assert that the scope of theodicy and the absurd are logical, but not in relation to the totality of black experience. This occurs especially when giving an impression of theodicy and an absurd existence outside the boundary line of white racism. The white racism manifests itself politically, culturally and ecclesiastically, in that way it also maintained its structures and ethics to support their position in human history, while absolving whiteness as a crime against humanity. However, if one wants to direct it to blacks, one should do so under the fact that a racist God cannot respond to those He hates. Biko (1978: 60-61) pointed out that white theological interpretation makes blacks step and adopted children of God, in which one might add; step children that God hates. This hatred of God to blacks is an aspect of the black church meditation that should be considered despite talk of truth, love and forgiveness. Also their worship and experience are intended to a God who ignores their history, dislocation and disposition (dehumanisation). The black theology seeks to address their disposition and dehumanisation and the genesis would be God’s revelation. Kunnie (1994: 5) says:

Black theology has emerged in response to European and Euro-American theologies that have either largely ignored black experience or excluded it from the domain of theology. Black theology therefore tapped into the wellspring of the history of resistance to racism as one source for its thesis of liberation. The *raison d’être* of black theology, in fact, is the tenacity of racism and its clever subversion of the reality that black humanity is indeed created in God’s image.

Biko (1978:104) asserts:

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.

The fact that black theology is not absolute, invalidates theodicy, but more appropriately challenges theodicy and black theology. It challenges theodicy to see whether Christian ethics

and virtue have not been manipulated, to validate one group while those ethics and virtue subjugates the other. The point that Biko raises is an issue of a fighting God which is reminiscent of the freedom of the Hebrews in Egypt (God who fought with pharaoh through plagues). A fighting God is a revelation of a God who does not change in character, content and nature, but moves the souls and bodies of the oppressed towards the legitimacy of freedom and liberation. This dismisses the transcendental being, who is His might. He is marvel and cannot even by a finger change the conditions that black people find themselves in. However, what is more crucial is that blacks should be involved, in a sense they become the movement of God in the same way white carried an idea of chosen-ness to conquer the world, in which they did. Biko (1978: 68) is correct in pointing out:

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.

What continues to evaporate in black spirituality is indeed never ceasing moment to address white racism. This is a condition in which the world, an anti-black world is structured around with God as an absolute and transcendental. Black spirituality should use suffering as a datum to reveal that even under democracies and ideas of integration God manifests absoluteness and transcendence existentially. According to Western theological tools, God remains unmovable and thus unveiled and not to be known by blacks. Biko correctly states:

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 (Archives-Unisa Accession 153: 1972: 21).

Biko challenges at least in theological concepts such as honesty of power and ideals of integration, which foster a common humanity, but instead has at least in South Africa a dominant and white humanity, both victor and victim. The revelation of God at least in black theological thought and meditation is cognisant of the act of establishing and maintaining white privilege. This is a deliberate act on the part of whites, because the fact that power remains in the hands of whites, validates white deliberateness in controlling the world. It further suggests

ecclesiastically a divine racism that cannot be out rooted by universal prayers between whites and blacks, Gordon (1995: 143) has said:

Divine racism is characterized by the basic presupposition of mankind as a “two-category system” of an “in” and “out” group, the two-category system’s being correlated with an imbalance of suffering for the “out” group and less suffering (if suffering at all) for the “in” group, God’s being responsible for the imbalance of suffering for the “out” group, God’s favor or disfavor being associated with God’s radical preference, and God’s being a member of the “in” group. Antiracist divine racism suggests that God is part of the “in” group (white) and blacks are part of the “out” group.

What Gordon (1995: 143) raises is about God being identified with the “in” group that is embedded with Euro-centrism, hence white supremacy makes it necessary that the “out” group should discover its “own” God. They will have their agenda at hand that keeps at bay docility and pacifism, that guarantees a constant reality of white success, massive white unaccountability and black failure, Gordon (1995: 144) further asserts:

If we respond that black suffering is but a minute period of God’s plans, the problem, from the existential perspective of actions, is that we have no more reason to believe that God will help black people than that God will continue to be indifferent to, or perhaps even relish, black suffering. Verification for that question can only be sought under some circumstance that will itself be subjected to multievidential interpretation. What God seems to mean yesterday and today is black suffering.

There is an element of truth to what Gordon (1995: 144) points out and it has to do with God that is held in the black mind, body and soul, yet God’s transcendental character and benevolence do not render the potent element of a fighting God of the oppressed. This outlook to God should easily be associated with the realisation of existential malice, and it should be in exchange of colonial Christianity’s spiritual escapist ecstasy, as an opium given to blacks, as the Christian sense and virtues.

3.4 THE EUROPEAN GOD IN A CASKET AND BLACK THEOLOGY

As part of the discussion about what has been identified as the escapist and spiritual ecstasy of colonial Christianity, their use of the gospel in light of the revelation of God and the doctrine of God and the ecclesiastical expression to God; one should press upon a particular period in European history. This particular period in history that will form part of this discussion gives themes for the truth for individuals who are part and parcel of meditation. This is especially in discussing the revelation of God, as existential and particularly based in European culture and even in academic thinking. The importance of such endeavour places the context of the black world and West in presenting a God to blacks. These are blacks who later through dehumanisation would be believers of this God brought by the missionaries and their intent. The context of the European romanticism and Nietzsche's period gives a fundamental theological insight between the metaphysical reality (i.e. happening in Europe) and the context that black people were facing, because of white evangelisation and missionary work. The starting point is Percy Bysshe, Shelly's (1811/1813: 3) necessity of atheism, as a leading figure of the Romantic Movement, Shelly asserted:

If the Deity should appear to us, he should convince our senses of his existence; this revelation would necessarily command belief. Those to whom the Deity has thus appeared have the strongest possible conviction of his existence. But the God of Theologians is incapable of local visibility.

Shelly (1813: 6) further asserts:

It is only by hearsay (by word of mouth passed down from generation to generation) that whole peoples adore the God of their fathers and of their priests; authority, confidence, submission and custom with them the place of conviction or of proof; they prostrate themselves and pray, because their fathers taught them to prostrate themselves and pray: by why did their fathers fall on their knees? That is because, in primitive times, their legislators and their guides made it their duty. "Adore and believe," they said. "the gods whom you cannot understand; have confidence in our profound wisdom; we know more than you about Divinity.

What Shelly is revealing in the 19th century is the theological crisis of the West, where the idea of a God is challenged, because it has become a bullying and numbing system. According to Shelly's (1813: 3) point of view, this is a God of theologians who is incapable of local visibility and this Shelly (1813: 3-6) points to an idea of God that is not existential or even transcendental. This is rather an abstraction suitable for those in power, geared for the numbing of the subjects

and structuring the world of oppression as normality, (Biko 1978:61) argued: “It must also be noted that the church in South Africa as everywhere else has been spoilt by bureaucracy.” Biko's analysis gives credence to what Shelly (1813: 3) has pointed out, Shelly (1813: 6) rightly asserts:

All religious nations are founded solely on authority; all the religions of the world forbid examination and do not want one to reason; authority wants one to believe in God; this God himself founded only on the authority of a few men who pretend to know him, and to come in his name and announce on earth. A god made by man undoubtedly has need of man to make himself known to man.

The point of interest at least within the romantic period is that of a rebellion on a God. At least from the Romantics, Shelly (1813) sees an ecclesiastical and political God who has been created by theologians and as such is a property of priests, who think, act and decide for this “God” upon human lives and drive in the need of submissiveness that acts out its praxis in the sterilisation of freedom. Hence, creating an idolisation of the concept of God manifest as pacifism and accepting suffering as God. The South African context of colonial Christianity and its theism to black contexts can be found fitting as well in Shelly's critique of religion. The idea of created God, revealed and known by white is at the centre of the dogma of God's revelation, as this is articulated by theological reflection of the West. It is important to remember that this God who is being rejected in Europe is the same that is being preached in Africa. The disillusionment in this God precludes His death, which is proclaimed by Nietzsche). Luft (1984: 263) asserts: “far from being only an anti-Christian slogan for Nietzsche, ‘God is dead!’ involves an intricate and dynamic metaphor, which has its roots deep in German religious thought.” Luft (1984: 266) further adds:

For Hegel, the phrase “God is dead!” reflects not only that the transcendent elements have largely disappeared from religion, but also that the immanent elements of Christianity, i.e., the life and kerygma of Christ in the world, are no longer so easily seen. His use of Pascal supports his claim that Western secular society has lost sight of God both metaphysically and personally.

Luft (1984: 266) adds, for Pascal: “not only is God lost, but nature itself, as well as human nature, is corrupt. The inherent defects of human nature are responsible for the inability of a person to see God in his world.” It is of importance to note that the loss of God or transcendence is linked to the loss of nature and humanity in the black experience. The loss of nature's challenges even Western interpretation of general revelation or natural theology, if there is no nature to discern the very existence of God. While the loss of humanity challenges or should

challenge special revelation, which is based on the incarnation and the humanity of Christ. Thus, the death of God and the necessity of atheism as articulated by Shelly (1813) reveal a doctrinal and theological crisis in the doctrine of God's revelation for both whites and black. This issue is further exacerbated by colonialism, colonial Christianity and abstract Western theology.

It should be pointed out that there is a high level of mischievousness and deceit on the part of whites and the colonial God and its existing vestiges. Other than taking over the land, colonialists and missionaries are guilty of preaching, bringing and revealing a dead God, whom they have lost sight of metaphysically and personally in Europe. Yet the same package which seemingly can be interpreted as a mummified God, beautiful at face value but rotting beneath is brought to Africa. Luft (1984: 268) records:

“God is dead!” is not Nietzsche's basic statement of atheism. Rather, the primary expression of his atheism is in Zarathustra, II, 2, where he tells us that the whole idea of divinity is a mere supposition untrue to both the essential transitoriness of the world and the highest aspirations of the human spirit. God is a nauseating oppression from which only the direct action of the individual will can free us. Of course, the historical death of God proclaimed by the Madman in *La Gaya Scienza*, 125, is inextricably linked with the message of Zarathustra.

To a certain extent, the black resistance towards oppression signifies an unconscious realisation of this dead God, who is incapable of freeing blacks. In as much as this God could not free whites, the romantics, who grew suspect of God's existence, because of oppression and what was happening in the West. Pheko (1995: 75 & 78) pointed out that there is a distinction between colonial Christianity and Christianity. Hence Pheko (1995:75 & 78) further pointed out that God revealed in the biblical text was different from that of colonial Christianity, a God that is somewhat buried in mind, body and soul of blacks for the interest of whites. Cone (1997: 169) pointed out how the truth in the biblical text of a God that is unchanging inspired blacks to wrestle and fight against whites. Therefore, by so doing, one can posit a wrestle with a dead divinity who is the dead God that supports the theology of the West. Perhaps it is important to understand the concept of the “colonial God” as being made and created in Europe. This “colonial God” was brought to Africa as materialistic and metaphysical realities that support physical and metaphysical conquest. Isichei (1995:24) in reference to white ecclesiology as

seeing black liberation as the work of the devil, because of fighting against white supremacy even on an ecclesiastical level recorded:

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.

Such assertion reflects a deeply interwoven reality of the problematic nature of the metaphysics of this God and the need in Europe for Him to die. His reign and existence is one that is inhumane and is a sadistic spectacle to his priests that seek to control; Luft (1984: 268) asserts:

God is dead! he means no more than that transcendence is lost—and not only lost, but purposefully done away with. This is the main difference between Nietzsche's death of God and the Christian's; for the latter, the loss of transcendence is an accident, a regrettable accident, cause by our own spiritual blindness; whereas for the former, it is a deliberate and definitive act of throwing down that which is found to be no longer beneficial to human cultural progress. Hence Nietzsche's saying is not only that God is dead but also that we ourselves, individual human beings, by our assertion of will, our refusal to believe, are His assassins.

It is fundamental as noted by Luft (1984: 268) that Nietzsche's position of humanity being the assassins of God is not a monolithic, absolute and general truth, but it is rather limited to the West. Masoga (2012: 1) notes that Setiloane assists in understanding this position in pointing out the error of western Christianity and the deep seated lack of understanding the divine or even Divinity itself. Masoga (2012: 1) discussing Gabriel Setiloane's view correctly asserts:

The impression he had was that Western Christianity has lost the *sensitivity*, in matters of religion, "of the African traditional scene". This sensitivity of humanity in relation to divinity at work in all corners of society and its relationships - the preferred expression by Setiloane is the *totality of life*— lies at the heart of African attitudes to religion. Interestingly enough, Setiloane regarded the latter to be basic to the *kerugma*. Its loss to Western Christianity, Setiloane, ascribed it to Greek and Roman philosophical influences on Christian thought development over centuries.

Setiloane as recorded by Masoga (2012: 1) assists in that he posits that Western spirituality of definitions and practices of having missed the mark expressed in the romantics and even

Nietzsche. As such, their conception of God and divinity ascended down to misinterpretation, even the definitions of African spirituality. In order to discuss God, God's nature and revelation requires strands towards metaphysics. More importantly understanding that metaphysics is what keeps society or the social order as it is. For Nietzsche and German thought, God must die, God's transcendence should be overthrown and God should be revealed to be ignorant mortal character of myth, responsible of bondage and one that oppressed human beings from thinking. Fanon (1963: 168) on a black account gives insight to the metaphysical tenets of colonial power:

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.

Brown (1996: 33) pointed out that in the studies of anthropology; human beings are caught up between being themselves and being products of a society, a society that has both materiality and psych, attached to idealistic supremacy of a particular race, the oppressed group that cannot relate to normality of life set by the status quo. Biko (1978: 61) has pointed out that colonialism and its faith is irrelevant to the people who are expected to adhere and accept the God known by a few men as noted by Shelly's (1813: 6) *Necessity of Atheism*. Shelly points out that the idea of God is represented by men who stand as God's mouthpiece, they are the only ones that know of him, as Shelly asserted that a God made by men is indeed in need of man. Biko (1978: 61) further highlights that the issue is not the Bible, but the interpretation of the Bible that comes with its own theology. This is a theology that has already been developed and maintained in all areas of human life, especially even the life force of this God. It is in the same line of thought that Biko brings about the issue of blacks being stepchildren of God, a God whose presence that they cannot feel. Biko's (1978: 61) climax statement: "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." This statement reveals a sense of alienation that has emptied one's sense of self, it has also broken the ontological reality of being human and the connection of humanity with God. If blacks (mother, father, daughter and son) suffer the inability to relate to the future, their inability is a signal of far greater destruction of imagination. A God that black cannot feel is precisely what

Shelly (1813: 3 & 6) pointed out about in the revelation of God. The God who is inherent in the senses of physical bodies, this then also pose the question to blacks, who were cut off from their essence of divinity.

One mentions that the death of God, or the “white God” in particular, was pronounced in the West already buried in Africa through the colonial experience. Thus this realisation shows that while this point which Shelly and other mention, it is a reflection of something that is happening in the West. At the same time, colonialism, slavery, imperialism and exploitation are taking place in the black world, despite the fact that slavery and dehumanisation of blacks was for economic purposes, However, it is possible that since “white God” and culture could not hold any longer in the West, it was necessary for it to find a new place to establish itself. Rempel (1959: 2) in discussing Kierkegaard’s existentialism reveals the depth of decay and decadence in European societies, as he asserts:

Why did Kierkegaard suddenly get a hearing and what accounts for the rise of modern existentialism? The key lies in the fact of alienation. There is a feeling of estrangement among modern man, which has increased considerably with the further development of the Industrial Revolution, the collectivization tied to a machine age and the gradual but definite depersonalization of man. There is a rupture between human beings and their objects, between human beings and other human beings, or between human beings and the natural world, or even between human beings and their own creations in art, science and society. Alienation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, psychological, psychopathological and sociological, because it concerns the individual and the group. Hegel spoke of this estrangement. He used the term *Entäusserung* (externalization), *Entfremdung* (alienation), *Selbstentfremdung* (self-estrangement) and "*Vergegenständlichung*") (objectification).

It is significant to note that the era that one is using (the romantic era), expresses a deep disillusionment of whites in their world and systems that have an idea or theoretical conception and practical view of a God. This God is perceived as God that maintains law and order that is fundamentally linked with oppression and looting in Africa. As such, the possibilities that are availed to human beings in such an existence of God, are either to be killed by God or to kill God before He does, this is what was meant by Shelly’s (1813) *Necessity of atheism*, Rand (2011: 1) says:

Wish humanity awash in bizarre and dangerous supernatural beliefs, atheism was in his day and remains today very necessary. But I think Shelly meant necessity in the strict logical sense of that word, as in: unavoidable, inevitable, certain. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge that

there is no proof of the existence of a Deity. However, that does not mean that we remain in a state of doubt, undecided between theism and atheism, for, as Shelly points out, God is a hypothesis, and, as such, stands in need of proof: the *onus probandi* rests on the theist.

Lee (2012: 3) has pointed out that with Shelly, his atheism was not absolute materialistic outlook, but it had spiritual tenets to it. He mentions Shelly's view of the immortality of the mind. Lee (2012: 3) asserts:

Indeed Shelly is one of those who changed the potential meanings of the word God, by popularizing the scope of spiritual possibilities for future generations of readers and religious sceptics: by bringing sceptical philosophy into popular consciousness and the new age. This intellectually conscious and spiritual middle ground between religiosity and materialism, like his vegetarianism, is perhaps one of Shelly's biggest 'unacknowledged' legacies to the modern world.

The roots of atheism in Europe, considering the romantics and disillusioned theologians (e.g. Nietzsche), don't seem to be a literal abandonment of God—though later it would be. It is rather a need of transcendental replacement or a need of a different vision and revelation of God; this can be seen in both Shelly and Nietzsche, Cybulska (2012: 2), as they rightly assert:

In *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel proposed that alienation of human essence as divinity, and its subsequent re-appropriation, had accounted for the emergence and decline of religions. 'Young Hegelians', among them Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, took up the theme. Feuerbach saw God's creativity as a projection of human failure to realize full potential, and God's omnipotence as a projection of human sense of finitude and vulnerability. "Atheism is a secret of religion" – he claimed in *The Essence of Christianity*. Once humanity achieves mature self-consciousness, there will be no need for such projections. Nietzsche's own departure from Christian faith coincided with his reading of Feuerbach, later augmented by his immersion in Schopenhauer. His mission was to reclaim the god-like part of humanity, and *Übermensch* can be seen as an attempt to do just that.

What is at hand in the European context is theodicy and the theatre of absurdism at play, as Europe falls deep into a displeasurable state of human existence. The denial of the belief in the transcendental being in the West provides a case study for the black world and the deep meditation of the black church. This point is fundamental because God is proclaimed dead in the West, while being proclaimed alive and seeking for African converts in Africa. Weisbord (2003: 35) rightly asserts:

Since the 1960s the role played by Pope PIUS XII and the Vatican in the Holocaust during World War II has been much discussed and debated, usually heatedly. Many historians have faulted the papacy for its silence in the face of great moral challenge. Few have noted that 40 years earlier the Holy See was confronted by a moral crisis no less daunting and no less costly in human lives, one which unfolded in Central Africa, one whose memory has receded with the passing years.

Noting from the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, Weisbord (2003: 35) asserts: “An endeavour to eliminate a portion of a people would qualify as genocide. Injuries, physical or mental, and the creation of unbearable conditions, as well as killing, qualify as genocide. In the case of the Congo all these techniques were employed.” Weisbord (2003: 35) further adds,

The late nineteenth century had witnessed the creation of white empires in black Africa. In the throes of the Industrial Revolution, Europe needed sources of raw materials. By dint of their superior military might the nations of Europe could obtain them by imposing their will on non-whites who were powerless to resist. Camouflaging their greed and ethnocentric arrogance with sanctimonious language about a civilizing mission to uplift the downtrodden, to enlighten the benighted and to Christianize the heathen, a handful of European countries forcibly partitioned the African continent. They carved out colonies, drawing borders that completely ignored tribal realities and proceeded to exploit those colonies for their own economic benefit.

The important point to deduce above is of the church, white church in particular. This white church is an instrument and institution that is for oppression and devastation, both in the West and the black world, with a dead God in their theology. The point of Christianising Africans by a group of few individuals echoes Shelly’s (1813: 6) sentiments on religious nation. The nation that is obsessed with authority and the elitism of those who pose as the mouthpiece of God or those whom God have solemnly revealed Himself to. Thus they are those who “lead” the “blind” to God, while this also helps in confirming the bureaucratic tenet of the church as having being identified by (Biko 1978: 61). There are two possibilities that one can then posit in the discussion of the revelation of God, particularly borrowing from the romantics. Firstly, being that what blacks were taught, God was actually not, thus no Christian God has been revealed to blacks from the colonial version of Christianity. This point can be solidified by the fact that it was not out of the love of Christ that Europeans sought to preach Christ to blacks as the revealed God in history for soteriological purpose. However, it was out of deceit and a need to build a white world; physically and ontologically for all non-white to inhabit as subjects;

morally, physically, spiritual and ontologically at the mercy of whites as God. The deceit that whites used to gain the black world should be thought seriously and very real, because its vestiges do not disappear, but are confirmed and solidified by the black condition. More appropriately the deceit of the West cannot be put under the carpet of world history. The second point is that it is a theological *anathema* and is the boundary line of black *thanatos* in existence. Weisbord (2005: 36), referring to the Congo which is the same for the rest of Africa asserts:

Cloaked in the deceptive garb of anti-slavery altruism, he won international recognition, which he then utilized for crude exploitation and selfish profiteering. Even by the chauvinist, racist, ruthless standards of European imperialism, what occurred in the Congo was bloody and barbaric. Leopold's personal enrichment came at an exorbitant price to the indigenous population. To harvest ivory and, more importantly, rubber, required conscription of the "native." In the process all manner of hideous acts were committed. Rubber quotas were assigned, and if the output was too low, villages would be burned and Africans shot. Others were flogged or mutilated—chopping off of hands was by no means uncommon. Women were kidnapped and held as hostages. In a true reign of terror, vast stretches of land were de-populated by murder and by the flight of terrified native.

The above description of brutality can only imply that blacks are frightened to death. Erskine's (1983: 38) view of the greatest tragedy to befall humanity being white wanting to be revered as God. This solidified a possible theological confusion of identity between whites and God for their black subjects. This is further elucidated by Carmichael's (1966) interview with Mike Wallace in 1966, The CBS NEWS Special: "BLACK POWER/WHITE BACKLASH", in which he pointed out that the burden of whites should not be preached to blacks, since it was whites that needed to be civilised and not blacks. Weisbord (2005: 36) seems to support this point, as he argues: "

Who can doubt that the white man's burden in the Congo was borne by the black man? Who can deny that the civilising mission in the Congo was uncivilised to the core? As such, this God who goes parallel with the devastation of Africa and blacks could have died in Europe as noted in the romantics, then mummified in European abstract theological and ecclesiastical discourse. Ultimately He is to be buried in the hearts, minds, souls and spirits of blacks and He is to be immortalised in the institutions that whites have left behind. There is a strong possibility to be considered that the West actually has never been in the authentic position in understanding the tradition of the Hebrew faith (Christianity). In order to solidify this point, one can consider the

Great disputations that occurred in Europe between Roman Catholic Church and the Jews headed by Nahmanides and Paulus (Pablo) Christiani. Encyclopedia Judaica: Disputation of Barcelona (2008: 1) records: “Nahmanides also made the point that from the time of Jesus until the present the world has been filled with violence and injustice, and the Christians have shed more blood than all other people.” Though these statements can be both true, it is also an exaggeration on the part of Nahmanides, but it is important, especially in understanding that white Christianity and church history is filled with acts of terror for the sake of Christian conversion. That spreads from the point that the religion of the marginalised and oppressed was adopted by the elite monarchs, who used it to its advantage. The Transcript (2012: 3) from the Doctrine of Discovery records:

Alexander, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to the illustrious sovereign, our very dear son in Christ, Ferdinand, king, and our very dear daughter in Christ, Isabella, queen of Castile, Leon, Aragon, Sicily, and Granada, health and apostolic benediction. Among other works well pleasing to the Divine Majesty and cherished of our heart, this assured ranks highest, that in our times especially the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith.

The above is a reflection of a cocktail between the faith Christ imparted to the lowly, oppressed and marginalised, that is now mixed with imperial monarchs to mix the desires of the monarch with those of Christ, as such, question the authority of special revelation as the absoluteness of Christ. The very identification of kings and queens with the Messiah approved what has to be done and the God of the oppressed losing his face to be replaced by white rulers. The conversion of blacks and natives is precisely inscribed in the doctrine of discovery as overthrowing other nations. The very same text puts Christopher Columbus as a dear son, since it is ample evidence that the God that blacks have accepted, is not a God who has been revealed, but a dead God. That might explain why Europeans acted mercilessly and without conscience. However, what is more troubling is that the acceptance of “God” from white theological thought became a collapse of black metaphysical existence. This metaphysical existence harbours thoughts, ideas, ideals, beliefs and aspirations of blacks. Carmichael (1967: 1) in the *BLACK POWER and the THIRD WORLD of 1967* pointed out that there is a preference to calling white Western imperialist society, rather than a white Western civilisation, because whites are not civil and thus cannot begin to speak about civilisation. One can accurately

suggest that this is true and is precisely at work, restricting any movement towards a diametrically different existence. 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.

Perhaps what can be deduced from Sauter is that the Western world is an estranged life and existence, hence such cannot be the navigator for other nation. Also, what Sauter suggests should not be accepted in general terms, but rather restricted to the West in order to not confuse the goals and aspiration of west as that of Africa. This is precisely what leads to the view that it was God who made and was revealed to blacks through the notion of a black church. As such, it is the black church, which is born from human experiences, specifically by those who were deemed subhuman and consequently dehumanised.

3.5 BLACK CHURCH RECEPTORS OF GOD'S REVELATION

The notion of a black church has been understood as an ambience for black theological expression, hence emanating from the grievances of blacks who are oppressed. This is also for blacks encounter with Christ through colonial Christianity, as such, the black church is an intrinsic part of the meditation for the self-actualisation of black. The notion of a black church takes into cognisance the religiousness of blacks mingled with society, in which blacks find themselves, as noted by (Cone 1997:15). This provides a firm grasp of meditation for addressing the self and the mastery of the black self, which is also a prophetic self. The notion of a black church is a vivid mirror of memory, typical of the Hebrew religious life, as it mixes revelation, doxology, worship and deliverance, while maintaining unwavering faith and belief in a just and unchanging God of deliverance. This is a point reflected by Cone (1997: 169) in pointing worship and bondage as opposite spectrums. As such, those in bondage engaging in worship, the latent enigma of God wrestles between worship or freedom and bondage—and God is for worship and freedom. The notion of a black church dispels the view of docility and

pacifism in suffering. This suffering is structurally based and not an act of God's benevolence. Lloyd (2016: 1) captures this when he says:

In a world of violence and suffering, it is hard enough to have faith. It is hard enough to believe, without evidence provided by the world, that there is a God who is good, who assures peace. Yet Christians are called not only to have faith but also to have hope. In other words, Christians are to be committed to a vision of the future in which goodness prevails, a time when violence and suffering end. This vision produces an uncannily bright disposition, a disposition discordant with the violence and suffering that surrounds. Christians are called to do more than endure or persevere in a world of wretchedness. They are called to thrive; to have a radiance guaranteed by the eternal happiness they know is to come – to have a radiance that itself participates in that happiness.

Lloyd is correct in linking faith with hope, especially as part of the religious aspect of blacks and the oppressed vision of *Imago Dei*. The notion of a black church signifies this radiance and hope though black suffering prevails; therefore Christian duty and faith require endurance in the suffering and not acceptance of it. However, the pronouncement of black faith amid suffering is confrontational to white ecclesia and white supremacy. Lloyd (2016: 3) is correct in pointing out that: black theology meant doing theology that, at least in principle, rejected white idioms and named God in Blacks' own language, as it were. Lloyd (2016) further points out that the view of Cone's blackness as an "ontological symbol" and "visible reality", which solidifies an enduring meditative state of black faith in their existential location. It is important to grasp both the ontological symbol and visibility, because the ontological symbol speaks to structures that are material in practice, but governed by a deep metaphysics and epistemology. This epistemology maintains black visible subjectivity in the world of anti-blackness. Even in democratised contexts, Hyden (1996: 1) says:

Since 1990, calls for political democratization have been added to the armoury of policy prescriptions for Africa. Faith in the significance of democratization among Africans and friends of Africa alike provided the continent with new breathing-space but half way through the 1990s, there is little evidence that Africa has begun turning a corner.

Hayden (1996: 1) further points out that the World Bank statistical reports show that economic growth compared to the rest of the world, Africa continues losing ground. The notion of the black church and its aims cannot be devoid of content and history, further, it cannot devoid existential location of blacks and their own groaning and grasp of an encounter with God. Stewart (1999: 103-104) is correct in asserting that black churches have a common goal that is

to meliorate the spiritual, economic, social, political, and cultural realities of black people in America. This also points that Stewarts makes fall through to the context of Africa and South Africa and it also implies that black meditation amounts in the presence of God in structures and people. The doctrine of revelation of God as indicated in the beginning, comes as a disclosure of God's inner expressions of God's love, established as a dialectical relationship based on disclosure of religious truths noted by (Edwards 1967: 189). The revelation of God is deliberate as having pointed by Myers (1987: 883), thus forcing a radical deliberate act of faith for black deliverance and freedom. Thus revealing itself with no limitation to enslaved Africans as a deliberate act of theological defiance, which sees the revelation of God as streaming under the bloody river of the oppressed, Martey (1995: 56) rightly points out:

Africanization and liberation are thus new forms of theological hermeneutics developed by both African and black theologians to bring full humanity to black African. With these new hermeneutics, Africans have initiated a process of *theologicogenesis* in Africa—a new theological beginning that calls for an epistemological break in theological reflection. But African determination to disentangle the gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as their Christians self-understanding, from Western cultural assumptions and intellectual framework began with doubts and suspicion of the ideology and the theological interpretation coming from those who have enslaved, colonized and exploited them. "Conscious suspicion" becomes an integral part of African theological hermeneutics; it is, in fact, its point of departure

The theological "conscious suspicion" points to whiteness as a perquisite and prerogative of existence and the integral part of black oppression in an anti-black world. The notion of the black church is found needing to address pessimism that prevails Lloyd (2016: 8) right points out:

Afro-pessimism makes four basic claims. First, blackness is not like other differences. It is not like other racial or ethnic differences nor is it like the differences of gender, sexuality, or disability. Second, blackness does not assimilate and fade away. Integration, at least as conventionally understood, is impossible. Third, blackness is an ontological condition. It names the condition faced by a person for whom the very possibility of being is foreclosed. Fourth and finally, blackness is woven deeply into the fabric of Western metaphysics.

The understanding of blackness from Afro-pessimism in Western metaphysics, places revelation of God as part of metaphysical and existential spiritual experience of blacks. Hence Mofokeng (1987:38) correctly asserts that the Bible is a book for hope to the downtrodden, since this sets the platform of the discovery and revelation of the God to the Hebrews. It further

seems to have missed the mind of whites, whose church history and scripture ignores the experience of people of God in the Old Testament. Thus setting this approach and negligence as a methodology of God's dealing with humanity, as a matter of fact to the oppressed, God is a transcendental and existential being who descends upon earth to redeem the wretched. Cone (12-13) pointed out that there was a shift in black religious thought from the transcendental metaphysics of the West to their special and general revelation. The transcendental point from the ecclesia maintains bureaucracy of those at the top ruling, with brutality to those at the bottom. It is therefore important to understand this untimely and immobile transcendence as the essence of the death of God in the West. This is linked to the death blow struck by colonialism and white supremacy to the oppressed, thus setting a different context to revelation and even the understanding of the death of God, Cone (1993: 12) asserts: "For in the deaths of the poor of the world is found the suffering and even the death of God." Cone (1993: 13) further asserts:

Many modern-day Lutheran scholars are often even worse, because they turn the cross of Jesus into a theological idea completely unrelated to the concrete historical struggles of the oppressed for freedom. For many Lutheran scholars, the theology of the cross is a theological concept to be contrasted with philosophical and metaphysical speculations. It is a way of making a distinction, between faith and reason, justification by faith through grace and justification by the works of reason.

One agrees with Cone (1993: 13) that the rejection of European metaphysical speculations and the acceptance of a crude anthropomorphic manner of speaking about God is a validation of Paul. Paul (Cor. 1: 27-28) points out God's love for wretchedness, marginalised, ridiculed and the ashamed in the world. It is important to add that the opposite is that God loves for bullies, racist, slave masters and oppressors with a prerequisite of repentance (a revelation of wrong doing). The death of the bureaucratic transcendental metaphysical God fosters in the rediscovery of the historical Jesus, who was revealed even by the rejection of missionary churches to the formation of African Initiated Churches. Neil asserts on the separation of these churches, Christianity and Jesus: "Their almost universal claim to confess the historical Jesus as Lord and Saviour establishes them as genuine Christian churches blacks are thus part of the recipient of God's revelation" (Neil et al 1971:9). It is important to also grasp that the revelation of God in itself is a form of rebellion to the status quo, it is a traditional nominative of life and the very meaning of life under a theological guise and interpretation. In the case of black people, their Christianity and the revelation of God is an entire different narrative from the

romanticised and metaphysical outlook of the faith that implicates the past and is even applicable to today. The revelation of God helps to sharpen the contradictions between whites and blacks, especially in areas of spirituality, economy, politics and reconciliation. Cone (1993: 1) rightly asserts:

Black religious' thought is not identical with the Christian theology of white Americans. Nor is it identical with traditional African beliefs, past or present. It is both--but reinterpreted" for and adapted to the life-situation of black people' struggle for justice in a nation whose social, political and economic structures are dominated by a white racist ideology.

Cone (1993: 2) further explains that it was the African side that made blacks see the distortion of white theology and the Gospel and seeking God's liberation from bondage. He further asserts that it was their Christian side that made black re-orientate their past to be useful in the struggle. It is a dialectic link for God's revelation that is willed by God and those who seek God's disclosure in their troubling times. Fundamentally, the God who is buried in the black mind, soul and body has his remains exhumed out because of black faith and the dominant character of the God of the oppressed.

It is fundamental to note that God's outpouring spirit to black Christians and the black ecclesia did not obliterate their Africaness, which Europe and its God found important to destroy in the name of being Christians. However, God confirmed it, confirming the authenticity and legitimacy of being black, Frazier (1964: 13) in discussing the *Spirituals and their Shout Songs* points out:

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'"

What is of importance is the point of dancing out their religions which explains that even on a spiritual level God to blacks has an impulse of motion to His people (Frazier 1964:13). This means a fundamental difference exists and will continue to exist between black spirituality. Further, this is the motion of being and action driven, compared to white spirituality, especially to blacks that do not necessitates; docility and an immutable God that wants to subjugate them. West (1999: 101-102) pointed out:

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.

The kinetic orality, passionate physicality, improvisational intellectuality and combative spirituality are precisely what make black people to be black people. As such, God reveals Himself in the modus of authentic black existence and this is confirming outside the theology of their own feeling and theology of *Imago Dei*. Hence God's revelation to blacks is stimulation of the self and not the destruction of the self. De Gruchy (2004: 46), in discussing the theological revolts of African towards whites, argues: "These independent churches symbolize the black revolt against European spiritual and cultural domination." The revelation of God reveals blackness and does not hide it; this is evident in Billingsley's (1999:7) confirmation of Du Bois's accounts of what makes the black church--(the preacher, music and frenzy). The shred that is tightly knitted in the subject of God's revelation is that God is not static, but pro-active in the content of materiality and history. Lincoln, in Billingsley (1999: xx) pointed out: "black religion takes its origins not from established religion in America, but from the black experience in America..." This point is crucial in both black history and biblical history and even for dogma, Cone (1993: 4) asserts:

Black slaves' hope was based on their faith in God's promise to "protect the needy" and to "defend the poor." Just as God delivered the Hebrew children from Egyptian bondage and raised Jesus from the dead, so God will also deliver African slaves from American slavery and "in due time" will bestow upon them the Gift of eternal life.

There is a need to stress different points of theological convergence between the Christian experience of the West and blacks. That point of difference makes the black encounter of God similar to that of the Hebrews. As such, it is making authenticity on theological matters and different sources of God, revelation and its comprehensibility clearly visible. It was God who made the Hebrews rebel against pharaoh's authority and hearken to God's deliverance and prospects of freedom. Boesak (2009: 56) 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 it also speaks of hope, of conversion, of redemption. It is a message for the whole of life. And 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).

Thus the dealings of God with humanity, be it a Hebrew or an African, is the same and does not change. These dealings do not even change the biblical text, as the biblical text continues to echo liberation as its central theme, giving insight to God's nature, love and building of relationships. Liberation to a certain extent can be a synonym of biblical revelation, be it metaphysical or physical. What is of infinite value to the revelation of God to the black church is Jesus Christ as the epicentre and litmus paper for metaphysical and physical existence. This is captured well by Mofokeng (1987: 38& 39) when he says:

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

Whereas Afro-pessimists make a case concerning black suffering, the suffering of blacks linked to Christ's own suffering on the cross, as pointed above reflects a change of lenses, which are geared to a different theology, dogma and creeds. The lenses are factoring in a different interpretation of even special revelation in Christ, central to it is the view of the cross, lynching and suffering and victory over suffering and death.

3.6 THE CRUCIFIED BODY AND THE BLACK BODY

It is significant to note that black faith discovered a different Jesus than that of the West, where the role of Jesus Christ in human history as the incarnate God. This is a role of particular significance, especially in considering special revelation and black people. As it lays the centre stage for revelatory content on the transcendental being made flesh, taking a narrative of the role of the revelation of God for the existential and historic *modus operandi* of the Christian faith. Edwards (1967: 189) had pointed to revelation found among other religions also. More

importantly, what God seeks to communicate in human history beyond the veil of metaphysics, ontology and existentialism is fully clothed in the Christ from Nazareth. It would seem as if there is a dialectic relationship that begins within Christ, between his humanity and divinity and death, but with focus on his humanity. Perhaps what is of absolute importance on Christ as the revelatory content of God's communication, is his existential relativity. This existential relativity places him at the epicentre of struggle, black human struggle in particular in the face of white devastation of the world. Such an assertion emerges from the biblical narratives concerning the life of Christ. Mofokeng (1987: 38) asserts:

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.

The theological observation that Mofokeng (1987: 38) points to reveal is that Christ seemed to be beyond just God and humanity. However, this is an engagement committed between God and human in God's revelation. This point is solidified by Mofokeng's assertion of the message of Christ about his God and human life. It implies that God requires justice in the dominant injustice and being human requires liberation from any form of injustice and dehumanisation process. This tally with Biko (1978: 104) when remarking on black theology:

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.

The Christ's encounter begins a different special revelation, particularly in the context of the black church and black theology. The black theology also has a powerful symbol of the dandling, bloody, used, bruised, and abused and murdered body of both blacks and Christ. It is as if black is taken in time to witness Golgotha, but with a Golgotha that is in their times. The

brutality suffered by the body of Christ is central to soteriology *Imago Dei* and revelation of God's love and justice. This is filled with God's love which is justice. Cone (1993: 4) asserts:

Theologically God's love is prior to the other themes. But in order to separate black reflections on love from a similar theme in white theology it is important to emphasize that love in black religious thought is usually linked with God's justice, liberation, and hope. God's love is made known through divine righteousness, liberating the poor for a new future. God's creation of all persons in the divine image bestows sacredness upon human beings and thus makes them the children of God. To violate any person's dignity is to transgress God's great law of love.

This love that Cone (1993: 4) speaks of is love that is not pacifism and sterility of resistance, but confrontation, a confrontation synonymous to Camus (1955: 4), a confrontation of the absurd, Camus asserted:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest— whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories—comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer. And if it is true, as Nietzsche claims, that a philosopher, to deserve our respect, must preach by example, you can appreciate the importance of that reply, for it will precede the definitive act. These are facts the heart can feel; yet they call for careful study before they become clear to the intellect.

In a black theological stance that Cone (1993: 1-4) notes, it points to Christ having died on the cross, willing-fully, is a confrontation to death. This is somewhat a philosophic suicide to answer the question of human life, which opens the board that would characterise black religious thought. That allows the revelation of God from an existential position, rather than the romance of transcendentalism of God, as noted by Biko's (1978: 104) God of the oppressed. For the death of Christ at the hands of the guilty Roman oppressors, with the puppet and bureaucratic Jews helps to solidify his purpose to be born to die for the world. Though the difference is that in Christ there is self-appointment for that task of atonement, while with blacks, it is imposed by white rule thus invoking an existential agony. This is noted by Cone (1993: 5) when referring to the strength of black faith. This existential agony is about a good God that allows whites to steal Africans from Africa and convert them to Christ. The particular pointing out of white and not God having stolen Africa is important for reflection. Hanna (1956: 225) discussing Camus and the Christian faith records:

Camus's estimate of the Christian faith is summed up most simply in his remark that "in its essence, Christianity (and this is its paradoxical greatness) is a doctrine of injustice. It is founded

on the sacrifice of the innocent and the acceptance of this sacrifice. This is to say that, to Camus's mind, Jesus of Nazareth was an innocent man unjustly killed; from no point of view can he rule out the fact of the injustice in this event. Hence, when Christians, viewing this event, accept it as sacrifice, that is when they accept it as right and necessary—they have denied the one undeniable truth in this event which is that it is horrible and unjust that an innocent man should be killed

What Hanna (1956: 225) notes on Camus is fundamental in understanding the revelation of God in black religious thought. Indeed, an innocent man has died at the hands of soldiers and bureaucratic religious leaders. Despite that, what is more fundamental is that in the black experience, blacks were expected to understand and rationalise that the innocent will suffer and die because Christ has suffered. It is here that one holds that despite the theology behind the death of Christ, Camus having being noted by Hanna (1956: 225) is correct by pointing the danger of acceptance of human suffering and the death of the innocent; acceptance of injustice. Europe and generally the white church cannot be like Christ or be suffering servant, because it is them who cause suffering and death of black, brown and coloured bodies. Cone (1993: 2) is correct in pointing out:

White theology is largely defined by its response to modern and post-modern societies of Europe and America, usually ignoring the contradictions of slavery and oppression in black life, black religious thought is the thinking of slaves and of marginalized blacks whose understanding of God was shaped by the contradictions that white theologians ignored and regarded as unworthy of serious theological reflection.

The black church can be unequivocally real discovery of the message of the Christian faith, in understanding first that Christ died, but rose from death. Secondly, he was crucified and did not crucify himself, hence this is similar to blacks who did not impose slavery, colonialism, imperialism and racism to themselves, but by whites. Cone (1993: 6) asserts:

Through the blood of slavery, blacks transcended the limitations of space and time. Jesus' time became their time, and they encountered the theological significance of Jesus' death: through the crucifixion, Jesus makes an unqualified identification with the poor and the helpless and takes their pain upon himself.

Cone (1993: 6) further asserts:

Jesus was not alone in his suffering. Blacks were not alone in their oppression in the United States. Jesus was with them! He was God's black slave who has come to put an end to

oppression. Herein lies the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. It means that the cross was not the end of God's drama of salvation.

This brings back the body of Christ and the black body that both are subjected to suffering. One has to point out that the resurrection of Christ is on its own a defiant act to death. Christ's body is the defiant reign of death on humanity, the fragility of mortality and the given temporality of human existence. Thus it is a rebellion to the status quo that human being must die, because the dead remain dead afterwards. Setiloane in Masoga (2012: 323) had pointed out the link of the living and the dead as important in African divinity. As having pointed out that blacks were expected to internalise the unjust death of Christ as their own datum. This is for their suffering, since their Christianity could not be the same as that of their "converters", as noted by (Cone 1986: 87). As such the humble, subtle and silent Christ up until the point of death cannot make blacks to be silent, Garrett (2000: 3) asserts;

African slaves brought their own African religions with them to the Americas, but the white slave masters, especially in English-speaking North America, did not permit them to practice it openly, since they noticed a connection between African religion and slave insurrections. Yet African elements survived, according to Cone, in music, dance, speech patterns and thought.

It is precisely the permanent vestiges of blackness and Africaness that gave a sense of sincerity to the ultimate conversion of an African. Further, it is the birth of the black church as the religion of the oppressed, a new Christian revelation of God, while the permanent thought pattern of resisting, blacks made the stories in the Bible come to be real and vivid images of God's dealing. Mofokeng (1987:41) confirms the reading of the Bible and the impact of biblical stories to the marginalised:

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.

The black body and the body of Christ are subject of God's revelation, suffering, resistance and victory. The theological premise in which 'Christian' salvation rest upon is fundamentally written in the body of Christ; scars and bruises. This is a position that is subject to Camus's critique of the Christian faith, noted by Hanna (1956: 225), as a celebration of a man's unjust

and innocent death. Anyway, the theological position in which blackness shares Christ's wound is when the body of Christ carries wounds of suffering. This is the very fossil of the existential and metaphysical victory of the body, which has been bathed in destruction. Established upon incarnation, one tends to agree with Camus in his critic of Christian metaphysics and his explanation of the incarnation, Camus (2007: 46) asserts:

The incarnation, that is to say, the meeting of the divine and flesh in the person of Jesus Christ; the extraordinary adventure of a God taking responsibility for the sin and the misery of man, the humility and the humiliations, are presented as so many symbols of Redemption.

It is at this point that the revelation of God becomes visible in human history; the black body has been subjected to humiliation and dehumanisation of the flesh and the metaphysics that is inculcated in incarnation. In a sense, black incarnated the servant that suffers and is victorious after suffering. The black church is opened to this realisation; Garret's (2000: 5) insight of black Christian records the address of Garnet (1843) to *Slaves of America*:

It is wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery, as it was for a man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors, when the bloody footprints of the first remorseless soul thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland... Liberty is a spirit sent out from God, and like its great Author, is no respecter of persons.

In black Christianity, Jesus's centrality is essential, since he is the peasant-king from Nazareth that is passionate, heals the sick and feeds the poor but in his innocence he finds himself hung on the cross (Cone 1993: 5). The difference of Western theological thought concerning the cross has been established by Cone (1993: 2) in pointing the white focus of theological experience and concern. However, it is in blackness that the body and the cross of Christ resurface to vindicate and authenticate faith of the oppressed. The oppressed are not amused by the hanging representation of the passion of Christ that is intrinsic in soteriological understanding and grasping revelation. The black body in bondage is the reflection of the open drama of salvation as noted by (Cone 1993: 6). The black church had to see Christ in ways that are also captured well by Camus' (2007: 48) need of understanding Christianity in its completeness and its meaning, especially the central part of Christ doctrine. Camus's (2007: 48) views parallel both the metaphysical of the faith and the discovery of the cross in the experience of the black church, Camus further (2007: 48) asserts:

Actually, we are not sufficiently aware that Christianity is centered around the person of Christ and around his death. We turn Jesus into an abstraction or a symbol. But the true Christians are

those who have realized the triumph of the martyred flesh. Jesus being fully human, the emphasis has been concentrated on his death, and one scarcely knows of a more physically horrible death. It is on certain Catalonian sculptures, on the broken hands and cracked joints that one must reflect in order to imagine the terrifying image of torture that Christianity has erected as a symbol

It suffices to point out that the conquest of colonialism and colonial Christianity does not interpret Christ humanely, but as transcendent God made of flesh. The experience of blacks under white supremacy theologically binds eyes fixed to guise at the body of Christ as his/her or their own. The body of Christ, particularly martyred flesh, gives the black church a mirror image that can be taken to be a historic and existential doxology suitable to dictate as a fundamental point of God's revelation. Cone (1993: 5) confirms this black Christian theological truth:

It is the cross of Jesus that attracted the most attention of black people. Oppressed blacks were moved by the Passion story because they too had been rejected, beaten, and shot without a chance to say a word in defence of their humanity. In Jesus's death poor blacks saw themselves, and they unleashed their imagination, describing what they felt and saw.

Cone (1993: 2) further adds:

Oh, they whipped him up the hill, and he never said a mumbalin' word, He just hung down his head and cried. They "nailed him to the cross", "pierced him in the side," and "the blood came twinkling down," but "he never said a mumbalin' word," "he just hung down his head and he died." The death of Jesus meant that he died on the cross for black slaves, His death was a symbol of their suffering, their trials and tribulations in an unfriendly world. Because black slaves knew of the significance of the pain and shame of Jesus' death on the cross, they found themselves by his side.

The God who had been pronounced dead in Europe could not find a resting place in the mind, souls and bodies of blacks. For even in worship a dead god could not enchant the African to be silent and docile to oppressive existence. This is a realisation that even after slavery, colonialism, dehumanisation which is best graphic in lynching, the focus on his (Christ) body becomes prime in the black encounter with the divine who is crucified. It is this different focus on the cross that enables finding authenticity in the African expression of the Christian and human experience. The Christian and human experience of blacks could not just be social,

economic and cultural construct, because there was a parallel existence that transcends normative social and ecclesiastical institutions and experience. The very focus on a body that is bruised and beaten is to look upon oneself. As such, the unjust and humiliating death of Christ is part of the revelation of God for black ecclesiology. This out of black ecclesiology confirms blacks and their existential and intellectual conversion to Christianity as noted by (West 1999: 62). This form of Christianity reveals a God who does not die and is not buried in their conversion. The black church becomes a theological renewal that has been long lost in Europe's vivid imagination, beliefs and doctrines.

One can even push it further by asserting that the forgetfulness of Western Christianity begins on a physiological level to the Christian faith which is the incarnation and bodily suffering of Christ. White sadistic acts of racism then reflect the climax of their "forgetfulness" or shift in focus as they come in contact with the black body. Farley (1997:457) asserts:

Race is the preeminent pleasure of our time. Whiteness is not color; it is a way of feeling in and about one's body. The black body is needed to fulfil this desire for race-pleasure. In our colorlined world, the white body is a form of desire and the black body is a form of pleasure.

The sadism of white racism to the black body and the theology of the cross of Christ serve as a hermeneutic. It is seeing white theology as historical, vague, romantic and evasive to reality, with a possible rendering and new reading of scripture, the Johannes Gospel of the incarnation, which is the cornerstone of revelation. This Gospel may be read as the word that was made flesh, since Jesus has been made flesh and blood—flesh that will be torn, humiliated, bruised by the whip of the Roman oppressors and murdered. The Gospel becomes new for black faith, especially the bodiliness of Christ. This Jesus' flesh and blood is a true makeup of the body that dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. This becomes a new reading in a context of theology, God's revelation and race, the aim of destroying the incarnate. The revelatory body is an indication of sadism and punishment which the oppressor imposes on their oppressed subjects. Blacks are accustomed to it in an anti-black world, Farley (1997: 463) rightly asserts:

The white identity is created and maintained by decorating black bodies with disdain, over and over again. The ritual scarification of Saturday morning TV negritude is the least of it. The image of the black is ubiquitous. White return and return and return again to this fetish in order to satisfy a self-created urge to be white. The satisfaction of this will-to-whiteness is a form of pleasure in and about one's body. It is a pleasure which is satisfied through the production,

circulation, and consumption of images of the not-white. The body is contested territory in the conflict over symbolic representation.

While Wiegman (1993: 446) recording on the subject of the *Anatomy of Lynching* asserts:

Lynching figures its victims as the culturally abject, monstrosities of excess whose limp and hanging bodies function as the specular assurance that the threat has not simply been averted, but thoroughly negated, dehumanised, and rendered incapable of return.

Wiegman is correct in stressing that the negating of the body and rendering of the body incapable of return is the very essence of lynching. This is similar to the crucifixion of Christ that was intended for him not to return. Though he did by his resurrection a subject of importance in black theology and the black church. What is fundamental is that punishment is shared by both Christ and blacks, especially when Christ and blacks seek a new ideal that will destroy the comfort of others, who by virtue of dialectical existence are the oppressors that destroy. In order to solidify this point, one can look into the context of the south during the emancipation of blacks after the Civil War and Reconstruction. Wiegman (1993: 452) asserts: “Emancipation represents the literal and symbolic loss of the security of the white patronym and an attendant displacement of the primacy of the white male.” He (1993: 451) also noted that:

lynching marks the excess of discourses of race and rights, serving as a chief mechanism for defining relations of power in the postwar years. For the emancipation of five million slaves was neither a widespread cultural recognition of black humanity nor the proud achievement of the democratic ethos. As the late nineteenth century’s turn towards the Ku Klux Klan and mob violence makes clear, the transformation from slavery to freedom was characterized by a rearticulation of cultural hierarchies in which terrorism provided the means for defining and securing the continuity of white supremacy.

It is un-dismissible that the black body is not just a body made of flesh, bones and blood which is under attack. However, it is those elements which is the body filled with ideas and its own possibilities, which are considered damnable to white supremacy. It would be correct to point out what was at stake in the colonial process. The theology of that age was to filter out blackness that is stubborn and defiant, even in conversion as it persists within oppression and its institutions. The persistence of black protest is a virtue which guarantees the strength of blackness at all times, West (1999: 101) points out:

The sheer absurdity of being a 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.

The context that Wiegman (1999: 101) has laid on lynching and the success that black would have achieved under emancipation solidifies this hatred and fear of the black body, since bureaucratic Jews feared the peasant Jesus, God in the flesh. This is fear that is metaphysical, ontological and existential in content, it is further sought to find and destroy through barbarism and savagery done to the black body, Wiegman (1993: 455) asserts:

Lynching emerges to reclaim and reassert the centrality of black corporeality, deterring the now theoretically possible move towards citizenry and disembodied abstraction. Through the lynching scenario, blackness is cast as a subversive (and most often sexual) threat, an incontrovertible chaos whose challenge to the economic and social coherency of the nation can be psychologically, if not wholly politically, averted by corporeal abjection and death. That lynching becomes during Reconstruction and its aftermath an increasingly routine response to black attempts at education, personal and communal government, suffrage, and other indicators of cultural inclusion and equality attests to its powerful disciplinary function.

Wiegman (1993: 455) further asserts:

As the most extreme deterritorialization of the body and its subjective boundaries, lynching guarantees the white mob's privilege of physical and psychic penetration, grants it a definitional authority over social, space, and embodies the vigilant and violent system of surveillance that underwrites late nineteenth and early twentieth-century negotiations over race and cultural power.

The psychic penetration is precisely the realm of ideas and black ontology embodied in the black body's quest for freedom and betterment. Theologically, the bruised Christ and his cruel suffering for ideas that form an ethical apocalypse and destruction of comfortable theology that avoids the depth of where free thought could lead one to death. This destruction is aimed at the bureaucratic leadership of Christ time, while being the same for blacks, evident even in the reconstruction. Cone (1993: 13) is correct when asserting:

But when the poor of the North American and Third World read the passion story of the cross, they do not view it as a theological idea but as God's suffering solidarity with the victims of the world. Jesus' cross is God's solidarity with the poor, experiencing their pain and suffering.

This point of the bodily suffering of blacks and of Christ begins a new theological premise and metaphysics which shall be discussed later. However, what is of importance is that as in Galilee, the black believers encounter Christ in bodily form as themselves. Thus sharing in his being as well as their own content of God's special revelation, absolute in Christ who then becomes Christ that is absolute in black's comprehension and formulation of special revelation rooted in both their human experiences. Furthermore, the identity and the humanity of blacks is that of God and is an authentic biblical revelation which should be considered in theological reflection. Thus the change of theology is necessary when conceiving on the black body and Christ'. Cone (1993: 13) is correct in positing even a change of language as "God is black" and "Jesus is the Oppressed One", Cone (1993: 13) also asserts:

Our rejection of European metaphysical speculations and our acceptance of an apparently crude anthropomorphic way of speaking of God are black theologians' way of concretizing Paul's saying that ". God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even the things that are not, to bring together to nothing the things that are" (I Cor. 1:27-28 RSV).

Further Cone (1993: 13) adds:

If it is the condition that, the suffering of God is revealed in the suffering of the oppressed, then it informs that theology cannot achieve its Christian identity without a critical-systematic reflection upon the history and culture of the victims of oppression. God is revealed in the suffering condition of his people. When this theological insight impressed itself upon human consciousness, then black theologians began to realize that black people and black theologians have been under-educated. In fact, European and North American theologians have stifled the indigenous development of the theological perspectives of blacks by teaching us that our own cultural traditions are not appropriate sources for an interpretation of the Christian gospel. Europeans and white North Americans taught US that the western theological tradition as defined by Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin and Schleiermacher is the essential source for a knowledge of the Christian past. But when black theologians began to concentrate on black culture and history, we realized that our own historical and cultural traditions are far more

important for an analysis of the gospel in the struggle of freedom than are the western traditions which participated in our enslavement.

The metaphysics and transcendental conception of God requires God to die existentially as human being exists in existential context. This is the same context in which God is love, justice truth and liberation. However, if the speculative and metaphysical God of “theology” cannot respond, then God is good as dead and incapable of rendering a revelation, Cone (12) is correct when asserting:

But it has been the actual suffering of the oppressed in black and other Third World communities that has been in our reflections on the cross of Jesus Christ. As Gustavo Gutierrez has said: "We cannot speak of the death of Jesus until we speak of the real death of people.

For in the deaths of the poor of the world is found in the suffering and even the death of God. One contends that the death of God here could be viewed within the premise of victimisation and victory between the reign of terror over the oppressed. Also, it can be the theological fatalistic death of God’s immanence, enacted on the existential plain for God incapability to respond. This could be especially when one considers the seriousness of God’s revelation, whether as special or general. The body as part of nature and its natural grasp of enigma and the divine. Additionally, the body for soteriology gives an insight for general and special revelation that can be linked both to the body, the body of humans and the God (Col. 3:9).

3.7 A DIFFERENT METAPHYSICS

The black experience has led to a new development in theological reflection that considers being black in a world that fundamentally placed itself to be at odds with blackness and blacks being human and creatures of God; who is as equipped and adequate enough as a creature of God to access and grasp God’s revelation. This revelation places emphasis on humanity and confirms black humanity as central to the revelation of God. Myers (1987: 883) has pointed the deliberate act of God’s revelation to humanity, while on the other side Martin (1964: 698) pointed out that revelation is God’s will for humanity. However, more fundamentally is what Dulles (1977: 51) noted on revelation being God communication with intelligent creatures or beings. These points concerning human intelligence for God's points to a different change of lenses of seeing and reflection and validates blacks as receptors and valid doctrinal interpreters of God’s revelation. However, what is at hand is the realisation of what white supremacy has done to the black body, soul and heart accompanied by a dead god. Tshaka (2012:171) argues

that black people flight from black-self due to internalised oppression. This point is solidified by Fanon (1963: 169-170) that, the colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, physiology, biology and its own unhappiness, which is its very essence. If one could use an analogy emanating from Fanon, one can conceive of a mother that refuses even within the gestation process in the womb for the child she bears to grow, to have a sense or personality and be independent from the (colonial) mother. In order to push it even further to the level of oppression, the child endowed within the womb is preparatory of the establishment of power relation between this mother and child. What Tshaka (2012: 171) points out is that this internalised oppression resulting in the flight from the black self, makes the child to be visible to be oppressed. However, it grants self-authenticity as invisible for the child in the white world, the climax being that the child born with internalised oppression and the imposed “motherly” oppression finds an identity that requires now subtler denouncement of the original identity. West (1999: 1010) in referring to the importance of being black at the existential level argued:

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.

This links with Tshaka’s (2012:171) explanation of the flight of the black self that is born under such horrific conditions, he asserts:

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.

These points are important in understanding the black body, the religion of the oppressed and a need for a different metaphysics that is free from the romantic transcendental God, rather, a metaphysics that is firmly rooted in materiality, blackness and the existential revelation of God. It is important to consider Wyman (1998: 40) speaking on religion and the role of imagination that is fundamental in religions. Wyman’s (1998: 40) reference to Kaufman points to a source of origin for all religion and asserting that if revelation is the disclosure of the transcendental

Christian theology, then revelation should also learn to do theology without the revelation of this transcendental being, but not without history. This position is not fully true for blacks, but acts as an approximate to truth for blacks, since blacks under the notion of the black church should learn to do a theology without a white transcendental being as part of “revelation”. Biko (1978: 64-65) sets the platform for this metaphysics, as he points out that God is not in the business of ascending and descending to solve human problems on earth, thus in some sense dismissing theodicy for blacks who are oppressed by whites and not God. This position places God at the centre of the black experience, history and collapses the myth of white perennial power, the black docility and sterility on the part of blacks. Lastly, this happens in their given opium for definitions of spirituality or a language for theology or for a mode of doing theology, Farley (1997: 466) asserts:

James Baldwin explains that the fantasy of race must be critically examined: For, it troubles don't last always, as the preacher tells us, neither does power, and it is on the fact or the hope the myth of power that that identity which calls itself White has always seemed to depend. That strength is produced by the colorline, by the division of the worthy from the unworthy on the basis of race. A series of major and minor aggressions, and their attendant pleasures and humiliations, which are sometimes direct and sometimes voyeuristic, produce this division.

A new Christian metaphysics is essential and can only have black people and people of colour, the oppressed. That has functioned under a guise of metaphysics and a philosophy of religion, beyond transcendence, rather an act of castrating material reality to blacks and cutting of an umbilical cord of land and the African, while “white theology” in all its manifestations as part of white supremacy attempted in thought and praxis to be an eschatology to black tangible experience, intellect and spirituality. Rhodes (1991: 2) asserted:

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 moment. Black theological thought should consider metaphysics and a theology rooted in justice, black rage, dispossession and an active God. It should also envisage a rebellious child who rejects the colonial mother and rejects even the very womb that makes him/her part of existence Fanon (1963: 169-170) Cone (1993: 3) has pointed out that the theological themes of judgement are fundamental to black oppression

and in their deliverance--deliverance that only results in the punishment of the wicked which are white. Cone (1993: 3) further asserts:

In the religion of African slaves, God's justice was identical with the punishment of the oppressors, and divine liberation was synonymous with the deliverance of the oppressed from the bondage of slavery - if not now then in the not yet. Because whites continued to prosper materially as they increased their victimization of African-Americans, black religious thought spoke more often of the later than the "sooner".

The transcendental romantic character of God typical of white theology and the white ecclesia has to be denounced by an understanding of a God that is existentially involved. Furthermore with God who validates his transcendence and immanence in existential contexts, thus creating the centrality of existence and God's love and revelation for black humanity. Cone (1993: 3-4) is correct in arguing:

The themes of justice and liberation are closely related to the idea of hope. The God who establishes the right and puts down the wrong is the sole basis of the hope that the suffering of the victims will be eliminated. Although African slaves used the term heaven to describe their experience of hope, its primary meaning for them must not be reduced to the "pie-in-the-sky" other-worldly affirmation that often characterized white evangelical Protestantism. The idea of heaven was the means by which slaves affirmed their humanity in a world that did not recognize them as human beings. It was their way of saying that they were made for freedom and not slavery.

What Cone (1993: 3-4) points to is an important reflection on this new metaphysics that expects justice on both parts of earth and in heaven. One would appeal to the *Lord's Prayer* in which Jesus taught his disciples, the words "thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven". The prayer becomes a linear position and a thread of theological expectation, experience and reality that is knitted in the dialectical continuum (i.e. between the world and heaven). Therefore, with both worlds as an equilibrium that is willed by one will and that is the will of the God of the oppressed. Perhaps failure of justice to reign on the lives of blacks from the back drop of the black experience and the black diaspora has resulted in the signs of the need of this metaphysics, as what Barnes (2013: 177) observed about the current state of the black church, he 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.

Martin et al (2011:4) also argued:

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.

The outlook of modern black churches are a reflection of how the deliverance of blacks have been left hanging, while positive theological insights emerge also with the need for financial stability. In this regard, prosperity gospel’s lack of social responsibility does not sort out a problematic system of a world that is anti-black. Cone (1993: 14) asserts:

People are not poor by divine decree or by historical accident. They are made poor by the rich and powerful few. This means that to do black liberation theology, one must make a commitment, an option for the poor and against those who are responsible for their poverty.

What is fundamental for the revelation of God and this new interpretation of metaphysics (i.e. that is informed by the black experience) is the body of Christ that finds meaning and solidarity in the black body beyond earth. The body that is both belonging to God and the African, a body that is unjustly and in racist rage is “strangely” subjected to destruction by oppression. Injustice to the certain extent is at the heart of soteriology and a new metaphysics. Cone (2011: 2) asserts:

The paradox of a crucified savior lies at the heart of the Christian story. That paradox was particularly evident in the first century when crucifixion was recognized as the particular form of execution reserved by the Roman Empire for insurrectionists and rebels. It was a public spectacle accompanied by torture and shame—one of the most humiliating and painful deaths ever devised by human beings. That Jesus died this way required special explanation.

Cone (2011: 2) also asserts that the cross became the illogical that Paul spoke of in the word of the cross, being foolishness to the intellect. This, guarantees that the last shall be the first.

Cone (2011: 2) asserts:

That God could make a way out of no way in Jesus’ cross was truly absurd to the intellect, yet profoundly real in the souls of black folk. Enslaved blacks who first heard the gospel message seized on the power of the cross. Christ crucified manifested God’s loving and liberating presence *in* the contradictions of black life—that transcendent presence in the lives of black Christians that empowered them to believe that *ultimately*, in God’s eschatological future, they

would not be defeated by the troubles of this world, no matter how great and painful their suffering.

The point of victory in eschatology is first to be seen not as escapism of the world, but an eschatology that takes cognisance of overthrowing unjust rulers and their existential and historic principalities of darkness. It is important to point out that the possible victory of blacks had been anticipated by whites, as noted by Isichei (1995: 24) in reference to the Apartheid state and church. As such, the metaphysics that takes it important to focus on the physical and visibility of Christ's suffering is not an expression of the world to come, but that of the present which comes with a new knowledge of God, Cone (2011: 2) asserted:

There was no place for the proud and the mighty, for people who think that God called them to rule over others. The cross was God's critique of power—white power—with powerless love, snatching victory out of defeat.

The black body which at best finds the reflection of white amazement in lynching points to a planned destruction that never finds fulfilment. Cone (2012: 3) asserts:

The lynching tree is the most potent symbol of the trouble nobody knows that blacks have seen but do not talk about because the pain of remembering—visions of black bodies dangling from southern trees, surrounded by jeering white mobs—is almost too excruciating to recall. In that era, the lynching tree joined the cross as the most emotionally charged symbols in the African American community— symbols that represented both death and the promise of redemption, judgment and the offer of mercy, suffering and the power of hope. Both the cross and the lynching tree represented the worst in human beings and at the same time “an unquenchable ontological thirst” for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning.

The black body and Christ fulfil the ontological validity of blackness and the reality that destruction is the opposite for those seeking freedom. One can argue that it is within the black experience that Christ's message is realised. The special revelation of God based on the flesh and word incarnate dialectical communion with all of that which is known and unknown. A signalling point between the apocalyptic and eschatological war, between the sons of darkness (colonisers) and the sons of light, which the *Books of Maccabees*, *Dead Sea Scrolls* and the Bible speak of in reference to God being revealed in the apocalypse, Thurman (1939: 515) in discussing the religious ideas of the Negro spirituals points out:

It must never be forgotten that the slave was a man without a home. He had been snatched from his familiar place and, under the most cruel and inhuman conditions, transported thousands of

miles away into a new world. His primary social grouping had been destroyed, so that it was not possible for him to perpetuate his own tongue. He must employ a new language— not a different dialect of his native African— but a new language. Slavery stripped the African to the literal substance of himself, depriving him of those props on which men commonly depend— language, custom, and social solidarity. In addition to all of this he was a slave; without freedom of movement or of person.

Thurman (1939: 515) further points out that the Christian conversion of the Negro was received from the master; it was the master's religion that sought to make the African the traditional Christian. It is at this point that one should consider what is meant by a traditional Christian. Traditional Christian means the accepted norm of who and what God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are. It is therefore precisely at this point that this traditional Christian's view is what meant and resulted in the death of God in Europe. As Christianity meant power to the powerful and dominion to rulers, it was this interpretation of Christianity that trapped Christianity in metaphysical transcendence of a motionless and pacifist God. Now the traditional Christian was not an authentic Christian, but a mirror image of the convertor. Mugambi (1989: 8) is correct when asserting the African conversion: "The practical objective was to turn the prospect convert into replicas of the missionary." Thurman (1939: 515) asserts:

It was a fateful moment in the life of the new world when the African slave was brought face to face with the Christian religion. It may be that then, as now, this black minority was called upon to redeem a religion that the master and his posterity disgraced in their midst. Be that as it may the fact remains— the slaves became Christians.

These points are important in grasping this new Christian metaphysics that emerges at the conversion of the African in Africa. It was a revelation of God to blacks on white supremacy, and Boesak (2004: 9) had argued:

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.

The revelation of God to blacks was seen by black not only redeeming themselves, but in the process redeeming Christianity and its metaphysics to its original sense. Pheko (1982: 75) pointed out the value of the Gospel (What the Gospel has done to Africa) and what the message of Christ is able to achieve in changing the world. The slave preacher was the instrument

presenting a new metaphysics that is built on justice and hope, while in a sense endowing the African with a yet subtle but strong message about them and God. That message could on the part of the Negro remind them in suffering or in revolt that they are God's property, Thurman (1939: 515-516) asserts:

To the old Negro 'preacher of yesterday fell the responsibility of confirming his people in their adopted faith and of interpreting its essential meanings. All during the week the slaves were without validation, without the possession of any rights that had to be respected. But when they came to church the old minister, illiterate, superstitious perhaps, often misinformed and misguided, spoke one truth which sprang full grown out of the heart of God. "You," he said, "are not slaves, not niggers— you are God's chillun." Many tired, weary Negroes through all the hard days caught a new hold on life, found a new source of strength welling up in them and their spirits were uplifted and inspired by the liquid words falling from the ignorant man's lips. -It is the ultimate truth about human life, says religion, and it was the projecting of this truth into the heart of Negro life that has made it impossible for all the brutality and woe of their environment to destroy them. You cannot destroy the soul and the life of a people who believe that!

It is important to link this with the body of Christ, as a subject of revelation that includes his birth, ministry, death and resurrection; all these unveil in the black experience, a new metaphysics from the black experience. The importance of this is that the black body produces the visibility of Christ and denounces his abstract/metaphysical mystification. This mystification by the Western theologies is guided by doctrines of God and revelation. Maimela (2005: 34) is correct in asserting:

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.

Such insights make Christ's embodying a human body real Part of the historical evidence of the human-God encounter and confirms, soteriologically and existentially God's love, which is part of transcendence and God's immanence, Thurman (1939: 521) asserts:

In the Spirituals the death of Jesus took on a deep and personal poignancy. It was not merely the death of a man or a God but there was a quality of identification in experience that continues to burn its way deep into the heart even of the most unemotional. The suffering of Jesus on the cross was something more. He suffered, he died but not alone— they were with him. They knew what he suffered; it was a cry of the heart that found a response— and an echo in their own woes. They entered into the fellowship of his suffering. There was something universal in his

suffering, something that reached through all the levels of society and encompassed in its sweep the entire human race.

It is significant to note that the spiritual strivings, suffering and wounds of blacks in some theological sense can be said to have been existential incense that reached the very face of the Christian God. In order to consider the Christian metaphysics of the West translated into the suffering of Christ, from the premise of prophecy and its purpose and not the act (Camus). That is the ambience for prophecy to come through and provides black faith and God's revelation as authentic. The hope, which is central to the message of Christ, has been unveiled and becomes some form of Pandora Box to those who have used this faith to dominate 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.

The inhumane, sadistic racist rage, existential absurdity, dehumanisation and oppression of blacks through the body first make the scars and wounds of Christ important. This oppression makes a shared experience to have moved God to respond to struggle from the cross to the modern world. What is essential is that Christ represents a new humanity and thus a new definition of metaphysics, rooted in being human rather than divine, Migliore (1991:175) correctly 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.

This outlook then evidently changes the face of Christianity, something definite in black Christianity and black theological thought, Maimela (2005: 34) 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.

What Maimela means is of importance for black theology, as it becomes a revival and an act out of death or of defeating death. This is a resurrection of God and God's special revelation in Christ expressed in full bodiliness of the divine.

3.7.1 Resurrection and revelation

The event of the resurrection is fundamental in understanding a new metaphysics and the completion of God's revelation in Christ. This is a revelation that is rooted in blackness, especially in the locus of existential context. It is important to note that metaphysics from Greek means after physicality, *meta*, being the preposition that reflects both antecedence and precedence of physicality. This definition fits in well with the paradigm of black thought, reason being that those blacks have been oppressed because of their blackness. Then there is a sudden move to colourlessness and democracy that seems to evade the issue of blacks, primarily because the world is anti-black. What should be a pattern or consequence for black oppression, (i.e. built around physiological and ontological oppression entailed and experienced in the black body) is what then becomes of blacks in this world, Biko (1978: 55) 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.

Fanon (1963: 175) pointed the danger of the black body in assimilating itself into the system that has oppressed it. This is an assimilation that results for the oppressed into raceless-ness, a race of angels, common humanity and colourlessness. All this is not real in a world that has proven to blacks of being racist. One has pointed that if the black body aligns itself with the same episteme that has destroyed it, then blacks resurrect to remain in a grave and cannot bear witness of the might of Christ's victory over death. However, what is of significance is that soteriology for blacks necessitates this current body, which is in danger as long as it still wants to identify with this world, white ecclesia, doxology and interpretation of doctrines. There is validity in the Afro-pessimistic stance on blackness and blackness being a fundamental point of differing with the world at large, Lloyd (2016: 8) says:

Blackness is not like other differences. It is not like other racial or ethnic differences nor is it like the differences of gender, sexuality, or disability. Second, blackness does not assimilate and fade away. Integration, at least as conventionally understood, is impossible. Third, blackness is an ontological condition. It names the condition faced by a person for whom the very possibility of being is foreclosed. Fourth and finally, blackness is woven deeply into the fabric of Western metaphysics. In other words, the oppression of blacks may be an empirical condition, but it is also much deeper, and so addressing that oppression requires much more than reducing present suffering. Altogether, Afro pessimism is so labelled because it points to the depth and gravity of black oppression and it suggests that the many efforts at ameliorating that oppression over the years, and decades, have been in vain.

The resurrection of Christ and the reading of the biblical text within black Christian spirituality expressed in the black church open new possibilities. These possibilities are unheard of in theology that has been based and shaped on transcendence and immateriality. Black Christianity has been described by Maluleke (2004: 184) as: “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.” Maluleke (2004: 184) further asserted:

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—itself seldom probed—is basic to almost all hues of black and African theologies.

This premise should be cognisant of the need to focus on the physical body of Christ and also on understanding heaven and earth as intrinsically linked. Lloyd (2016: 4) points to the linkage common in aspirations as he added;

The hope expressed in slave stories and songs can certainly be inspirational, what seems most useful for theological reflection is the clarity such expressions can bring regarding the relationship between this-worldly hope and other-worldly hope. It is tempting to understand the other-worldly hope expressed as exoteric and the-worldly hope expressed as esoteric, protected from broader view because of the looming threat of racial violence.

The focus on the body should be the continuum datum for black Christian hope, a hope that should seek not a dimensional escape from this world, but rather see justice as the revelation of God that grants a place in the world for black humanity. While bringing into remembrance the physical and ontological survival of blacks under years of oppression, thus making the black body physiologically and ontologically rooted in Christ’s resurrection. This is validating

the biblical text account of the encounter of Christ at Emmaus with his disciples, to which he shows his wounds, scars and piercings. Therefore, this encounter is validating a place for the dehumanised body and soul on earth, despite lingering effects of death. The wounds on the body of Christ are a haunting reflection of death on the cross, an indication of the climax of love on the cross, but simultaneously a symbol of being defiant to death by resurrecting from the dead. This analysis can become a strong motif as somehow proposed by Garvey, Mazucci (2005: 69) asserts:

Garvey's Christian beliefs and political philosophy were inextricable. He firmly believed that with faith in one God, black people would "rise up with their risen Lord and take a firm hold of their heritage as made in God's image, expressed in the soil of Africa, and act courageously to become fully human.

The black church in such a stance becomes the logical redemption of Christianity, as noted by (Thurman 1939: 515). It also becomes a point of witness of Christ's resurrection and places blacks within the black church as receptors of God's revelation. The revelation of God in such a condition is one that holds whites guilty, whites who have created for themselves a false version of Christian belief. That sees blacks and the symbol of the black body as not fit for an authentic human existence, while similarly in the current position, blacks still do not feature as colourlessness that maintains the white structural paradigm of a created and perennial black invisibility to which Gibson (2003:22 & 24) pointed out to, when Africans are seen as embodiments of evil, thus a stimulus to the denial of black human recognition. These points are fundamental in understanding that representation of blacks is still the same. Gibson (2005: 96) solidified such a reality when he noted that in the multi-cultural South Africa, there is denial of the fact that 90 percent of the poor are black. The crux that Gibson (2005: 96) notes rest on the point that

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.

The notion of a black church becomes the epicentre for the declaration that the body of the risen Lord could eat and drink things of this world. Its sub-atomic structure that emerged from the defiant and rebellious act towards death, namely resurrection and is not suitable for earth. The same logic should then apply for blacks, when they particularly seek freedom, justice and righteous judgment. That can only become real if there is a fundamental ontological, spiritual,

political and cultural separation of the visions and aspirations of black in this world of anti-blackness. As such, decolonialisation becomes the ascension and a paradigm shifts from white salvation, blind faith and docility as a tenet of being Christ-like or the revealed God. Fanon (1963: 28) asserts:

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

In this new metaphysics and doctrine of revelation that has descended transcendental God bearing wounds beyond the grave and earth; the marks on his body is the arena of the immortal, as seen in John's (the Book of Revelation) apocalypses. John's vision in heaven is a mortal indication that even beyond the veil of the metaphysical level; he still sides with the poor till he is revealed again in the Paraousia. As a result, the masses will know him in his Paraousia, with his marks on his body. This is a shared history of attack on black bodies by white racism, hence this body is an instrument for both meditation and for God's revelation, whether it is considered as an *ecclesia* or not. This is a biological sphere of existence or human body is central for black visibility. Christ is siding with the oppressed and authenticates a coming judgement and justice against the workers of iniquity. These points are to be considered in Christian theology as changes for blacks and the entire doctrine of revelation and its links with the visions of Christ in the apocalypse and the realm of metaphysics. Masoga (2012: 323) gives validity to this when discussing Setiloane's views of African divinity, theology and authentic Christian revelation, Setiloane (2012: 323) asserts:

According to Setiloane there is a need to have a comprehensive understanding of divinity in African Theology encompassing all – the *living* and the *dead*. In this regard, Setiloane attempted to develop what he called the "African Divinity discourse" encompassing areas of life such as ethics and morality in secular contexts, family life, and civil authority, "riches and poverties" and the land question, crime, leadership styles, the functioning of the corporate sector in terms of *ubuntu* and bio-centric ethics.

Masoga (2012: 323) indicates that, African theology is defined by Setiloane as an attempt to understand the relationship of God in Christ, to the experience of the African sense-making.

This is a challenge to the normally accepted, so-called ecumenical theology, which clouds the issue of Christian revelation. It is in fact an understanding therefore through the Western cultural world-view over the years, the understanding which is now imposed, by the claim of Christian orthodoxy, wherever the Christian message is welcome and accepted.

These points place a link between general revelation or monotheistic natural theology and special revelation. Thus pressing that both general and special revelation, for black or Africans is inextricable for a doctrine of revelation. That maintains the link between divinity, expressed as heaven and earth, a new heaven and earth, life and death. With the black church serving as a symbol of a New Jerusalem or Zion that preserves, loves and offers its doxology to the God of the oppressed. The God who is known for particular important in revelation through dualship of generality and speciality accomplished in bodiliness.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The chapter has attempted to suggest that the black church is a church born in meditative state to find the self and God's revelation, linking both the existential with the transcendental or metaphysical being. This position reveals that the God conceived by the lenses of the black experience should force a change in a theological discourse on the revelation of God. This approach has been fundamental for the subject of special revelation that does not see Christ's incarnation as simply another case of metaphysical reign on earth. Rather sees the humanity of Christ as linked with the black body, which suffers and links between their experience of Christ and theirs. The chapter contends that even in the realms of the metaphysical, for example Christ sees in the book of the *Apocalypse* with the wounds and scars as a reflection of the solidarity that the crucified shares with those on earth. The wounds are classical markers of knowing him and identifying him thus the link between transcendence and the metaphysical is precisely the content of God's revelation.

CHAPTER 4

BLACK INVISIBILITY AND THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays the basis for the question of invisibility as applicable to black people under the controlled cartel of existence by white supremacy. This is the conveyor belt portioning the standards and mode for being human, to be a visible and accepted creature of God. This invisibility carries on as part of the theological sphere that proclaims the hiddenness and invisibility of God as a symbol of transcendence, a position that the Western church has found fundamental in the seeing of the Son. Malone (2007: 311) brings the Old Testament as a suggestion of the visibility of God versus the invisibility of God of the New Testament and the church of the West. Malone (2007: 311) argues:

Much modern theology and Christology is built on the notion that God is invisible. God is incorporeal spirit (John 4:24) and 'no one has ever seen God' (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). God is 'invisible' (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27), 'whom no one has seen or is able to see' (1 Tim. 6:16). Jesus clarifies that such verses are particularly concerned with the Father (John 6:46). These negative statements about God's visibility are complemented by those passages which speak more positively about the Son as the image or exclusive representative of the Father.

Malone brings also in the argument the foundation of Western theology, its abstractness as a tool of analysis and discussing metaphysics or things of divinity, as such, this leads Western theology to ignore and neglect Old Testament's literal visions of God. Hence. These visions are both ontologically and physiologically located. God's transcendence in the New Testament and Western theology supports God's hiddenness, which is laid as the very reason for a need of revelation or an encounter with God, resulting in the content of Western theology's general and special revelation. Western interpreters of the Bible have found the locus of God's existence as knitted deeply in the concepts of invisibility and incomprehension. The same logic is the very base even in the conceptions of general revelation supported in the Old Testament, which seeks to discern God's existence through reason and intellect. At least Christian theology maintains an abstract theology and the idea of God even drawn from nature, though it is necessary to assert that; this hiddenness and invisibility of God could be redeemed from classical theological concepts. These concepts comprising primarily of lofty metaphysical idealism of a God who is said to rule on high with power, however, this God cannot be in

mortal substance and essence and He cannot even be interpreted in the existential context as noted by Percy B. Shelly (1813) in *Necessity of atheism* and the God of theologians who has no visibility in the community. It is possible in light of black experience that this is a God who does not share in commune with His creation even in the ambience of nature and is thus a God who is an exercise of thoughts and ideas. This is a contrast to divine awe and experience may be a voyage that will lead us to ideas being God.

Furthermore, the chapter seeks to point out the defying outlook to God's invisibility, the clash of histories and the context in the chapter of human civilisation, hence this results to blacks assuming the existence of God in invisibility. This is a cornerstone of invisibility that is marked and mingled in the colonial express, with the creation of black invisibility by white supremacy and a God who does not respond. This is God who stands known by white missionaries on behalf of their Christian subjects. The invisibility of black is the attempt of aberration of their human existence. The modern experience of blacks seems to portray blacks as existing with a questioned human existence, experience, substance and essence. Biko (1998:43) captures this reality as recorded in *Biko in Bizos*, where he speaks of the ideological basis of black consciousness, he argues:

The Black man is a defeated being who finds it very difficult to lift himself up by his bootstraps. He is alienated; he is made to live all the time concerned with matters of existence, concerned with tomorrow. Now we felt that we must attempt to defeat and break this kind of attitude and instil once more a sense of dignity within the Black man.

The position that Biko points to is that of existence and the ontological, primarily for black people. This is because of alienation that makes invisibility and inferiority as instilled and accepted essences. In this regard, there is a lot shared by the oppressed of the world, who have shared death with God, as such, the meditation of blacks does not seek to transcend the self for a high plain of consciousness, tranquillity and peace. This meditation wrestles with pain staking questions of existence both in faith, visibility and in hope, as well as their constant wrestle with despair and pessimism. This despair and pessimism may also in theological hindsight become a base for a possible urgent encounter of the divine or God's revelation. This pessimism may further be the encounter with the divine who manifests consciousness. This is even within the confines of created racial limitations in which blacks are expected to exist in. These racial creations see the physiological importance of blacks as labour, with a deep seated outlook of white supremacy. This white supremacy is in need for ecclesiastical and theological process,

having being accompanied by the eradication of ontological substance. It could also be accompanied by name branding of blacks into approximation of tenets and essence denied in black “bestiality”, as noted by (Fanon¹³ 1963: 168). Fanon noted what whites and the invisible God have sought to do by “civilizing” blacks. Mugambi (1989:8) pointed out the interest of colonial Christianity to “pagan”. At the core of this paradigm, is the notion of a black church and black theology, which have a shared invisibility between God and blacks, the former descriptive of theological “contemplation” and reflection about God as the transcendental abstract. Also in line with colonialism and white supremacy is the utmost need for God to be invisible to the heathens. In that regard, the subject may be heaven bound when white enterprise household in the land of slave, captives and natives. God’s invisibility is particularly relevant to those needed in the whites' ecclesia and benevolence in civilising and Christianising the heathens. This ties with Malone’s (2007: 311-329) critic of the New Testament in interpretation and theology of invisibility or being in invisibility, before time of God that ends up for the Western theology undermine God being in the flesh in the New Testament.

In a sense, there is disjuncture for those who were not saved by the Christian gospel. God’s disclosure and communication in the incarnate of Christ as the classical event of the special revelation is rather consumed by the cross, the gospel and the physicality of God in Christ, as transcended by the expounded “orthodox” view of Christ, which is being God’s nature as opposed to God being made human in Christ. The humanity of Christ is an event that is of profound importance historically, ontologically even if it was momentarily minute. The significance is that it fosters a communion between God and humanity that is opposed to alienation between God and nature and humanity. The incarnate other than being the coming of God into earth is a direct soteriological confrontation with the human condition. God possessed human ontology, the question of being, the experience of being in the groans and agonies of human existence. It is of significance to assert that white supremacy has been able to be maintained through alienation in blacks themselves. The alienation of blacks in history and political structures are imposed and are a perennial external experience in a racist society. Biko (1978:111) pointed out that alienation of blacks is an attachment of all good things, whereas, whiteness being the bar line for human existence and visibility. Thus there is a disjuncture in their self-existence and a world within themselves as black people emerges. The

¹³Fanon (1963: 168) speaks of bestiality that has been allocated to blackness because of white superiority and the humanity ascribed to whiteness.

concept of the world within themselves rooted in namelessness is both positive and negative. In that regard, if it's the latter it remains a position of despair because of seeking approval to exist and being a visible creature of a God who shares in visibility. While it becomes positive it contends for power for the powerless, nameless and the hopeless. It would then assume its own existence and essentiality as mode of expression, mode of being, expressing the self and the rejection of the world. This is where blacks are objects because of their ontological stance in a Western metaphysics that has been noted by Lloyd (N/D: 8), which results in their invisibility. It is at this point that the role of the black church becomes fundamental as a world within itself. The black church is found in invisibility and namelessness as a point that has been noted by (West 1999: 101).

It is important to mention that the invisibility of blacks and the invisibility of God ranges. It is a human and a divine nucleus for the true image of both God and blacks; ecclesiastically, ontologically and for human and divine experience. If theological pendulums can swing more appropriately at the side of the oppressed, then the oppressed have their own theology other than the voices of Western theology that have bombarded reason then, as noted by (Cone 2004:). It stands to reason that the concepts, dialect and mean of thoughts about God, humanity, the world and existence will change. For instance, Haar (2009: 1) has pointed out concerning African religion, which is the backbone of an African and black church:

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.

The image of an invisible world inhabited by spirits and entities can affect the material links, the divine or spiritual experience with the real. For the spirit world is perceived and accepted as real, because it manifests its presence and realness of the material world. Masoga (2012: 327) also records Setiloane on *African theology and religions*, as that which is encompassing of life and death, sacred and secular, God and human. Masoga (2012: 327) asserts:

From *African Traditional Religion*, declares Setiloane, African Theology views the human being *umuntu-motho*, as dynamic. The human is *force vitale* (Tempels); as much possessing *seriti-isithunzi*, a magnetic energy, which makes it an entity in “vital participation” (Mulango) along with similar entities, which may be human or not. That this human vital force, *seriti-*

isithunzi, is derived from the all-pervasive, original, determining Vital Force, Modimo, the Source of Being, accounts for human indestructibility and therefore, continuation in vital participation as Ancestors after corporeal death. This continued life of the human after death is not for its own sake, but for the continued sustenance of the physically living as well as for ethical-moral purposes of ensuring righteous dealing between humans as well as between humans and other beings in nature, animate as well as inanimate.

The importance of what both Masoga (2012: 327) and Haar (2009: 1) point is that an African way of thinking on Christian concepts should be freed from the cultural heritage of the West and colonial Christianity. That is cushioned and tailored in Christian views that are not really Christian. However, this influences the Christian soul and expression taking a form of being seen as Christianity. The African eye and voice can see things and Christian beliefs in their own way and cultural intellect. The discourse of invisibility, the visibility of the material world populated also by spirits, human life and death, changes the face of Christianity. Masoga (2012: 327) has pointed out that even Setiloane had suspicion of what was termed Christianity, which for Setiloane resulted in the loss of other dimensions of Christianity, Masoga (2012: 326) records;

Loss to Western Christianity, Setiloane, ascribed it to Greek and Roman philosophical influences on Christian thought development over centuries. As he argues, these influences were already seen at work in the biblical material, e.g. how much was Paul influenced by the Stoa or how much of Gnosticism is detectable in the Johannine writings, and so forth? In this regard, Setiloane points out that, over the ages, as a result of this influence, Christianity and Christian theology have emphasised *concept*, the cerebral acceptance more than the pragmatic application. Christianity has thus been passed down as a body of concepts (e.g. the Creeds) to be given consensus to, rather than as a *way of life*, a dynamic force to being. All these convinced Setiloane to hold the firm view that African traditional ideas about humanity, society and the divinity at work in them (theology) may be much nearer the purposes and intentions of the *kerugma* than Western Christianity.

Perhaps what Setiloane according Masoga (2016: 326) postulates on closeness of African way to Christianity is not only sufficient for academic purposes, rather is what it directs to a legitimate stance on black Christian religiosity and experience. This is a meaningful exercise for blacks to encounter God, especially Christ in the personage. This approach can automatically bring what Setiloane has termed cerebral acceptance of traditional Christianity as noted by (Masoga 2012: 326). This Christianity is populated with concepts which oppose to being life in a practical manner. The wave of expression and expressing oneself before God

(i.e. as a creature of God in the African context) underpins conceptual theology. This theology ought to vary from concepts of divinity and of being, being active in the lives of African as Christians or not, Masoga (2012: 330) also asserts:

Life is a totality and there cannot be any line of differentiation between the so-called sacred and the so-called secular. This African theology comes at Christianity from a monistic world view and claims to hear corroboration of this in the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament. In West African religion, there exists among the various people a multiplicity of smaller divinities that need to be approached and worshipped on different occasions. This is not a universal African phenomenon. Of universal application, however, are the ancestors, who are very prominent in religious belief and practice throughout the continent, “always near and normally attentive (EW Smith) and the idea of a Supreme or Higher Deity above all the other divinities. Behind African beliefs and actions, explains Setiloane, lies a fundamental experience, a feeling of the existence of something or somebody beyond oneself, a mysterious power which cannot be seen and is not fully understood, but which is at work in the world.

The above makes it fundamentally clear for a discussion of life, death, revelation and humanity for blacks, also by reflecting that even invisibility is rooted in visibility. Life becomes a dialect to death, as well as the sacred to the secular. As such, white creations of invisibility of both blacks and God, aberrant to human experience and historical belief provide the need of moving forward with eyes fixed within self and past. The self, having to entail to a need for a mode of expression and clear theological legitimacy for experience and the encounter with the divine. The past histories on God and humanity, at least from an African paradigm correct the distortions. These are distortions directed at European Christianity, as the “self” appointed monopoly on the subject of Christian theology and God. Setiloane (see Masoga: 2012) points on a feeling of the existence of “something” or “somebody” beyond oneself. Masoga further points out to a mysterious “power”, which cannot be seen and is not fully understood, but at work. This power brings a theology of awe and humility to see oneself in the scheme of things instead of a transcendence, explainable in invisibility. This is making a case for “African” view of general revelation. This African view is closely linked to Old Testament and African way or reading the New Testament. It is the outlook that reveals the contrast of a being, who cannot be seen or fully understood, hence it is not an approximate of the evasive God, rather an active God directing and bearing existence. This God can be approached in black and African theologies by ancestors. As a result, that God in the Christian sense, is also a God of the living and the dead. Hence, the black African paradigm embraces all tenets of divinity, life and existence.

4.2 INVISIBILITY AND REVELATION

The subject of black invisibility is crucial when discussing the revelation of God to black people. This is for revelation having a home and ambience in black ecclesiology and even in Christian doctrine, equipping the church and her believers to bear light under their feet and guiding them in existential times and ontological agonies under systems that are not of God. This importance is due to the fact that the revelation of God has been thus far established as the descending of transcendence to the existential creature of God. This existential creature is devoid of the authentic self, through the lenses of black dehumanisation. This revelation necessitates visibility of what has been previously understood in theological reflection. Since the immaterial and metaphysical nature and character of God underlines white supremacy. Baltazar (1973: 7) correctly asserted:

Western color symbolism permeates all Western languages both sacred and profane. As Howard Thurman: “The identification of blackness with evil, with the ominous, the destructive, the terrifying, is all through the language both sacred and profane. Black magic is evil; so is a black crime, but a white lie is acceptable.

Thurman (1973: 8) further adds:

Granted the influence of Greek literature and culture on Western color symbolism, by far the more influential and pervading sources are white Christianity and white theology. Many writers concerned with the origin of Western color symbolism attest to the fact. Thus, Harold Isaac notes that “these concepts and usages of black evil and white goodness, of beautiful fairness and ugly blackness, are deeply imbedded in the Bible, are folded into the language of Milton and Shakespeare, indeed are laced into almost every entwining strand of the art and literature in which our history is clothed.

It is important to note the ontological whiteness and symbolism that underline the view of the profane and sacred. However, it is important to note that there is a sense that liberation theologies, what African theology and in particular black liberation theology understands about scripture. It is understanding with a new hermeneutics of liberation; socially, politically, intellectually and spiritually. This hermeneutics brings the practical character of God, visibility and a God who has a face built on being. This being has a motion particularly in the acts of God’s creation, providence and salvation. This very interpretation of scripture from an aspect of literalism and materialistic approach brings into light the graphic description of God about

Himself (the world, justice, judgement and salvation); while further pointing out the graphic description of what is in the heart of God. Furthermore, it espoused God's revelation in eschatology, which requires that the God who in a metaphysical sense wants to be seen together with God's people to whom God reveals Himself to, as part of the visibility of God and humanity. As such, those who are bearers and receptors of God's revelation should be seen even in the state of invisibility. West (1999:113) correctly argues: "the black church tradition has made ritual art and communal bonds out of black invisibility and namelessness". Malone (2007: 311) on the other hand is correct when discussing that the visibility of God poses disparity between the Old and New Testament on the nature of God. Maloane asserts:

Negative statements about God's visibility are complemented by those passages which speak more positively about the Son as the image or exclusive representative of the Father.

Maloane (2007: 312) further adds: "syntheses do not seem to have dissuaded the academy or the church from the entrenched tradition that God is utterly invisible." This point is important because the modern human experience is the location where black people remain oppressed, fuelling black invisibility. This black invisibility guarantees white dominance, prominence, supremacy, privilege and absolute rule of black people evident in the historical present of South Africa and the world where there are the oppressed. This is what Mills (1997: 98 & 100) has captured in his explanation as the white global supremacy. Further, black invisibility emerges within the colonial "Christian" promise of seeing an invisible God, though in the midst of visible and existential suffering and problems. Malone (2007: 312) correctly asserts:

The idea of the Father being invisible has become commonplace in theology, shaped as much by the Platonistic ideals of early authors like Justin – indeed, by the whole influence of Greek philosophy at the major turning points of church history – as by the biblical text itself. Few readers are surprised, then, when a commentary like Kruse's addition to the Tyndale series regularly explains Johannine passages from the premise that 'It is a fundamental teaching of the OT that no human being has seen God.'⁶ It is not hard to find the invisibility of the Father both present and encouraged in the thinking of the everyday Christian.

The point that God is invisible and is a "Christian" mode of thinking is what both Setiloane in Masoga (2012: 326) pointed out about common ideas outside the Hebrew tradition that influenced the Bible. Malone (2007: 312) corroborates the influence of Greek philosophy and other ideas used to define God outside the Hebrew context of the scriptures. Thus the invisibility of God and blacks is what was central to colonial Christianity. This black invisibility has been critiqued by black theologians for its abstraction as noted by (Cone 2004).

This influence has been instrumental in Western Christian theology and the making of blacks in the colonial era. Weisbord (2003: 35) asserts:

Camouflaging their greed and ethnocentric arrogance with sanctimonious language about a civilizing mission to uplift the downtrodden, to enlighten the benighted and to Christianize the heathen, a handful of European countries forcibly portioned the African continent.

Blacks hold on to the “Christian” view to get into being in the invisible world (heaven) and let go of this world. The point of black invisibility can be raised in the South African context, due to the question of the colonial history and the persisting bombardment of white supremacy. Mabasa¹⁴ (1995: 1) in an article entitled *With due Apology Mr President Your African Country is too white* asserted:

At the height of the political uprising in the 1970's a particularly strange phenomenon started to manifest itself mainly in traditional White Afrikaans speaking areas like the Platteland and the Karoo's. The mainly black-read newspapers of the time namely; *The World* and *The Weekend World* reported on those events. White people particularly conservative farmers gathered in great numbers at local churches to fervently pray in earnest. This time not for rain or that God should bless the crops. But strange it may seem that God should make Black people to disappear. With hindsight now I have a niggling feeling somehow that their prayers were answered.

The above quotation from Mabasa (1995: 1) is relevant because it is written in the early period of the newly-elected democracy, in the beginning of a post-apartheid dispensation. That is thought to have brought about changes and the visibility of Africans in the world and to themselves. It is important to note that black invisibility rests on the face of so-called “light bearers”. These “light bearers” will shine light to the Dark Continent in terms of “civilisation”, “commerce” and “beauty”. This implies whiteness and its odour that is not a reminiscent of the past in believing that even in post-apartheid South Africa apartheid is a regime of yesterday. According to Western metaphysics, white supremacy is rather an odour that surpasses time and captures black's victims to the lack and somehow impossibility in an anti-white world of self-visibility. Naude¹⁵ (1987) recounts how Biko emphasised that even in the process of nation building or having to work in coalitions with whites, blacks needed to do this from themselves if they are to survive. This point is important because Biko and the philosophy of Black

¹⁴ Lybon Mabasa is the founding member of Azapo, he was a member of SASO, BPC, and UCM and is currently President of the Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA).

¹⁵ Beyers Naude The Cry of Reason - Beyers Naude an Afrikaner Speaks Out - 1987 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPsv-YKeTYQ> Accessed 2017-06-27.

Consciousness stresses the importance of self-defiance, which prepares way for black visibility and the validation of the self. Biko in the recounting of Naude sees danger of black liberation and does so when Naude (1987) points to the fact that coalitions precede black solidarity and for blacks to do things for themselves. Therefore, this places them in danger when considering the reign of white supremacy and the role it played in black existence and encroachment to whiteness. This approach of coalitions might be as help or for oppression makes blacks continue being the shadow of white supremacy and visibility. The view of West (1999: 86) remains time immemorial when he asserts:

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.

What West (1999: 86) reveals is the lack of true reconciliation and power. They both rendered the revelation of God to black and the oppressed majority as impossible. This adds the possibility of blacks being intoxicated by the odour of white perennial rule. That can only have a climax of the permanent death of blackness in the world, where the black tokenism prevailing in the name of transition and transformation. The tokenism here is meant to reflect insight of not assuming visibility through the dark pigmentation of colour alone as the true face of change. There are ontological, historical, political and existential components to pigmentation. In other words, the wrestling with the invisibility of God forces a wrestle with visibility that is apparent in pigmentation. This visibility may render itself artificial and thus casting true blackness with its definitions and praxis into the trenches of invisibility. Doxtader (2001: 225) is thus correct in asserting:

There is also substantial debate over how reconciliation shaped the form of the transition and whether it produced a political dispensation that ignored the needs of those who suffered under apartheid.

Mabasa (1995: 1) re-counting on the prayers of whites to assure white visibility and black invisibility as dialectical power relations for the black world:

While the prayers themselves might have seemed very naive and outright stupid however there was a profound meaning in the whole exercise and it was a fair commentary on the political situation at the time. White South Africans had for many years lived in this country as if there were no black people. Maybe also this had to do with the mentality of their earlier historians who recorded that when the first white people landed in the Cape they encountered no people.

They claim the country was teeming with wild animals. Thus white people continued to treat black people as non-people who were to be ignored, disregarded and treated with utter contempt. For many years that was the essence of the relationship between white people and black people.

It is significant to note what West (1999: 101) says:

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.

This links with what Mabasa (1995: 1) says about white visibility, prayers for black disappearance and the ever presence of blacks to remain visible. This outlook implies that the content of God's revelation is directed at humanity. The dehumanisation of blacks to obliterate them as visible people worthy of respect has created a sadistic fetish for white supremacy. This sadistic fetish of white supremacy is the absurd desire to change face and not systems in the South African context. Thus it is a maintaining of black ontological, economic, social, political and theological mutilation and lack of self-control and mastery. This is a process that is an eternal warrantee to black invisibility. However,, there is the possibility of whites to honestly confess in their churches and media on change and understanding of black pain, though not wanting to lose what they have, one can echo Tshaka's (2012: 168) words:

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 is plausible, given the evident separation between black and white in this country.

What is more revealing to the insincerity of whites in the democratic era is the reality on the separation between whites and blacks, as noted by (Tshaka 2012: 168). More than that, it is a separation that is maintained by metaphysical or ontological lines perpetuated by history of colonialism, slavery and existential necessities and demands. These lines are further translatable into; economics and landlessness. While in the South African context's docile and naïve spirituality of inclusiveness, nation building and a colourlessness and a common humanity mutes the black society to be discernible. This reality and truth for the South African context is noted by Bompani (2006: 1141) when he asserts:

The call for unity in the name of the past anti-apartheid struggle impelled the different voices of civil society to abandon criticism and differences in the name of nation building.

Docile spirituality allows credulous “Christian” virtues (forgiveness, turning the other cheek, to go unchecked especially when God as transcendental and without colour is involved). These are pitfalls of naïve-ness to which black liberation theology dispels. This implies that if blacks are to understand the faith from the theological premise represented by whites, then failure is unavoidable. Therefore, God’s justice and presence is an ever search running parallel to black invisibility. This failure has been realised and achieved in South Africa, Bompani (2006: 1138) asserted: “The end of apartheid defined the end of churches’ engagement in the political arena, although not as actors supportive of the ANC project of nation building.” Maluleke (1997) asserts:

The presence of prominent church people in the TRC – especially the chairpersonship of the charismatic African ecumenical giant and veteran anti-Apartheid campaigner, Desmond Tutu – as commissioners and as members of sub-committees may tend to make many people feel that the church is “well represented” in the TRC. But this could be an erroneous assumption to make. We must never forget that the TRC is a juridical entity with a political rather than a spiritual or theological agenda. To that end all those appointed to it are appointed not by churches, nor to serve the cause of the churches.

What Maluleke brings about disagreement, in particular the notion of a black church, it is not only a spiritual or theological paradigm that automatically confirms its existence (theologically or spiritually) in the world. As a matter of fact, the notion of a black church, black theologian and understanding of God is multidimensional. Stewarts (1999: 104) captures its multi-dimensionalism that does not place the black church in lofty idealism—spiritually or theologically-- and peripheral transcendence of an unreachable God, as Maluleke asserts:

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.

In that regard, to pass the buck to a few individuals assigned for juridical activities is to dwarf the strength of the black church, that engage with the white power colonial establishment. The silence of those who were taught to disagree with the transition of this country, ecclesiastically,

seems to be habitually silent. This is a result manifesting the abandonment of prophetic ecclesiastical engagement with the world. The black church in the past and now if Maluleke (1997) is correct is a futile exercise rather than affirming the prophetic in seeing God's hand in human relations, especially at the expense of justice. Doxtader (2001: 224) asserts:

In all of its forms, South African reconciliation has generated substantial interest and significant controversy. What is the nature or substance of reconciliation? Did it play a meaningful role in the South African transition? Was reconciliation a constitutive element of a (peaceful transition), noble garb for a distasteful compromise, or a tactic designed to preserve white power?

Doxtader (2001: 225) further asserts:

There is also substantial debate over how reconciliation shaped the form of the transition and whether it produced a political dispensation that ignored the needs of those who suffered under apartheid.

It should be noted that there is something uneasy about what has been termed change or a democratic South Africa. The uneasiness emanates as trying to please every race, inclusive of the race that has oppressed and classed other races. This is deeming them invisible and subject to the revelation of God that is white.

It is through denialism of the true perpetrators of dehumanisation and misinterpretation of the Gospel of the revealed God that hinders transformation and the revelation of God. West (1999: 70) is correct in pointing out that the humaneness of blacks is relatively a new discovery in the West, since it can be added in Western civilisation, the inextricable attachment to race perpetuates the persistence of black invisibility. As whites seem to think blacks are human out of their magnanimity, the benevolence of their god claimed to have been brought by the West. West (1999: 70) further asserts:

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.

It is necessary that the invisibility of black is taken as the very pulse that guarantees white privilege, in the same way colourlessness or being blind to race is actually confirming the victory of whites. The contextual God is white and out expedience is colourless and loves

everybody, whereas the oppressed remain in the margins and with a deep character of invisibility. This is also a reflection and acknowledgement of one “particular”, “perfect”, “innocent” and “special “race that is not bothered by accountability of the revelation of God. This revelation in the black church becomes a need and a consequence of knowing God and themselves and the invisibility of blacks is displaying explicitly the impulse of black self-hatred. It is an orchestrated of an ontological concoction of immaterialising and denying the black-self to settle for white definitions, answers and the immaterial God of lofty metaphysics. This is a strategy for black invisibility, West (1999: 109) asserted:

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.

It is precisely desirable to find self from a Christian experience that blacks should show solidarity and support to a God who wants to be known. Further, they should respond by making black accept, themselves as visible creatures of God that has visibility in Christ. As such, the Old and New Testament, sources of general revelation and African divinity see transcendence, visibility and invisibility as beating from the same pulse of a singular heart that is manifested always in difference contexts and phenomenon.

4. 3 THE BLACK PHYSICAL BODY AND BLACK INVISIBILITY

The fundamental *modus operandi* for black faith and existences is the understanding of humanity of blacks from the framework that takes into account a physiology. As such, the physiological aspect makes blacks physiological and mobile existence to stand against oppression. However, the standing against the West becomes feasible when the black body has been redeemed soteriologically and against the totality of white power. The overall perceptibility and penetration in confrontation against the black body, white metaphysics prims through this body ontologically and existentially. The emphasis of bodiliness is part of general revelation that accepts a creature of God. This is an acceptance of God with a mind that conceives divinity and the world. As such, confession of the dehumanised suggests that the black body is physically manifested, un-avoided and additionally, it is useful and a resource and a body that can be used for experiments, that diffuse the very essence of the human experience and being a creature of God. In Western metaphysics, the black body is a myriad maze for white amazement and self-gratification as Fanon (1952: 82-83) noted. He noted the

maze of a white child where he/she sees a “negro”. The contrast to Western metaphysics should be that the black body, bone and flesh is a history of visibility. This history of visibility is to be used at God’s will, delight and self-authenticity and pleasure. As such, blacks can be everything that the parameter of being posited can immediately stand out especially in a white supremacist world. Their humanity is at risk in the existential realm when the mode of being human is verified and authenticated when authenticated not by bodily description and characteristics that embodies them. This humanity is rather judged by whiteness and the immediate effect of political expediency, which reserves white metaphysics, white supremacy and white privilege by colourlessness. Fanon (1952: 82) carries this idea of black visibility and the white attitude that guarantees black invisibility, when he asserted:

Dirty nigger! or simply, Look, a Negro! I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.

This condition is a mystic veil of displaying how blacks (who are relevantly purely visible in physiological substance) seem to escape this existential and tangible existence of themselves and God. Instead they find themselves in a scenario of entrapment in this world, they are prosecuted for crimes unknowable, truth unreachable and pigmentation that is naturally unchangeable. Black invisibility is a case of a denied black ontology, Fanon (1952: 82-83) asserts:

In the *Weltanschauung* of a colonized people there is an impurity, a flaw that outlaws any ontological explanation. Someone may object that this is the case with every individual, but such an objection merely conceals a basic problem. Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him.

What Fanon implies is valid, primarily in Biko (1978:74) as he argues: “The greatest weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.” The mind of the oppressed must arrive to themselves and in locating God contrary to a mind that accepts it as natural to not see

themselves and even God. Fanon (1952: 82-83) further problematizes the apparatus of guise, by pointing out that the white establishment sees or has posited no ontological substance on black. As such, one cannot see an ontological resistance in the eyes of the black man. This point seems to suggest the issue that would affect the guise of blacks and the oppressed to God and the question of how God guises upon them. Central to the ontological resistance, it needed to be present in the eyes of both blacks and whites. It is also how blacks see themselves and effects upon the face to face image of God and Christ.

Black invisibility in a historical geographical or political setting is and was achievable by the confiscation of the mind of black people. The wiping of the slave as a process that lives no remnant of the self, traces of intent and purpose of the one who now owns the mind of the oppressed and dictates for both God and blacks. Black invisibility under a confiscated mind diminishes reality of the self. It further only functions by proposing a reality that the authentic self cannot live in. As such, in a world of existential materiality that functions on the basis of survival for necessities, (food, clothes and shelter), it is not the material reality that underlines this invisibility. Reason being that by all cost, blackness cannot be denied physiologically, especially in a continent that is dominated by black bodies historically, anthropologically and biologically. The root of power is the power that lays in metaphysics, which is the mainstay of the enigma of God, whether God appears metaphysically or in vivid visibility.

By way of an example consider an analogy to explain this explicable reality of blackness, which to a certain extent seems to be inexplicable by the way it confuses metaphysics and physicality and allows an escape of reality. Consider slaves incarcerated or in an involuntary entrapment, circled by barbed wire and these slaves have been put there by force with the pending human will or desire for freedom. Attempts of escapes are inevitable and are multiple and every attempt to escape is met with sadistic rage to teach the slave a lesson, namely; to repel from rebelling. From the torn skin by being dragged down from the wire to the whips that reap the flesh from the back of the slave and wounds on every joint, coupled with blows to the head are sustained. These wounds are constantly being maintained by the sheer absurdity of oppression and the human impulse to be free, no matter the consequences. The climax of the numerous failed attempts results in accepting where they are, to a certain extent that the barbed wire can be removed and plain open field is left to bear, but the slave cannot escape any longer, even though he or she is no longer bound by whips and chains. What has been domesticated in the already confiscated self is the idea of being free, while on an unconscious plane, God should show

his/her face through deliverance of the oppressed, outside the parameters of fear. This state is a victory to the one who seeks to dominate the black body, not only as a physiological and economical profitable construct for the benefit of the anti-black world. Fanon (1952: 82-83) gives credence to this by pointing that black lives in an imposed civilisation, is submitting and the subjugation of the entire gist of human existence to the will of the master; the diffused ontological self, which does not connect with the physical self and even the transcendental God taught to blacks by whites. Confirming metaphysical destruction after the boarder lines have been removed. This implies that the slave no longer seeks to cross out of his/her will, which at first was not his/her will, but that of the master. Presently, it is a manipulated will that has been mutated and has become identical to his/her master thought; their initial stance of the slave was diametrically opposite. Perhaps this analogy or example is a caution to how the ideas and dreams can be transferred to those with an artificial identity, to think as others and not themselves. It is as if from the primordial pool that was alive with black aspiration, possibility and danger, has only evolved to the constant and perennial origin and end of pathological instincts of impossibility and absurd feelings of fear. In the Christian sense, especially the Pauline letters, we are exhorted to believe this truth about the impact of the metaphysical. Ephesians 6:12 (KJV) records; "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The exhortation of the apostle Paul is one that makes clear, the vivid stimulus for destruction and the decadence that happens in the material plain of our existence, in other words moral decay. The object of *Sola Scriptura* confirms Haar's (2009: 1) point on world of spirit filled with entities and spirits that affect and effect on the material plain. It is then significant to grasp the apostle Paul object in his prison Epistles that his faith was beyond those who put him in prison. As an attempt to mute and hide Paul's message, the area of hiding links to black hiddenness and invisibility. However, Paul's faith rather is a hope celebrated even outside of the prison and goes to Christian churches he exhorts. The linking of theological reflection in the Epistles of Paul and through black liberation theology finds a slight similarity in the cause of black liberation and political prisoners. By way of an example linking black power and the prison (i.e. prison being among the many surrogate wombs for black invisibility), Newton (1967 in his prison letters to motivate the *Black Panther Party For Self*

*Defence*¹⁶ and the black community, as chance would have it exhorted hope outside the prison for blacks and the oppressed. Newton¹⁷ (1967: 10) addressing political prisoners' asserts:

When a person studies mathematics, he learns that there are many mathematical laws which determine the approach he must take to solving the problems presented to him. In the study of geometry, one of the first laws a person learns is that "the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts. This means simply that one cannot have a geometrical figure such as a circle or a square which in its totality contains more than it does when broken down into smaller parts. Therefore, if all the smaller parts add up to a certain amount, the entire figure cannot add up to a larger amount.

Newton (1967: 10) further asserts:

In the case of the human, we are not dealing only with the single individual, we are also dealing with the ideas and beliefs which have motivated him and which sustain him, even when his body is confined. In the case of humanity, the whole is much greater than its parts, because the whole includes the body which is measurable and confineable, and also the ideas which cannot be measured and which cannot be confined. The ideas are not only within the mind of the prisoner where they cannot be seen nor controlled, the ideas are also within the mind of the prisoner where they cannot be within the people. The ideas which can and will sustain our movement for total freedom and dignity of the people cannot be imprisoned, for they are to be found in the people, all the people, wherever they are.

What Newton (1967: 10) advocates for through the mathematical example of geometry and the prison experience is precisely a reversal of what is sought to be done to the black body, particularly, the mind of blacks as the possibility of prisoning; metaphysically and existentially, runs parallel with black reality and invisibility. Newton (1967: 10) urges the consolation of a broad solidarity, love and humanity, which like Paul's faith cannot be confined. Fanon (1952: 84-85) correctly points to the imprisoning of blackness by whiteness when he asserts:

I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: Sho good eatin'. On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own

¹⁶The Black Panther Party is a political organization of the 1960's which espoused black power, and scientific socialism as a tool of analysis and for a political programme.

¹⁷Heuy P Newton is the co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self-defence in 1966 in California.

presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?

Fanon's (1952: 84-85) amputation, an excision, haemorrhage spattering the black body with blood, signifies physiological and ontological images of a prison. Therefore, after the imprisonment, by content, force and injustice been hidden and rendered invisible. Newton (1967: 12) seems to suggest that even if the barbwire has been removed, that human voice geared and wired in audibility, intellect and visibility to freedom must be hearkened too. Newton (1967: 12) further adds:

The prison cannot gain a victory over the political prisoner because he has nothing to be rehabilitated from or to. He refuses to accept the legitimacy of the system and refuses to participate. To participate is to admit that the society is legitimate because of its exploitation of the oppressed. This is the idea which the political prisoner does not accept; this is the idea for which he has been imprisoned.

Newton (1967: 12) further asserts: "The prison cannot be victorious because walls, bars and guards cannot conquer or hold down an idea." Newton and the use of the imprisonment of Paul (Epistle of Ephesians, Philemon and Colossians) in the black church could be that the enigma of humanity; theologically and ecclesiastically to fulfil *Imago Dei*. The vivid worldview of Newton (1967: 12) of the necessity in liberation to transcending prison. Garvey preceded Newton, but validates Newton's position as an ontological express and resistance to bondage. According to Garvey, one can discern that the attack on the black body is linked with the sleeping of Africa and the dead God given to Africa, this is a sleep that easily allows easily evasiveness of the black body, because Africa and the Africans are under the burden of slavery, colonialism, imperialism and institutionalised racism. The imprisonment could have then sedated blacks into a deep sleep that somehow becomes unconscious of what is happening to the souls, which originate and inhabit it. The Black world and black body cannot live or even imprisoned to a barricaded existence of the self that learns to avoid the self, evade the self and finally erase the self and even others in the process.

It also seems to suggest an anaesthetic force that makes the black mind immovable, subjecting the black body to be motionless and stuck in a state of a permanent telekinesis process. This is

a process of allowing movement only of ideas in the mind and never translated to reality, Garvey¹⁸ asserts:

Now Africa's been sleeping. Not dead, only sleeping. Today Africa is walking around not only on our feet but on our brains. You can enslave us for some 300 years, the bodies of men, you can shackle the hands of men, you can shackle the feet of men, you can imprison the bodies of men, but you cannot shackle or imprison the minds of men.

It would be valid; given the black experience that black invisibility has also been achieved by black mental invisibility or an isolation of the black body from its own mind. Thus cutting off the transferral of knowledge from black humanity, Maimela (2005: 29-30) has pointed out the dual, but yet single face of the black experience. One which begins by slavery landing in bondage of blacks in North America and further the imperialist expansion through exploitation in the continent. This exploitation happened through subjecting blacks to conditions that resulted in a destroyed life. The destroyed life was typified by a lack of land, resources, shelter and the primary act of the lack of self-knowledge. Fanon (1963: 169-170) pointed out that the colonial mother protects her child from itself, ego, physiology, biology. Furthermore, colonial mother protects the colonial child from its own unhappiness, which is its very essence. In the same Fanonian thought of the colonial mother, it is fundamental to proclaim an act of reversal by the colonial child rejecting colonial protection. This act makes the already present, but denied authenticity of a child invisible, seeking, thus at the mercy seat of white dominant visibility, which demonises the prospects of black physiological visibility Fanon (1952: 86) correctly asserted:

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up.

Fanon (1952: 86) reveals who's distortion of blacks confirms white's insecurity and the inferiority of black thought for and not able to think for themselves. While it is important to note that Fanon (1952: 86) sees the fear of white people, reduces blacks to cannibals that eat

¹⁸Source Marcus Garvey Live Freedom Speech. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ykhPHWIk48>

white, devoid of the large number of blacks who were not only eaten by white supremacy but became invisible.

4.3.1 BLACK VISIBILITY

The consideration from Lloyd's (2016: 8) definition of Afro-pessimism on blackness is ontological and rooted in Western metaphysics. Fanon's (1952: 82-83) observation of lack of ontological resistance sets a platform that forms a mode of expression that is sufficient for ontological, physiological and existential visibility. The notion of the black church and the spirituality it envisages is one of interest when considering the new doctrine of God's revelation, black invisibility and the prospects of black visibility in an anti-black world. The point of significance is that the black church has been identified as the invisible institution. Lincoln, in Billingsley (1999: xx) asserts: "From its inception, the black church sets 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." This point is fundamental as a platform to see from a theological stance that the black body, which has been physiologically and ontologically dismembered. It gains visibility in God, God's multiple revelation; conscious or unconscious and a God they discovered is like them. The gains of its visibility occur through self-authenticity, through the existential encounter with the divine within ecclesiastical expression and theological articulation of experience. It is important to understand the visibility from an optimistic point of blackness, as having emerged as dialectical and identical with the Creator. This is a revelation of God as the revelation of the black self out of slavery, colonialism, institutional racism, white supremacy and bondage. Cone (1997:169) captures this dialectical relation when he asserted the slave's understanding of an unchanging God and inconceivability of that God with bondage. Black visibility then is a re-correctional task because it should primarily take cognisance of the defaced and hiddenness or invisibility of God and black humanity. It should do this in all areas of life and a grasp to the near extinction of blacks and worship to a God, without local visibility noted by (Shelly 1813). Extinction that would have been successful through theological beliefs if black remained theologically and existentially in the shadows of whites and colonial Christianity. 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.

It is significant to note that black invisibility was a process depicted by the very loss of land and any means of ownership. That is easily linked with white supremacy's projection and creation--through institutionalised black inferiority--a black incapability or black incapacity. Yet this invisible institution, the black church, is one that is the centre stage for both God and black humanity's revelation, It is the historical vehicle leading to existential visibility, particularly through the black preacher. Frazier (1964: 11-12) 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. 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.

While Billingsley (1999:7) recorded: "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. Billingsley (1999) stresses that the preacher is a leader, a politician, an orator, a boss, an intriguer an idealist, characteristics which are used for assuming visibility. The music and sermon captured from the metaphysical, ontological and metaphysical the dreams and hopes of the people. Both music and sermon give God physical substance of the experience of the cross and of God's existence in human existence. While furthering the African understanding of religion that both encapsulate visibility and invisibility, Haar (2009: 1) has pointed out that in Africa, religion and its invisibility contains a world of spirits that impress upon the physical and visible world. This point is central even to Setiloane's description of African divinity as noted by Masoga (2012: 1).

4.4 WHITENESS THE OBSOLESCENCE OF TRUE HUMANITY

In a classical Fanonian thought, blackness in all its structural ramifications range from social death, existential and cultural nihilism, black political and economic. Therefore, lack of representation and invisibility and perennial marginality under white rule has been considered a zone of none being (Fanon 1963). Perhaps to turn Fanonian radical truth to a theological paradigm of the black radical prophetic Christian confession, liturgy and doxology, sets up black liberation in a theological expression resulting in a God of the oppressed or a God, who is black opening up another enquiry to who is the human of *Imago Dei*, who in truth exists

contrary to the white political and ecclesiastical lie of divine and racial supremacy this emergence out of the white albatross impinged on blacks reveal the human and being. This new creation sees the “human” as constituting of biology and physiology, while the “being” is the ontological expressed in the existential condition knitted with its biology, a dialectical accordance and credence of true human existence and identity as creatures of God. This realisation or the change of thought on the subjects of “being” is moved by the paradigm of the oppressed and the divine to see whiteness as not human. Perhaps as the lack of it, to elucidate further Western civilisation, where the rulers and landlords are white, the world of whiteness becomes definable as non-beingness or inhumaneness. This is despite white supremacy’s attempt that predicates the “importance” of whiteness and underlines this white world as an ambience of “true” human experience and human dwelling. However, the experience of blacks point to an obscenity manifested in a questioned existence that has caused the absence of blacks in the “human”. Such understanding brings the truth of black theological confession on the essence and embodiment of the zone of none being located in which and practised on blacks. Cesaire (1972:5) asserts:

First we must study how colonization works to *decivilise* the coloniser, to *brutalise* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism.

Cesaire (1972: 5) further noted:

Colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out.

The depth of the effect of white racism and dehumanisation validates a theological confession of defiance that God is black (Turner 1898). As such, this is a confession of an old proclamation that disputes whiteness and sees it as not being human or divine. Rather ecclesiastically, historically and existentially, it is a manifestation of the inhumane, profane and secular. Whiteness, being the very face of the secular/worldly, Ahmed (2007: 150) correctly asserts: “Whiteness describes the very what that coheres as a world.” Ahmed (2007: 150) further asserts:

We can consider how whiteness becomes worldly as an effect of reification. Reification is not then something we do to whiteness, but something whiteness does, or to be more precise, what allows whiteness to be done.

As such, whiteness is a theological profanity on the authenticity of the doctrine of humanity, further, it is the doctrine of God and His revelation, especially God's representation physically and through the missionary work. Whiteness as the zone of non-being, is thus the theological datum of all failing of human virtues of self/others-love, respect and dignity. The realness of whiteness is a dialectical relation of an epidermalisation of human emptiness; therefore, with whiteness operating under a pseudo and assumed humanity and divinity by black suffrage and dehumanisation, both the blacks and whites are without humanity. The absence of black visibility in a forceful exchange for white visibility is the acceptance of silence of the human. This is the human who becomes visible and which whiteness dreads and conceals through creating an urgent need for survival, by obsessing about being white and converting blacks to their worship. Cone (2004: 140) asserts:

No one can deny that racism is a major killer in the modern world. Yet there has been considerable resistance to seeing it as a profound problem for the religion of Christianity. During the course of five centuries, Europeans and White Americans systematically confiscated lands and committed genocide against untold numbers of indigenous people around the world. When whites 'discovered' something they wanted, whether land or labor, they took it with very little thought of the consequences for the lives people already there.

When consideration and reflection is manifested on the whiteness that is secular and divine, it is discernible to see the death of humanity within the white body, though the white body is given a social and political premise for existence, Cone (2004: 140) argues:

I am amazed at how much more people of color want to be White. They want to look like Whites, and even pray like Whites. Many are still worshipping a White God and a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus—still singing, Wash me and I will be Whiter than snow. As James Baldwin put it: 'It is a terrible, an inexorable, law that one cannot deny the humanity of another without diminishing one's own: in the face of one's victim, one sees oneself.

Further, if black ecclesiology from a prophetic tradition sees death in whiteness, the whiteness in the body, language, thought, mannerisms which whiteness has projected as human, becomes death. One could assert that the white body becomes not the human in reality, but within a conceived and reality of conquest, (Fanon 1952: 82-83) . As such, the black body that is

resurrected and visible in the black church should through black liberation theology make use of lenses that see the white body as a carcass. The very same lenses should see Western civilisation as a grave that should not be followed for human conception and God's revelation. The validity of such a pronouncement emerges from the level of death whiteness. Cone (2004: 141) asserted the reduction of indigenous people by the Portuguese and Spanish, ranging from 90 million to being 3.3 million. In terms of Leopold of Belgium, having 10 million Congolese meet an untimely death and finally the Nazi genocide of 6 million Jews. It is clear then that the white body and its fighting to occupy space, time, land, thought, religion and the intellect has been through death. Cone (2004: 140) spoke of the distinction between two types of death, spiritual and physical death. The spiritual and physical death of black people occurred under the banner of being civilised and being a Christian (Cone: 2004: 141).

It is thus clear that the invisible institution cannot conceive of theodicy, as it does not really hold for black suffering under white supremacy. Cone (2004: 142) asserts:

White theologians and philosophers write numerous articles and books on theodicy, asking why God permits massive suffering, but they hardly ever mention the horrendous crimes Whites have committed against people of color in the modern world.

The denial and neglecting of white racism by white thinkers, which Cone (2004: 142) speaks about, reveals a more sinister reality of actually causing suffering under the banner of God's will. However, another point in which this unaccountability flourishes is due to white racism (white theologians). The silence is precisely what is under historic and contemporary black invisibility and the invisibility of black suffering. Such attitudes continue through pseudo definitions of racism that Tshaka (2012: 168) pointed out. Thus giving room for the view of racism about attitudes, as opposed to the true face of racism which is power. Europeans rather speak of controversies on the death of God as opposed to the death of humanity, as noted by (Cone 2004: 143). He further points out to the comfort of whites in speaking about class and not racism.

Perhaps not out of equivalence of class and race there exists an inseparable, but identical reality for class and race in the case of blackness and in the context of South Africa. Posel (2010:160) captured this in her critique of the South African context, she asserts:

The desire and power to consume was racialised, 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.

In both aspects of race and class, the root is power; economic power which channels and funnels political, religious, cultural, intellectual and spiritual power. All these forms of power can enable an ontological authentic existence of the black being. The issue of race and class in relation to oppression brings about Jesus, with God and the economy in relation to worship. The biblical texts of Mark 11: 15 speak of the coinage representative of Caesar, his kingdom and God with His kingdom. Such texts speak volume to the black context, especially in areas where economies are put before humanity and God, in a sense the prevailing of Mammon. Raboteau (1978: 98) asserts:

Despite the widely held justification of slavery as a means of spreading the gospel, and despite proclamation of the duty of Christian colonies to evangelize the heathen, the process of slave conversion was blocked by major obstacles, not the least of which was the antipathy of the colonists themselves. The economic profitability of his slaves, not their Christianization, held to priority for the colonial planter.

Raboteau (1978: 98) further records that Morgan Godwin, an English divine who spent several years in Virginia, decried the priorities of the colonialist in a sermon published in 1685 with the accusatory title: *Trade preferred before religion and Christ made to give place to Mammon*. This is the genealogy from the past to the present period on Europe, its religion and civilisation through economics before the claim to "Christian duty". This is despite law of freedom for baptised Christians in bondage, the refusal of Christian baptism not for undeserving soteriology to the heathen. The fear of economic loss precedes the white Christian mind and posits a fundamental need for black resistance of "Christian" virtues, ethics and spirituality taught by whites to them.

Cone (2004: 150) has spoken occasionally of race talk within the field of higher learning. This points to the important point that blacks do not have the luxury of conferences. He also in the same line of thought points out that if whites are tired of talking about race, then how much more are those who suffer from it. Tshaka (2012: 168) and West (1999: 70) have pointed out that whites or white supremacy today considers the irrelevance of the race topic. Cone (2004: 149) hits the heart of white denial of racism discussion by pointing out:

Whites do not say much about racial injustice because they are not prepared for a radical redistribution of wealth and power. No group gives up power freely. Power must be taken against the will of those who have it. Fighting white supremacy means dismantling white privilege in the society, the churches and theology. Progressive whites do not mind talking as long as it does not cost too much, as long as the structures of power remain intact.

The biblical text in which Jesus Christ speaks of Roman coinage and God should have a new reading within our context. This will conclude by rendering what belongs to God, the black body and their land. Revelation becomes a rebellion and revolution against silence, sterility, social death and existential nihilism that sees the truth on whiteness that cannot be cast into the memory of history, because whiteness is alive. This is validated by Ahmed (2007: 150) when she asserts:

I repose the question of whiteness as a phenomenological issue, as a question of how whiteness is lived as a background to experience. In so doing, I will consider what 'whiteness' does without assuming whiteness as an ontological given, but as that which has been received, or become given, over time. Whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up space.

Such assertion sums up comprehensively the reality of the black body, white world and imposed reality for blacks. This reality makes white racism a group project, as opposed to individual attitudes. Cone (2004: 150) has pointed out that group selfishness is unavoidable and as such, white supremacy cannot be viewed as individuals in the world that favours them, since whiteness and its individualism provides no marginality for whites and their privilege, but approves it. This approval is found even in white ecclesiology and theology that admits the sinfulness of white supremacy, Cone (2004: 149-150) argues:

Although White Christians and other religions communicates acknowledge their sinful condition, and that their inordinate power as a group makes them more prone toward injustice in relation to other minority groups, they find it nearly impossible to do anything to relinquish their advantage. Individuals are often self-critical but groups are inevitably selfish and proud. No theologians have been more insightful on this point than Reinhold Niebuhr: The group is more arrogant, hypocritical, self-centred and more ruthless in the pursuit of its ends than the individual...If we did for ourselves what we do for our country, what rascal we would be.

White theological silence is the greatest enemy and obstacle to liberation. This silence is what Melancon (1983) identified as a constituent of absurdism permeating and penetrating the vocal,

racist and violent world of white supremacy. The world is vocal to the black body in how racism and injustice continue, even in so-called post-democratic times to haunt black existence. The white scholastic silence is evident in what Cone (2004: 151) notes about whites who speak on the black subject without consulting black thinkers, he asserts:

There are almost no references to black scholars or other people of color in any of the writings of major white male theologians. Even when white theologians talk about 'race', as Reinhold Niebuhr did occasionally throughout his career, there are no citations from black intellectuals who informed his thinking. How can anybody write about 'race' in an informed way and not engage the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Richard Wright, James Baldwin and Howard Thurman?

What Cone has pointed out reveals the deep levels of an epistemic hold up of racism to scholarship and the existential context across the board. One should take serious the absence of black thought from European thinkers, this is primarily because there is a deeper meaning to the avoidance of black thought, crisis of epistemology. One would speculatively ponder that the black voice is envisaged in black thought. Therefore, if found in white scholars it may influence and authenticate the process of the white cause and for the liberation of the oppressed. However, seeing that in a world of facts/reality and fiction optimism, imagination and speculation, is not suitable to go by. As such, the black voice is found in the black church expresses not assimilation, integration or dialogue, but typical black consciousness thought of self-determination and self-reliance. Cone (2004: 151) has pointed out the vision of working together under the guidance of the Great Spirit of the universe. Cone (2004:151) further points the resilience, tenacity and unwavering faith of those who fought for resistance and vocalise the black liberation struggle. A struggle for the freedom of a muted body, presence and visibility, he asserts:

Black spirituals says, *there is great camp meeting in the Promise Land*. That song is not primarily about the geography of heaven but rather a message of hope in direct circumstances. Blacks, with their backs against the wall of slavery, were saying that evil will not have the last word about their humanity. We have a future not made with White hands.

Day (2012: 23) correctly asserted:

Black churches exposed the contradictions between biblical understandings of humanity and the practice of white churches. Because black churches provide a way for black persons to reclaim their human dignity, identity, and worth in the light of the Divine, Paris names the early black church the "surrogate world" for the black community. This surrogate world allowed black persons to find spiritual, socioeconomic, and political refuge and respite. 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 pertinent point from the above is the black church as a substitute or alternative world as human beings. The black church attacks the dehumanisation caused by whiteness and it being a bar of human existence. It is of soteriological importance to consider the view of the black church as an alternative world; the dehumanised through the gospel, were able to have an affirmation of their human beings built on the ecclesia and their view of their gospel. In such an analysis, the authentic view of the Bible and the intent of the gospel writers emerge by expressing the humanness of Jesus, thus a point of reference for his followers. In this case, the centrality being is the human and God descending down on earth in the human experience. Wright¹⁹(2017) speaking on the subject of reconsidering the meaning of Jesus's crucifixion points out that Western Christianity and theology have missed the real meaning of God. They are often speculating and theorising the gospel as opposed to upholding the central human role in salvation. Wright (2017) further mentions three fundamental points, firstly, that the Gospel is not about souls going up to heaven, a point that Rhodes (1991: 2) shows as underlying the slave brand Christianity that places emphasis on otherworldliness. Secondly, Wright (2017) dispels the Platonised version of Christianity and points to going to heaven the New Jerusalem. Perhaps Day's (2012: 23) point on the black church as an alternative world of human affirmation, places the New Jerusalem coming down into the black community, the black experience and black church. He further points out that the cross is seen outside the human experience of Christ that condemns sin in the flesh. Thus the resurrection of Christ and his suffering ought to re-humanise *Imago Dei* in all of humanity. Wright (2017) emphasises that the gospels and the message of Jesus should make the new humanity. This new humanity should find Jesus to be a bearing of Christ, visible in Christianity. The third point that Wright (2017) points out is of God's love, God not concerned with wrath and judgment, but with the important role humanity plays in the drama of the cosmos. These points from the study of the New Testament are given by Wright (2017), as he reveals how the black faith serves ecclesiastically, theologically and existentially to redeeming *Imago Dei* and manifest it as a

¹⁹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwM8gOYPseM>NT Wright presents on Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus' Crucifixion

sign of being Christian. Thus operating as a sign of visibility on the power of the gospel in human purpose.

4.5 COINAGE AND SOUTH AFRICA'S ECONOMIC STRUGGLE

The South African context and the reconciliation process that ushers in a new dispensation offer a possibility of a future, a humanity built and defined by white hands. Contrary to the Negro spiritual that wants a future and humanity built by black hands, a future built by white hands falls flat at the efforts of redistribution of wealth, liberation, well-being, historical justice and being human. The South African context is problematic precisely because it is based on the values and skeleton of the former apartheid regime. These negative apartheid values are now wearing and hiding in apparels of democracy. In order to arrive at this point, one should consider that among the claims and instrument for change, there is a reconciliatory aim, through transformation and through integration. Soteriologically, the message of the cross is tied to God's revelation and reconciliation of God and human, even to reconciling humanity with humanity. However, from the view point of the black church in the current periods of the economic, social and existential contexts this posits a point of critic to the reconciliation and means of integration, stemming out of political expediency and its dire effects on blacks that Biko foretold:

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).

While Evans (1992: 101) argued that, interaction refers to the notion that no person can achieve the fullness of life apart from the group. If one would follow the logic of both Biko (1972: 21) and Evans (1992: 101), one can discern that the prevailing views of integration consist of a dialectical ambivalence, which is in relation to basis of relations of group efforts. According to Biko (1972: 21) blacks prove themselves not to be submissive to the oppressive system, rather compete among themselves for crumbs left of by the Western system, while Evans (1992: 101) thought integration means finding functionality within the group. However, according to

whiteness regardless of integration or not find—place is more appropriate—above the group and continue to flourish. Biko (1977) told Naude (1987) that the entire process of integration is unjust, deceptive and possibly has cut off the self-reliance needed by an oppressed group. The ambivalence is not innocent, but premeditated for political expedience. Furthermore, it (ambivalence) is the chief tool suitable for whites to be absolved from accountability and the equal redistribution of wealth and resources. The final aspect to this ambivalence is that whites are solidified as individuals in the group of the integrated. There is deep root or embedded-ness of how whites conceive the family and definition of humanity; culturally, politically, historically, epistemologically and theologically. Evans (1999: 102) is correct that the 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. The fact that supremacy of individual over the group is constant in Western thought is an indication that the theology of the West is absent from the human being or family. Therefore, as long as that has not changed, all other efforts fall to the realm of impossibility, while the absence of the human in collectivism is absent in Western theological discourse. It therefore reveals the depth of the void conversion of blacks during colonialism, imperialism, slavery and under institutional racism. Humanising faith was at the hands of those who have through economic dominance fallen victim to the obsolescence of human life and human dignity. This realisation gives entry to radical voice that the black church should articulate in the plight of the poor, oppressed and blacks. There should be an existence of a deep sense of connection of black Christian reconciliations. This is a deep sense of connection with the cross and the dues that characterises black spirituality in a soteriology that manifests economically and ecclesiastically. It is in the context of the church that the spirituals call for future political, cultural and economical built by black hands as noted by (Cone 2004). The call of the spiritual captured from the history and the Christian faith's texts, the soteriology entangled in ecclesiology and economics. The datum of such a revelation of God finds fulfilment in the man; Yoheshua the Christ, a Hebrew peasant and carpenter from Galilee. The more fundamental truth of this revelation in relation to the incarnate and oppressed is in the incidents of confrontation between coinage and the temple. The declaration from the Gospels of Christ questioned about tax and the question posed as answer by asserting; “whose face is the face of the coin?”. It opens up a soteriology with economics, hence the antecedent answer between Caesar and God is settled. Such a narrative is telling to the South African context that it is in a “dispensation” of political freedom without economics. There is an excessive bemoaning and decay of failing to do some duties, since this is due to the lack of economic power. Christ as

the revelation of God, reveals the place of Mammon and Caesar in contrast to God and the oppressed. Such a reading of the text through the trajectory and hermeneutics of black ecclesiology, the revelation of God is not placed with an enigmatic origin alone. It was the enigmatic being that filled the temple (Isaiah 6) in which Caesar's coinage was exchanged, while he was their oppressor. Christ's stance is an ethic that questions oppressor's coinage in the temple of the God of the oppressed.

If one understands the theological paradigm that places the church in economic struggle parallel to freedom, then God becomes apparent in the daily running of the world. Therefore, from the biblical records, there are incidents of exchange of coins in the temple God, hence that becomes apparent in His revelation to black people within the South African context. This is due to the reality of white supremacy; ecclesiology and economics over the black body and land. Colonialism, slavery, imperialism and institutional racism are economical as the prevalence of racism over the "free world". This indeed reveals the need for one to know what belongs to God and the oppressor. Black ecclesiology in history and experience was founded, emanated from the selling of slaves, colonialism of Africa under the "preaching of Jesus" and conversion. Such a conversion required spiritual and economic subjugation. The validity of this point ties within the history and existential context of blackness. This is especially the spiritual experience and prophetic tradition of the notion of a black church.

Such understanding gives new meaning to scripture and the context of black people, it also gives their liturgy that is linked both in instrument (sacraments) and symbolism. The Christian stance of the faith itself is that we are the body of Christ as the Epistles of Paul asserts and exhorts the believers. However, the black church takes another role of uniqueness because of aspect of being instruments and the symbolism. The black church is made of the physical black body that comes with serious vestiges of its history, origin and present day context in light to a dehumanising theology. The physiological blackness makes credence to the spiritual reality of the black church; hence the physiological realness of the black existence through white supremacy becomes the physical content, of engaging the worldliness of white supremacy. It is asserting pride, aesthetics, culture and dignity in light of the black experience, while ontological blackness expressed in black spirituality or the slave religion entered through physiology to the divine. It is this divine that revealed the spiritual 'profane' of white theological and ecclesiastical stance. The spiritual profane is revealed in economic and spiritual oppression of the black body, for God to be revealed as black in the black church is a confession

of the black body, which is made of believers and their ontological blackness against whiteness. Day (2012: 23) asserted:

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.

This black body is an expression of ecclesiology, but also the physiological make up of believers who should learn from the black preacher, to call the communal body of blacks into the black church and that the God revealed is black. Cone (2004: 150) has indicated the need for white theological or philosophical discourse that engages black thinkers. One can suggest that the black thinker is needed in thought on race, the black preacher also becomes one who speaks with the voice of God to black ecclesiology, even to white supremacy. This is relevant in the black church, its acquaintances and mission of origin: political, spiritual, economic and cultural commitments to the believers. Saul (2001:429) asserted the context of South Africa and the paradox of freedom in perpetuity of economic bondage in the new dispensation of post-apartheid:

A tragedy is being enacted in South Africa, as much a metaphor for our times as Rwanda and Yugoslavia and, even if not so immediately searing of the spirit, it is perhaps a more revealing one. For in the teeth of high expectations arising from the successful struggle against malignant apartheid state, a very large percentage of the population—among them many of the most desperately poor in the world—are being sacrificed on the altar of the neoliberal logic of global capitalism.

Saul²⁰ (2001: 429) further asserts:

One does not know whether to laugh or cry at this kind of realism—magical market realism, as I have termed it elsewhere for there is absolutely no reason to assume that the vast majority of people in South Africa will find their lives improved by the policies that are being adopted in their name by the present African National Congress (ANC) government. Indeed, something quite the reverse is the far more likely outcome.

The points that have been mentioned by Saul (2001: 429) are serious on the black condition and the dislocation of the black body, from economic freedom and authenticity. The framework

²⁰ Saul refers to magical market in an essay found in the Monthly Review.

in Saul (2001: 429) operates in the premise that the very base from which the ruling party operates is problematic, since it is a direct manifestation and representation of exploitation and its values as pointed out by Biko (1972: 21) on the expedient integration. Bompani (2006: 1138) pointed out that the end of apartheid saw an end of the churches' engagement in the political arena, with a caution that the churches were not actors; this is supportive of the ANC nation building. Bompani (2006: 1141) further added that there were persisting possibilities of clashes between ruling elites and the groups that resisted the apartheid regime. These groups were expected to put criticism and differences aside in the name of nation building. The present condition of black people necessitates a change of negative terms and conditions with the church engagement again in the political arena. The re-entry of the church in the political arena facilitates the confrontation of Jesus in the gospels with the money changers and a corrupt priesthood in the temple. Therefore, to have a revelation of the God of the oppressed and the temple coinage exchange, limits political restraints and refraining due to "correctness" and docility used as Christian caricature. Whereas coinage represented colonialism and imperialism in biblical times, it is of interest to consider that aspect of the oppressed imposed invisibility by their rulers become apparent. One therefore needs to consider that in their temple it is the face of Caesar that is visible. This point is crystallised again by the question posed by Christ to Peter concerning taxes, when he asked in Matthew (17: 24-26 KJV)

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, what thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, then are the children free.

This idea of children is a precise example and motif for South Africa, especially in the context of neo-liberal markets of capitalism that justifies the oppression of the people of colour. If by any means the coffers of history in light of the black experience are to be bound to account, facts and validity of God and the religious experience of the oppressed must be investigated and taken seriously. A theological discourse of resistance is thus unavoidable, as it should respond to the black existence animated to fragile and incomplete hope and future, a future with perennial imprints of white hands seeking to build a future for blacks. Wilmore (2006: 33) has pointed out that the God worshipped by slaves beneath the slave ship, was not the same worshipped by slave masters above the slave ship. As such, the merits of God's revelation on both accounts reveal two distinct ecclesiologies (liturgy, confessions and the sacraments). The

merit of that revelation is out of divine favour or cries of suffrage. The preceding climax of black Christianity and the notion of the black churches are born in a context of cries, miseries, deliverance and wealth. The invisible spirit of being, who is approached by the oppressed has to have a different ear, focus, ethic and justice. Raboteau's (1978: 290) wrote on the black version of Christianity that was not born out of conversion, this was rather a conversion resulting in slave rebellion and Christianity. Raboteau (1978:290) asserts: "Revolutionary interpretations of the Bible by such slaves as Vesey and Turner were proof to American slaveholders that slave Christianity could become a double-edged sword". Raboteau (1978: 295) further asserts:

Nowhere is the slave's rejection of the masters religion clearer than in their refusal to obey moral precepts held up to them by whites, especially commands against stealing. While white preachers repeatedly urged (Don't steal), slaves just as persistently denied that this commandment applied to them, since they themselves were stolen property.

The point of rebellion that refuses the prevailing ethic that justifies and condemns one is an indication of higher moral issue that is being raised.

4.6 NEOLIBERALISM AND REVELATION

Perhaps it is fitting to speak of the subject of neoliberalism and neo-colonialism in the South African context, in relation to the revelation of God. The relativity of such concepts and lived reality pushes forth in a theological discourse insurgence, as the key to the revelation of God in the black world, particularly the dialectical oppression of black people. Rodney (1973) has pointed out the sort of absurdity of Western development fuelled by oppression and the squander of natural resources and land. However, what is fundamental is the espousing of biblical text for liberation in light of the existential context, which prevails and overwhelms blackness. As having pointed out the point of revelation in South African context, particularly in terms of the church's doxology and pneumatic experiences is linked with economics, more clearly the biblical account of Christ encounter and confrontation with taxes elucidates this point. The context of the 'black church' moves to materialism and consumption, reveals the link and an interpretation of blessing by the poor and oppressed, though such struggles are represented by those who have not chosen the reality of justice for the marginalised. Posel (2013: 160) is correct in pointing out that the "fall" of apartheid ushered in South Africa into the global economy that is deeply rooted in consumption. It is significant even here to note that the global economy has been built on the back of blacks and indigenous people. Therefore, this

is an analogy to the history of black genocide that markets are marred by black blood. Nicolaidis (2012:126) correctly 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.” What is crucial in light of the current era is the critique that Day (2012: 107) has posited, when she asserts:

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.

Key to this move to prosperity within the capitalistic framework is Pentecostalism. Martin (2011:4) asserts:

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.

As a point of reflection, the black church has been characterised by African vestiges of dance, clap, song and spiritual experiences. However, even Thurman (1939: 515) has further pointed out that the African’s conversion saved Christianity; it is then significant to note that the church of Pentecost as recorded by the book of Acts was for the marginalised. This is similar to the black church and what is done to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, as it reflects how the link between God and the church, society and economics are linked. Further, there is a strong indication of this by the very fact that God killed both Ananias and Sapphira for deceiving the church. This is a narrative telling of the South African context and its reconciliation with a ‘Christian ethic’ that has left powers unmoved, un-surmounted and un-transcendable with all its efforts. Pheko (2012: 1) correctly asserted:

The South African liberation struggle was exceptional in the manner it captured popular imagination and influenced narratives of oppression across the world. Post-apartheid South Africa had two choices in this context; to continue the struggle in the context of transition to realise historical aspirations and the liberated South African dream, or to allow the pervasive hybrid capitalist mode.

Pheko (2012: 1) further points out that the dream for liberation in the South African context was stolen and the nature of apartheid capitalism remained as it is. There was also a change of

approach with regards to the World Bank, which had agreed to a redistribution of wealth approach given the nature of apartheid capitalism. Pheko (2012: 2) asserts:

Despite this, the ANC-led liberation movement chose not just reconciliation but arguably appeasement. This meant that white monopoly capital was not called upon to take responsibility for its complicity under apartheid and to commit to a serious transformative programme, even though the conditions existed for this. Instead it was given what it wanted in terms of neoliberal reforms and ‘economic stability’. Corporate social responsibility, tax payments and black economic empowerment to engender a new black bourgeoisie were considered sufficient and a normalising quid pro quo. Even this strategy has not worked with many monopoly firms moving offshore.

Pheko (2012: 2) further argues:

Instead of pursuing the dream of a transformed and non-racial South Africa, the ANC-led national liberation movement relied on neoliberal reforms with an African voice to bring a better life for all. The presumption was that South Africa would manage home-grown neo-liberalisation as a short term expedient in a different way from the rest of Africa and, indeed, the world. Thus, post-apartheid South Africa moved in a straight historical line from apartheid into a market-led development model, sometimes referred to as ‘Afro-neoliberalism.

The theological paradigm that one holds as the confrontation or encounter with Christ as the historically and pneumatically revelation of God, can be picked up in the South African context. That seems to suggest that the actions of Ananias and Sapphira to the followers of Christ, God of the oppressed, are at play in the fragile democracy of the South African context. Whereas Ananias and Sapphira are killed dead by the spirit of the God of the oppressed, in the settling and developing Christian community, today the spirit reveals an immanent and nearly complete death of black existence, particularly in areas of wealth, resources and land. It is a matter of serious reflection, which requires an analysis and social praxis. This is a matter which needs to consider why ethical South Africa cannot transform because it preserved “white power” under the guise of forgiveness, transformation and reconciliation. Americanisation which is deeply rooted in South Africa is perceived as a signal of freedom (clothes and bling, coupled with the pathological and perennial need for entertainment on the part of the youth) Nicolaidis (2012: 126) asserts:

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.

It is also significant to note that the United States of America (USA) pop culture emerges from black slaves. As such, if theological discernment is something to go with, the weapon developed from black suffrage has turned to bruise black people. Martinez-Roca & Vazi (2012:3) are correct when they assert: “Bling lifestyle in post-apartheid South Africa might then be associated to race issues and specifically to black Africans.” It would not be out of place to point out that there is certainly a lot of misgiving and misreading of the situation of the South African context. This is especially among the youth who are both victims and perpetrators of a differed dream. The biblical text as prophesied in apocalyptic literature, points out that in the period of eschatos, God will pour out His spirit to all flesh, hence, the text mentioning of young men and women, sons and daughters, prophesying and having vision concerning the day of the Lord. Therefore, to this end Muhammed on the *Donahue Show* pointed out a point that proves clarity on the South African context. He pointed out that there is no human being who leaves prison after 27 years to be president, unless there is a plan behind. This is not an incitement on Mandela alone, but rather a point of concern to South Africans. The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and Black Consciousness Movements (BCM) pointed out this plan that could be fashioned around Mandela and the ANC. Khalid (1994) adds that this is possible only for the removal of sanctions on the country and not a case of freedom, because the wealth remains where it has been from colonial times. These are points that have been raised by John Pilger’s *Freedom Next Time* and John Saul’s *Cry the beloved country*. As such, there seems to be a different rendition in theological reflection on the encounter and confrontation of Christ with the tax collectors, temple rulers and the Roman soldiers concerning taxes. Whereas, Christ responded by inquiring whose face was on the coin and seeing Caesar, the black church particularly in the South African context should see the face on the coin. The face on the coin unlike in Roman, occupied Palestine, is not a symbol of economic power and dominion, rather a reflection of titles, prestige and honour devoid of power. Pheko (2012: 2) correctly points out the results of this blunder of tokenism without power, she asserts:

Eighteen years later, a virtue has been made out of necessity. The great globalisation leap of national liberation has been a great leap into dystopia. The deepening of the South African economy’s immersion into global financial, production and trade structures through macroeconomic adjustment has produced a country with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world (40 per cent), obscene inequality (and worsening in comparison with, for example,

Brazil), a deepening ecological crisis (South Africa is the 13th-highest carbon emitter in the world and scary climate change scenarios face the country) and growing hunger. This is the short story of how the South African dream was stolen from the majority.

To further elucidate this dystopia, Pheko (2012: 4) asserts:

The underlining philosophy of neoliberal economy, a major component of globalisation, is that state intervention in the economic life of the people, however well intentioned, is counter-productive and therefore undesirable. The major policy of globalisation thus includes trade liberalisation, devaluation of national currencies against 'major' currencies, especially the US dollar and deregulation of the public sector or, simply, privatisation of public utilities. The social and economic consequences of these policies have been the retrenchment of workers and consequently, massive unemployment, reduction in government spending on social infrastructure, cut in government subsidies for social services wherever they are available and subsequent increase in the of cost these services.

What Pheko (2012: 4) attributes as dystopia is troubling for the South African democracy and reveals a sense of political premature behaviour, cocktailed with a theology of compromise. The premature behaviour can be discerned through the inclusiveness that South Africa, under the ruling party, wishes to portray to the world. It also seems that the utopian reality that was sought has revealed its face as this dystopia. Theologically, it would seem that black people in South Africa in their efforts of universalism have fallen prey to the same attitude and intent, which was encouraged by missionaries. Weisbord's (2003: 35) writings on evangelisation and missionary efforts and goals assert:

Camouflaging their greed and ethnocentric arrogance with sanctimonious language about a civilizing mission to uplift the downtrodden, to enlighten the benighted and to Christianise the heathen, a handful of European countries forcibly portioned the African continent.

One of the fundamental problems to be observed in black theological logic is black humanity's misreading of the text expressed; it is an obsession with idealistic divinity opposite to the sacredness and sanctification to be performed in the secular world (i.e. communities and societies). This idealistic divinity expresses the over spirituality of God, heaven and human beings as spiritual beings that are living in the material world. Ignoring that the secular world forms the ambience where sacredness can be assumed and observed from the scheme of things and judged, particularly as a point of departure from secularisation. This misreading is due to

the perpetual mentorship of black African spirituality by the “master” pedagogy of life; the Western world, whiteness and its interpretation.

During the era of Malcolm X and his engagement with fellow black leaders and revolutionaries, the CIA, FBI and the Americans vowed that now more than ever they needed to prevent the coming of the black Messiah, who would electrify black nationalism. In having to consider Stewart’s (1999: 100 & 104) view of the black church to black humanity and black leaders, one cannot dismiss that the Western world had read the scripture beyond idealistic divinity and located messianism in the black context as pivotal in the secular world. That had justified black oppression in all aspects inclusive also of ecclesiastical institutions.

It is important also to note that politically, the ideology of white supremacy proclaimed as part of its caricature divine inspiration and ordination. However, what in its end and spirituality was materially oriented and secularised. Thus, this clearly reveals subjugation, bastardisation of cultures and dispossession of blacks. Black African messianism is radical divinity from its pronouncements that God is not white, but black. Ironically, it is the white God that blacks within historically white churches offer prayers to and veneration, while African Initiated Churches are in a sense reacting to the white God, instead of disproving his existence as a figment of white dogmatic imagination. A proper black African theology will secularise the black Messiah in order to properly affirm his divinity from the disarray. The secular world permeates into ecclesiastical, political, cultural and economical situations. Biko (1978: 100) rightly argued:

We must realise that our situation is not a mistake on the parts 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.

Heaven is not some abstract and peripheral reality, but firstly begins in the ghettos as an express of ideals and aspiration, a “ghetto heaven” in a vulgarised sense, not to say that the ghetto is a place that blacks remain spiritually and materially contempt—this is far from an escape that is rather preferred. However, it is fundamental to form solidarity among the poor who are black and have been reduced to beasts and savages. In a sense within the black context, blacks do not need to go to heaven or even be in the comfort of luxury to have good morals, ethics, behaviours, mannerisms and benevolence. That will start in their daily engagements as black human beings sharing in the mutuality and authenticity of their life and existence. Considering

that whites have all these things, but remain docile, immoral and unjust to the issues that they have created for blacks.

4.7 GOD IS A NEGRO; CONFESSION OF BLACK SPIRITUALITY AND REVELATION

The realm of metaphysics which has also been colonised and corrupted by white supremacy is of importance in the realm of revelation, particularly the view of God conceived as a transcendental being whose existence surpasses space, time, mind and matter, thus is a being beyond what is conceivable. It is here that traditional metaphysics has dominated the space for an inconceivable and invisible God. This God has easily been led to obsolescence and oblivion of the oppressed in the world and the general plight of the human condition for those people of colour. Historically, the white theological and religious Christian experience upon blacks has been one that shouts the magnificence, power and glory of God, though one cautions that it is possible that this magnificence, glory and power of God is the white world cheer in dominating the world. To the black body, heart and souls this cheer has been accepted as a form of doxology of the *ecclesia* without grasp of a secular and political achievement of white positionality in the world. The God in the metaphysical realm is comforting; especially on His revelation is the realm of immateriality. Therefore, this immateriality also being taught by colonial Christianity is a God's place of abode. Thus a revelation in this realm is inconsequential to black humanity and the masses that are oppressed. Turner (1898) asserted:

We have as much right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you buckra, or white, people have to believe that God 'is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man. For the bulk of you, and' all the fool Negroes of the country, believe that God is white-skinned, blue-eyed, straight-haired, projecting-nosed compressed-lipped and finely-robed white gentleman sitting upon a throne somewhere in the heavens. Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by carvings, or by any other form or figure have conveyed the idea that the God who made them and shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why should not the Negro believe that he resembles God as much as other people? We do not believe that there is any hope for a race of people who do not believe that they look like God.

What Turner asserts (1898) can be thought of as a form of theological confession by the "altar" in the black church. This theological confession is also a doxology cognisant of the black human condition and religious experience. That can be described as a contradiction of conversion that reveals to the black Christian that the God who has been white is unreal. This

God has been a symbol of subjugation physically, symbolically and metaphysically and is unreal or at worst is an idol of black spiritual and political sterility. As such, God's authenticity fights for its space and for God to be known by blacks. It is important to reflect that a transcendental God who is white in symbolism, physically and metaphysically is a God that cannot only reach blacks. Hence, this God cannot be reached by blacks on any level and can create futile hope and serious black atheistic pessimism. The relation is that the dialectical God cannot reach blacks and black cannot reach Him (God). Such manifestation and representation of whiteness are un-transcendable to blacks. As such, the black Christian, if they fall in the belief of such a God, it is as good as worshipping nothing. Turner (1898) rightly captures this by asserting:

Demented though we be, whenever we reach the conclusion that God or even that Jesus Christ, while in the flesh, was a white man, we shall hang our gospel trumpet upon the willow and cease to preach. We had rather be an atheist and believe in no God or a pantheist and believe that all nature is God, than to believe in the personality of a God and not believe that He is Negro.

Such understanding is a realm of revelation, but fundamentally is a soteriological insignnia and redemption of the black self. That places a base of metaphysics of God built upon black physiology. It meant that black pigmentation in light of the scripture is a powerful symbol and colour, which finds validity in theological reflection. This soteriology of black self is a metaphysical, ontological and existential rejection of whiteness as a centre of focus and obsession. Biko's (1978: 53) definition of black consciousness extends the black theological spectrum of thought and experience, as it validates Turner's (1898) view. Biko (1978: 53) asserted black consciousness:

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.

It is significant to also note that Christianity has been given a different spirit by colonial Christianity, a spirit of docility and compromise, while tightly knitted with the thread of distortion. The distortion allows the influence of spirituality and the capturing of the African soul, since both the body soul) and land of blacks were dialectically linked in the mission of the white world, (Boesak 2004: 9). Biko (1978: 102) asserted:

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: 53) speaks of the deliberateness of a black human creation by the divine or by God. In that regard, blackness is a point of black humanity's origin, which begins from the womb. This blackness is a symbol of strength and this identity makes it impossible for the colonial mother who protects the child from its essence, biology and physiology to change its blackness (Fanon 1963:169-170). Further, this blackness within the liberation of the black self is a badge of honour, (Biko 1978: 52). Biko correctly argues:

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) also pointed out blackness as a point of rallying together and for solidarity against the oppressors. Turner (1898) makes a case for blackness that is theological, philosophic and political concerning blackness, he asserts:

Blackness is much older than whiteness, for black was here before white, if the Hebrew word, *coshach*, or *chasack*, has any meaning. We do not believe in the eternity of matter, but we do believe that chaos floated in infinite darkness or blackness, millions, billions, quintillions and eons of years before God said, "Let there be light," and that during that time God had no material light Himself and was shrouded in darkness, so far as human comprehension is able to grasp the situation. Yet we are no stickler as to God's color, anyway, but if He has any we should prefer to believe that it is nearer symbolized in the blue sky above us and the blue water of the seas and oceans; but we certainly protest against God being a white man or against God being white at all; abstract as this theme must forever remain while we are in the flesh.

Turner gives an approach that lays basis for an epistemological and existential God in blackness, though a metaphysics that allows God's colourlessness imposed by blacks, as opposed to whiteness of God given by whites and their assumed invisibility of blacks and invisibility of God.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The basis of this chapter was to dispel the normal accepted views of invisibility, as described by white supremacy, this is a neglect and dehumanisation of blacks and invisibility linked with visibility, secular and sacred, death and life. This chapter sought to put forward the means to overcome black invisibility. This is an aspect of theology rooted in the notion of a black church, which was both invisible and nameless, but emerged to be known and be visible. There is a fundamental link between this development of African religion and views of divinity, as these views ought to guide the theological discourse in areas of accepted dogma and the authentic expression of blacks.

CHAPTER 5: CHRISTOLOGY; A SOTERIOLOGICAL GOD REVEALED

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to explore the central theological paradigm that warrants the Christian faith and what is central to its belief, dogma and interpretation. This aspect is on Christology, which traces back to the early Christian community or the Jesus movement view concerning Christ. This chapter will discuss the common and unsophisticated view on the nature of Christ, as experienced and known by the first followers of Christ and the makeup of Christian ecclesiology and dogma. This view of Christology will run parallel with the more sophisticated interpretation of Christology. This Christology is more complex and is not part of the experience of those who were with Jesus, but is a future development of the church. This approach is necessary because it will attempt to reveal how diverse are Christologies that escape real experience and clear indication of the content of the incarnation and kenosis of Christ. That binds his bodily appearance as the cornerstone of God's human experience and solidarity with the people of the world.

Perhaps as a starting for theology and a Christology embedded in bodiliness, the Greek meaning and implication of *soma*²¹, gears towards the bodily experiences of the oppressed. The oppressed descriptive of those living in the modern period comprising of indigenous people, who are by product of colonial Christianity. This is making oppression a starting point for the case of divinity and the secular world. As a starting point of Christology, the oppressed are central to a doctrine of Christology and revelation of God, because of the use of the Bible in colonialism, as noted by (Pheko 1995:78). The use of *Christos* in world domination, human altering and the portrayal of the perfect human being (i.e., before a perfect God habiting the earth), poses a matter of theological convergence. This is concerning the experience and knowledge of the human and the divine. This reflection and outlook is against the backdrop of Western civilisation, Western theological abstractionism and white ecclesiology. This abstractionism finds fulfilment through white supremacy of the prevailing idea of God's abstraction, invisibility and deistic relation to people of colour. The centrality of the oppressed is crucially to the cause, soteriology and revelation of God. This is all for the development of

²¹ *Soma* is the Greek version of the body which can be linked to *schemati* which means form and is used in Philippians 2 to described fully Christ bodily implication and meaning of the incarnation.

a self-defined Christology that emerges from the authority of biblical text. This Christology emerges from Christian orthodoxy and bearing a physiological and historical evidence of the incarnate God through faith. The biblical text is a confirmation of recalling soteriological and historical elements of God's revelation; moreover, the importance of biblical texts as revelation is even upheld in Barthian theology. Barth (1936: 124) asserts: "The Bible is the concrete medium by which the church recalls God's revelation in the past, is called to expect revelation in the future, and is thereby challenged, empowered, and guided to proclaim." Barthian (1936: 124) further asserts: "But the Bible speaking to us and heard by us as God's Word attests the past revelation." While as part of dogmatic for the Christian church, Barth (1936: 124) is correct on the Bible and revelation. However, his correctness speaks for specific ecclesiastical pockets of Christianity, at least the authoritative and established one (Catholic and Protestant). It has to be superficial for the contribution to ecclesiastical traditions from the margins of society, for instance the black Christian church, it is not born out of biblical authority, in the given context of European or white supremacy and colonial Christianity. The black church is born out of human experience, despair, roots of theodicy and hopes, all which antecedes the accepted authority of the Bible by West. This view is essential in understanding humanity. The whites in particular, are playing the role of the divine and thus creating a theological, divine, dogmatic and ontological shift for Christianity. This ontological shift is a phenomenon influencing dogma and biblical authority that is supposed to be the recalling of past revelation of God. The proponents that argue for the authority of the Bible as God's revelation climaxed in the Christ. This is surely in a robust discourse on matters of the spirit and flesh that cannot accept blacks too easily to see the Bible as revelation. This especially in dogmatic, which is part and parcel of Western Christian thought. In some sense, the black church and the experience of the dehumanised antecedes reading the recorded revelation of God in the past, even in the personage of Jesus. It is however orthodox to the preceding records of the biblical revelation that demand a higher price for reflection. Therefore, to elucidate further, what Barth (1936: 124) refers to as the Bible, recalling the past revelation of God makes the black church and the oppressed the future of God's revelation. The future that Bible points to as a future of the revelations of God, for the black church or black Christian faith does not emerge out of dialect, theological jargon, concepts and conversion. It reveals the heart of God and a faith in God that needed not to know what is said about God in the Bible. Rather what God says to slaves, the oppressed and dehumanised, which is the central message of the Bible, namely deliverance. Mofokeng (1987:38) has pointed that the Bible is down trodden and Cone (1993: 13) has pointed out that the West see the cross abstractly. These are important to setting the

platform of a Christology that emphasised the coming of God into being flesh and in solidarity with the oppressed in God's human experience.

The human experience of God is central for the oppressed and as for the theological and truthfully authentic meaning of the incarnation. Barth (1936: 133) has pointed out that revelation means unveiling, hence Barth (1936: 134) further asserts: "Revelation in fact does not differ from the person of Jesus Christ, and again does not differ from the reconciliation that took place in Him." In that regard, to say revelation is to say, "The Word became flesh." It is at this point that attention has to be focused to revelation being a process of unveiling. It is an unveiling that does not simply hang on lofty metaphysics or abstractionism concerning the nature and being of God in the world and human life. Unveiling what Western Christianity has neglected namely; the human, which in turn allowed slavery, colonialism and white supremacy. This is to making slave and dehumanising and humiliating the oppressed, who in turn are deemed as non-human. It is going against biblical truth of human origins that is linked to God's existence and is marked by the seal of *Imago Dei*. However, it is significant to note that the slave religion identifies the truth of Christ. Christ who is in abstractionism is being preached to advantage Europe and at the same time is not the true reflection of the humanity of God in the Bible. The Word "made flesh" and "suffering" are precisely what black theology sees and what blacks see in Christ, especially in reference to cross and lynching tree, especially also in the realm of African religious experience as noted by Cone (2012: 3). It can also be argued that perhaps colonial Christianity underneath its theology, carried for blacks a docetic Christology that does acknowledge the explicit bodiliness of God on the cross. Yamauchi (1982: 1) writing on *The Crucifixion and Docetic Christology* asserts:

We often forget how incongruous a symbol for a religious movement the cross is. It was, after all, the means of capital punishment in the ancient world—the equivalent of the electric chair, the gas chamber, or the gallows.

He (1982: 1) further adds:

In spite of the Jewish curse on anyone who was hung upon a "tree" (Deut. 21: 22-23), the apostles boldly preached the resurrection of a Messiah who had been killed on a cross (Acts 5: 30; 10:29; 13:29; Gal. 3:13; 1 Peter. 2: 24). Knowing well that both Greeks and Romans regarded the cross as the humiliating punishment reserved for slaves and rebels, Paul preached Christ crucified and even declared that he who was equal to God had humbled himself to experience such a shameful death (Phil. 2:6-11).

The above reveals the humanness of Christ and being God that consummates well with the incarnation, but confirms the word being flesh by means of *Imago Dei*. This creates a point of solidarity for blacks, as well as distinct and orthodox tenets of the Christian faith with the human experience for both blacks and Christ. This precedes the accepted dogmas of historical white churches. Instead, pointing to black rediscovering the revelation of God in Christ and the Word of God becoming true. Such an outlook is reminiscent of what Pheko (1995: 75) speaks of distinguishing colonial Christianity and the message of the Bible. This is resulting in an authentic Gospel of Jesus, of which when obeyed never fails. It is this outlook and truth of Christianity that assures truth on the revelation of God in Christ and the importance of human experience, Barth (1936: 340) asserts:

God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself. If we wish really to regard the revelation from the side of its subject, God, then above all we must understand that this subject, God, the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation, identical also with its effect. This is at first merely indicative fact from which we get the hint to begin the doctrine of revelation with the doctrine of the Triune God.

The point of revelation being identical to the Revealer is coherent to a God who suffers as *Imago Dei*. The same applies to the humans that are God's creation as *Imago Dei* can meet with God through the incarnation. Without appealing to Trinitarian theology, it should be thought that the Triune God is precisely acknowledged in Christianity, because of Christ as personage of God and the human. The biblical witness of God's revelation testifies the humanity of Jesus as central to salvation. The Trinitarian authority of salvation emanating from Matthew 28, great commission and in whose authority they should be baptised. The *Pauline letter to Colossians* (Col 2: 9) testifies that "the fullness of the Godhead exists in Christ in bodily form". The personage of Christ as both the God and human crystalises general revelation by appealing to physiology and humanity in general (considering physiology as apart and as part of *Imago Dei*). It is appealing to the aspect of special revelation when it becomes God or the Word made of flesh. The humiliation of the cross and death are points of convergence. As such, the ecclesiastical tradition of the black church with the cross and lynching (see Cone) tree holds both Christ and the Bible. This is central to their ecclesiology rooted not in general doctrine on the Christian church, as represented by Western theology, but rooted in Christ and the manner in which the church is conceived in the world. Moltmann (1970: 279-280) correctly asserts:

The church cannot simply confirm to so-called modern Christian history, and it can even less afford a sectarian pose in opposition to a world it cannot understand. I am convinced that Christianity can show itself to be believable only by discovering its inner truth and then orienting its life, both practically and theoretically, in terms of the one who makes the church the Christian church, who makes faith Christian faith, and so makes theology Christian theology. The real essence of the church depends not on its ecclesiology but on its Christology. Whether the church is believable today depends on the faith which the church has in Christ. It will be relevant to the extent to which it identifies itself with the one who was crucified, and with his God

The point that Moltmann (1970: 279-280) makes is identification of the church with the crucified and that reality as being the inner truth of Christianity. This links the early church with the black church conceived on the suffering of blacks and vivid mirror of suffering in Christ. Both Christian communities (early and black church) looked at the bodiliness of a suffering servant, therefore, God as opposed to Christ on the throne of glory reigning on high and against the oppressed because Christ has been made identical to the crown. Thus this implicates the Christian church, as noted by Biko (1978:61). Biko (1978:61) further notes of the South African church as well as everywhere linked and having bureaucracy. While Cone (1993: 13) asserted;

Many modern-day Lutheran scholars are often even worse, because they turn the cross of Jesus into a theological idea completely unrelated to the concrete historical struggles of the oppressed for freedom.

As such, the emphasis of Barth (1936) on the Bible and maintaining the transcendental character of God's revelation is fundamental in the doctrine of revelation. However, it should contend with the view of grasping the human condition, nature and role in the doctrine of God. The emphasis on the human condition is not necessarily a glance at human life, but taking into account the oppression of the Jews, which God becomes part of and the need of an all-encompassing soteriology. Moltmann (1970: 282) correctly asserts:

Christian theology must look at the question of Christ's suffering before looking at the suffering of the world. It can form a critical theology of its contemporary environment only in as far as it has experienced the critique of the cross. Only when we are clear as to what happened on the cross between Jesus and his God can it be clear who this God is for us and for our experience.

The above reflection is correct and perhaps for a black church and a black Christology of the suffering of Christ. The reception of his message is pertinent for the development of the early

church and for the subject of revelation within the black experience. This then allows a deep reflection in parallels, doxology and *kerugma*, for the early church and for the black faith. This is particularly the form in which the Bible becomes vivid and not abstract. It is significant to note the humanity of Christ and the stressing on the flesh of the word, instead of simple and shallow reflection of the incarnate that brings the question of the humanity of Christ as central and missing in Christianity. It would seem that by all accounts, Western Christianity has by all attempts tried to avoid the Arian²²(325) controversy. It has instead brought Christological deism and Docetism, in a sense, the deism features in when the humanity of Christ is not seen as point of convergence. That is undermining an emotional and communal care of God for creation, especially in soteriology. The Docetism features are that Christ's physiological and existential manifestation of *Imago Dei* is seen emblematically as opposed to truth and history. This is for a "cheap and abstract soteriology" that neglects the group that Christ is born within and grows up in leading to the death on cross. It further undermines the build up to Christ's soteriology with Western theologies' abstractionism that turns the agony of the cross to an abstract and intellectual exercise.

5.2 BLACK CHRISTOLOGY A NEW PARADIGM IN REVELATION

The history of the Christian church and survival of its doctrine is both the work of the *kerugma* and the advances of Christological controversies that establish the Christ of Christianity. That lay bare the meaning of Christ or even seemingly the evasiveness and eclipsing of the content of an assumed difference between divinity and humanity. This with intermingled and married in singularity that only appears divided by virtue of lenses of spectrum and paradigm. These lenses implicate the theological dual meaning of Yeshua of Nazareth and Yeshua the Christ. Both aspects of materialism and divinity contend for space, relevance and identity of Yeshua the Christ and Son of Man with the centrality he possesses for a Christian faith. This makes God and humanity central to the doctrine of the church, doctrine of God, doctrine of humanity and revelation. As such, reflecting an area of significance to troubling times of existence, human meaning and purpose running parallel with *Imago Dei*. The transcendence, immanence and existentiality of God or the ontological aspect of being, in motion characterised by human experience. It is important to assert what is central in the belief of Apostles. God made human

²² Arianism is part of the Christological controversies of the third and fourth century concerning the nature of Jesus. It usually stood between his humanity and divinity. The significance that Christological controversies serve is that they direct the footprints of Christian theology and how we have come to accept Christ. A process that is form more complex than simply ascribing humanity or divinity of Christ as the revelation of God (special revelation).

and dwell among the masses and is the content of Christology, points to a coherence of faith of accepting the humanity of Christ or the divinity of Christ. The classical possession of the Christian faith is that Christ humanity and divinity has been accepted. However, a faith of the oppressed, dehumanised and that suffering surely does not easily confirm this position. This therefore finds central the purpose and experience of Christ's humanity, for God plans to save the world. Anyway, this is a man of physical content who dangles upon the tree to fulfil God's purpose and the safety of the destiny of humanity. As such, the humanity of Christ is a point of departure from simplistic views of the special revelation of God in Christ specifically. This is especially if such doctrines evade the existential possession of Christ's parallel humiliation and purpose, which in Christianity considers him a deity who bleeds and lives beyond the grave.

The contention for Christological controversies namely; divinity and humanity, fits in well in the doctrine of revelation. This is espoused in black theological thought and the black church, while holding to a new meaning or understanding of general revelation and special revelation that is manifested in bodiliness of the divine. What is also of importance is the question of a *gnosis* that suggests a deeper meaning and reading of the incarnate in revealing the transcendental being, having a heart filled with existential content which is the lives of human being on earth, thus suitable also for a soteriology with a God in motion. The transcendental being that becomes flesh, binds oneself to human experience and committed to it even to death of the human experience. A new paradigm doctrinal critic through black theology and the "metaphysical" aspect of Christian theology, the quest is not to over spiritualise Christ sacrifice. One could consider the crucified as a God-made man and suffers at the hands of human beings, which is typical of blacks suffering at the hands of white human beings. The point of Christ's humiliation as the transcendental being fosters in the view not be amazed at God's sacrifice. In that regard, it is a testimony to a commitment to loving and saving humanity at any cost, it entails the existential, social, ontological and metaphysical aspects to the drama of salvation. This broadens the scope of reason when *Dei* is found as *Imago Dei*. The essence and absolute becomes the image, likeness and form, of true essence and the absoluteness of being. This is where the black church through black theology affirms God's special revelation in matters of soteriology and the general revelation embodied in bodiliness that suffers pain, death and mutilation. Perhaps it is fitting for the early church of the *Didache*²³, directly linked

²³ Didache is the teaching of the Apostles and precedes the New Testament.

with the Apostles without concrete theological and dogmatised ocean of Christian creeds. This is also the content which informs Paul's theology, as also emerging from the early songs of the church²⁴. The church expresses how the marginalised believe in Christ human experience, the *Kerugma* of early testimony of Christ witness. New Testament scholars note how some of Paul's Christology inspired by the doxology of the early "insignificant", Jesus cult of Galilee under Roman rule and the crown. That sang; for instance. Philippians 2:5-11 assert:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:⁶ who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The above text and idea of an early church hymn that was sang by the early believers and which shaped the Christology is supported by Hull (2009: 172) when he asserts:

If we could wander back through time and slip into a little house church in ancient Corinth some early morning on the first day of the week, we might be surprised at what we would hear. Paul, in describing one of these gatherings, writes in 1 Corinthians 14.26, Each one has a song, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Each one. Imagine that. Everyone brought a gift to the worship, and some people brought songs. The word I translated as song is the Greek *psalmos*, which could possibly be understood to mean that someone sang one of the OT psalms, but I have taken it in the broader sense of a song of praise. That the early Christians sang in worship is certainly not surprising. Jews who confessed Jesus as Messiah had grown up hearing and singing the psalms of Israel, and other songs as well, for their holy books preserved such inspired compositions as the Song of Moses (Exod 15.1-18) and the Song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5.2-31). Greeks and Romans who confessed Jesus as Lord were also acquainted with the custom of singing in worship; songs in praise of Zeus and Isis, for example, have been preserved in their literature.

Scholars have insisted that central to this text (Philippian 2) is the hymn style and poetical structure it possesses. It is having a theological grasp of the divine and human work of the

²⁴ Bratcher speaks of the Poured out life; the Kenosis Hymn in context a focus of Philippians 2: 5-11.

“body” of Christ in salvation. In other words, the bodiliness of Christ, which is important to the black bodies, is facing despair, because of white supremacy and humiliation. This view of Christ body reveals a theology of emptying a; *Kenosis*, as understood by the Christian community, at least the Philippians and the taking on of human form. Perhaps in the context of the black experience, such poetic melodies are descriptive of the blues and the spirituals, which entail a theology of similar fashion. This is concerning Christ’s body and the body of a slave, both as ambiances for soteriology and a new expression of humanity. Such an understanding of the Christian faith, a pre-scribed belief of the early church reveals that this church had its own authentic life force. The church further has a theological lifeline that emerged from within to influence a vision of the crucified Christ in the world outside. Hull (2009: 172) asserts:

There was something about singing that was so characteristic of early Christian life that Paul includes it among his exhortations to the Ephesians (5.19) and Colossians (3.16), telling them to speak to each other, teach and encourage each other by means of psalms, hymns, and spiritual odes. I think there may be a valuable clue here about how songs functioned in the community lives of the early Christians, namely, that they were not simply embellishments of their gatherings for worship, but were central to what we might call the curriculum of the school of Christ.

Thus a reading of the early church history, together with the blues and the black experience ponders on the subject of Christology, *Kenosis* and God assuming humanity. A link of transcendence and the existential, precede Christological controversies. Fundamentally, this aspect of the *Kerugma and kenosis* implicates general and special revelation. Another aspect that necessitates a careful focus on a Christology for a new vision is what is meant by the connotation of a general and special revelation. It is the doctrine of revelation and Christology that places centrality to early Christian faith of the *kenosis*. This *kenosis* should not be simply defined by philosophical exposition and theological hermeneutics or as hermeneutics that see the incarnation as a romance of the divine emptying self or seen as deep truths and embellishments on the subject of metaphysics in the physiological appearance of being in the man Christ. The *kenosis* has an existential character and an invaluable meaning to Christianity central content of belief. Wright and Kelly²⁵ (2013) in discussing *The Bible; Gospel, Guide or Garbage*, point out that the danger that Christian doctrine and theology suffered is the Greek and Roman ideas. These ideas are carried into the faith by the early theologians who brought Platonic abstractions that Jesus was contending with the Olympian Gods, while the truth is that

²⁵https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTpgvI_vUjc*The Bible; Gospel, Guide or Garbage.*

Jesus was a better human being saving humanity as part of humanity. This was the loftiness that often protrude of “Being” in terms of an ego between the Creator and creation, whilst giving impression of transcendental hidden truth, seated in the realm of the unknown and veiled from the ignorance of humanity. Wright and Kelly (2013) have critiqued the false image given to the Judeo-Christian God, in terms of the “abstract” god of the philosophers. They further stress that the Hebrew God accounts for human messiness. These points contrast to the view of hiddenness, the unknown of God and ignorance promoted by Western theology. These points are important for a black church, black theology and their own biblical and philosophical encounter with the divine to dispute this divine who is unknown and this “unknown” as not rooted in luxury of thought and laziness or backwardness. Rather seen as a tool that solidifies colonialism, conversion and European self-appointed to guide and for conquest of blacks. This conquest of blacks was brought by the reign of Western civilisation under a learnt, emptied and imposed existence built by white hands and their theology. The traditional Christian tradition holds the view from the selected and white theological giants, towering over all thought and human experience. This is due to the view that their “truth” are cushioned and excused as dogma despite foreign influence that does not even appeal to the common believer in Galilee. This approach of accepting things under Christian dogma is prevalent, especially in areas of speaking for God. It is widely favoured by Western theology and the Western church that regard these concepts as authority. Though Setiloane in Masoga (2012: 326) and Wright and Kelly (2013) prove that these positions affected authentic Christian dogma, they are detached from the marginalised audience of Galilee or Samaria.

It is significant to note that *kenosis* has been understood, at least from the metaphysical and academic stance that fuels Christian theological tradition. This theological tradition is the emptying of the divine to human content as expressed in Phillip 2: 5-11. It is also significant to note that the early Christian community is defined by oral tradition and *Kerugma*. These lenses of black theology reflect a different view of the church from the later developments of the church. The church became more systematic, formal, structural and academic, distinct from the oppressed such as fishermen, prostitutes, lepers and those on the margins that comprised the nature of the church of Christ. Hull (2009: 174) asserts on Philippians 2 and the Jesus movement:

What shall we name this hymn? The answer may depend on what you understand the function of the hymn to be. The essential movement of the hymn is not in question: It traces the descent of Messiah Jesus from the highest status to the lowest and up to the highest again. But is it

basically a theological statement an assertion that the man Jesus had a pre-existent divine identity, that he gave this up in humble obedience to God, resulting in his crucifixion, and that God has now exalted him as Lord?3 If so, we might put over the hymn the title The Divine Christ Humiliated and Exalted.

Hull (2009: 175) further adds:

The hymn not only foreshadows the letter; everything following the hymn reaches back to it; the hymn backgrounds the letter. That's precisely the force of the so then, or therefore, of 2.12. To participate in Christ is to share in the story of his downward movement from power to humble obedience, even if it might lead to rejection, suffering, fear and trembling.

The point that is fundamental in Hull's (2009: 175) assertion is the downward movement from power to humble obedience. This point is significant because the theological reflection, meditations and tradition of the first followers lose some of its human experience in Western theology and Western Christianity. The human experience that embodies the experiences of lowly, the humble and oppressed, as conception of early believers concerning the essence about God and God's nature. The loss of the human experience relates with the lowly life of Christ which is ventilated out in the formalised and Western view of Christian faith and theology, Biko (1978:61) again stand to correct by arguing: "how the church everywhere is spoilt by bureaucracy." As such, the *kenosis*, does not only find serious theological meaning from the Apostle Paul's letter alone, but has historical bonds and is typical of the early church's theology. The composition of early church theologically and in doxology, is surely fundamentally distinct to the *kenosis* of Christian philosophical and metaphysical treatise of the incarnation and the nature of Christ. The doctrine of the word is the word being flesh and dwelling among the masses who beheld the glory of God filled with compassion. The Stanford Encyclopedia (2012: 8) under the title *Philosophy and Christian theology* records on *kenosis*;

The kenotic view (from the Greek *kenosis* meaning to empty) finds its motivation in a New Testament passage which claims that Christ Jesus ...though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.... (Philippians 2:6-8, NRSV). According to this view, in becoming incarnate, God the Son voluntarily and temporarily laid aside some of his divine attributes in order to take on a human nature and thus his earthly mission.

Furthermore, it records that if the *kenotic* view is correct, then (contrary to what theists are normally inclined to think) properties like omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence are not essential to divinity. Something can remain divine even after putting some or all of those properties aside, however the problem is that if these properties aren't essential to divinity, then it is hard to see what would be essential. The so-called 'omni-properties' seem to be constitutive of divinity; they are the properties in terms of which divinity is defined. If we say that something can be divine, while lacking those properties, then we lose all grip on what it means to be divine, however, if Wright and Kelly²⁶(2013) are correct in discussing the Bible and reflecting that the theology of the West is filled with Hellenistic ideas and philosophy. It can be concluded that the *kenosis* of the early church did not focus on the abstractness of God, but rejoiced the humility of God in being the man Jesus.

These points above concerning *kenosis* and incarnation reflect how the philosophical and theological baggage, particularly of the West sees a need for definitive answers about humanity and God. As such, God's revelation cannot be contained in general and special revelation. It is fundamental in the doctrine of revelation for a Christian theology to hold firm to what the early Christian community understood about God and God coming to them and dwelling among them. This is not an act of philosophical reflection or the motion of "Being". Rather a space of "Being", being among the crushed and finding value in the village in Nazareth of Galilee. Thus, this is the true proclaiming of the existential positionality in history of God and God's role in the human condition. This is contrary to biblical times and a typology of the present era of the bureaucracy of the royal palace in the temple as the dwelling place of the scribes, chief priests, Sadducees and Pharisees who together with their God evade daily human reality. The incarnate and how it's understood by the early Christian community shapes the whole of Christian theology and the link of secular with the divine. Therefore, Paul through the image of the temple and the daily experiences of the oppressed, draws for his Christology on reverence for God's humility and God's choosing of the poor, oppressed and concerned in struggles of human beings. Even the context in the Pauline epistle to Philippians, namely Philippians 2, a careful reading reveals not the lofty philosophy of *Kenosis*. The chapter is rather concerning being exemplary, particularly the starting point when Philippians 2 saying; "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...". This sets the platform for the *Kenosis* and Christian theology

²⁶https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTpgvI_vUjc The Bible: Gospel, Guide or Garbage.

that ought to be exemplary to others in the world as the salt of the world. It is perhaps here that the Western Christian theologians, colonial Christianity and philosophers miss the mark, especially the exhortation and emphasis of Christ's mind. The exemplary character of Christ humility is what makes him inherently the perfect human and subordinate to God, even to point of death. Stanford Encyclopedia (2012) also asserts on the nature of Christ and essential property:

Philosophy of biology, for example, that there are no properties possession of which are jointly necessary and sufficient for membership in, say, the kind *humanity*. Moreover, it is very hard to find any interesting properties—apart from properties like having mass or being an organism—that are even merely necessary for being human. That is, it seems that for any (interesting) property you might think of as partly definitive of humanity, there are or could be humans who lack that property. Thus, many philosophers think that membership in the kind is determined simply by family resemblance to paradigm examples of the kind. Something counts as human, in other words, if, and only if, it shares enough of the properties that are *typical* of humanity. If we were to say the same thing about divinity, there would be no in-principle objection to the idea that Jesus counts as divine despite lacking omniscience or other properties like, perhaps, omnipotence, omnipresence, or even perfect goodness. One might just say that he is knowledgeable, powerful, and good *enough* that, given his other attributes, he bears the right sort of family resemblance to the other members of the Godhead to count as divine.

Stanford Encyclopedia (2012) further records:

Some have offered more refined versions of the kenotic theory, arguing that the basic view mischaracterizes the divine attributes. According to these versions of the kenotic view, rather than attribute to God properties like omniscience, omnipotence, and the like, we should instead say that God has properties like the following: being omniscient-unless-temporarily-and-freely-choosing-to-be-otherwise, being omnipotent-unless-temporarily-and-freely-choosing-to-be-otherwise, and so forth. These latter sorts of properties can be retained without contradiction even when certain powers are laid aside. In this way, then, Jesus can divest himself of some of his powers to become fully human while still remaining fully divine.

What is fundamentally clear between the early Christian church and more organised Christianity is that the latter seeks to speak and speculate about God. The former builds on the experience of the early followers of Christ and is closely linked to the humanity of Christ. In a sense, the humanity of Christ is the centre stage for authentic divinity expressed. Setiloane in

Masoga (2012: 326) is correct when pointing out that the West and its theology have corrupted and misunderstood divinity. The use of Greek and Roman philosophy for a Hebrew faith is a major point in prohibiting a clear image and picture of the essential character. This is clearly the substance and essence of Christianity and God's revelation. The corrupted version of divinity hinders a self-defined experience and knowledge of the divine, thus implicating the connotations and the content of God's revelation. It's sufficient when considering what Setiloane (Masoga 2012: 326) points to, which reveals that despite the dogmas associated with Christianity, there is sufficient pointers within and outside to the fact that, the accepted version of Christianity might not necessarily capture the faith of the fishermen from Galilee. It is also significant to recount Thurman's (1939: 515) view of Christianity and the Negro:

It was a fateful moment in the life of the new world when the African slave was brought face to face with the Christian religion. It may be that then, as now, this black minority was called upon to redeem a religion that the master and his posterity disgraced in their midst. Be that as it may the fact remains—the slaves became Christians.

The aspect of blacks redeeming Christianity from the disgrace of the slave master is a navigating tool for a new interpretation, which is linked with the early Christian church of the marginalised. The Saviour acknowledged and revered as God, comes from the lowly and remote city of Nazareth. The black experience, which has the encounter of Africans and colonial Christianity, gives a deeper twist to the incarnation and *kenosis*. The Saviour becomes beyond metaphysical and transcendental embodiment in the flesh and also stands as the convergence of authentic Christianity between the early church and the black experience.

It is significant to speak of Christology, even from the premise of the Old Testament at least before a development of ecclesiastical tradition of the New Testament and Christian theology. This is significant at least with the black experience in mind and in reflection, because the Christology is dominant in traditional Christian discourse, theology, soteriology and doxology. This doxology is a Christ's antecedent idea of a redeeming God, who has been useful for those in power. What is also fundamental is that the Christology of the Old Testament is a true reflection of the Christ, as understood by his followers. It is perhaps here that the validity of Old Testament is fundamental for early Christianity and especially in the context of blacks. Mofokeng (1987:38 & 39) correctly 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.

It is significant to note Mofokeng and Malone's (2007: 311) view of how the Christian church neglects some of the pertinent reflections of the Old Testament. It is important to grasp the subject of God's revelation and the role of Jesus within the Old Testament, which has usually supported general revelation. However, the presence of Christ or Christology in the Old Testament (OT) solidifies how the West creates two theologies. It comprises of the OT theology, which is useful if it supports a certain kind of Western theology, while the New Testament (NT) is used for God's invisibility, though God's dwelling is pertinent and historically manifested. Mofokeng (1987: 39) pointed out: "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."

A point that Erskine (1981: 37) also alluded to when he asserts:

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.

The point that Erskine (1981:37) raises leads to seeing the validity of scripture in black Christianity. Secondly, how the New Testament's Christ is part of the revelation process from the Old Testament. This point is significant in conceptualisation or restoring the picture of a Messiah, the Christ and the Son of Man who is indwelling in the *kerugma* and should be in any live ecclesiology. There is a clear positioning of how in Christological controversies, especially in relation to how Jesus of Nazareth at least in classical scholarship remains an abstract God. Thus, there is indication of Christ magically transferring from a lay and lowly Jewish preacher from obscure beginning and an insignificant city of Nazareth to suddenly being the staff of legends, which later question his divinity and humanity of Christ in Kyrios Christology. Black (2016: 7) correctly asserts:

Isa. xlv. 23 is the basis of the Kyrios christology: ' Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord', and verse 10 gives the theological reason, because God has bestowed this very name upon Jesus: the ' name above every name' is the sacred name of

Jahweh, the Kyrios of the Greek Old Testament.⁶ It could be this Kyrios christology - the 'transfer', so to speak, of Kyrios attributes from *Jahweh*, *Kupios* Os6s, to Jesus, *Kupios Xpicrros*

The point raised by Black (2016: 7) is fundamental for the oppressed and the theology that has focused solely on transcendence and maintaining the abstraction of God. Black (2016: 1) has stressed the point of the Old Testament and its Christological use since the time of Jerome and how it links to the Christian tradition. In the same vein of thought, what Black (2016: 1-2) points to is a more radical shift of hermeneutical tools for a different hermeneutics. It is significant to note that biblical studies that have been inspired by the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* contain seeds of Christian theology. What is of interest is the manner in which Christology and God's revelation through the Messiah was viewed in pre-Christian theology as expressed in the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, which also carry concerns of the Messiah's expectation, Black (2016: 2) notes:

The first 4Q_Test. collection, in combining texts from Deuteronomy and Numbers (Deut. v. 28-9, xviii. 18-19; Num. xxiv. 15-17; Deut. xxxiii. 8-11), while not without interest for students of the New Testament, is of greater importance for the Messianism of Qumran; the three texts testify to the expectation of a Moses-like Prophet and the two Anointed Ones of Aaron and Israel, the high-priestly and the Davidic messiah.

The messianic expectation for oppressed Jews meant deliverance and thus the Moses-like Prophet, Aaron high priesthood and Davidic character are fulfilled in Christ. This fulfilment serves an important part for Christology. Black stresses that insight into such a background gives rooms to the use of such tradition in the gospels, Black (2016: 3) further argues:

The occurrence of Deut. xviii. 18-19 (the Moses-like Prophet) in the first collection, together with 4Q Flor, suggests even a Lukan use of Qumran testimonia in Acts. The origin of the *Xpistos*, *vios* titles in this Davidic strand of Jewish messianic tradition is now fully certain, even if it is not the only source, in pre-Christian Judaism, of the whole christological concept of the Son.

The importance of this use is an indication of a hermeneutic, which was used to develop New Testament and Christian messianism that as Black (2016: 3) notes included the connotation of Jewish and apocalyptic or eschatological views. This is also a Davidic connection to the Messiah. Furthermore, Black (2016: 3-4 & 7) has noted that there is also a point of interest and significant links between the Son of God and the Holy Child, while in another place Black (2016: 7) observes Jewish interpretation of messianic interpretation of *Isa liii* and the

Christology behind the Christian hymn of Philippians 2: 7-10. This is linked with three motifs, that is, Jesus as the Son of Man, as Servant of the Lord and Jesus as *Kyrios*. These points are fundamentally important for a meaningful Christology that differs in reflection, meditation and application. The points differ with the vague and abstract Christ represented by the West and their churches. It is important here to mention that Christ is accepted by black believers as the Son of Man. Christ is the suffering servant accepting sorrow and suffering, since his lot and the will of God (Isiah 53) is a logical approach behind black oppression and liberation with them having accepted Christ as the *Kyrios*, without exclusive and separate theological interrogation to what these titles really mean. In the same way that vague and Christology seeks to explain Christ in metaphysical terms, instead of a metaphysics rooted in the political, ontological and existential context of faith and human experience. What it means to be the Son of God as Ps ii: 1-2 employs the verse “thou art my son today I have begotten thee”. Black (2016: 3) notes that this verse was used in the *Book of Acts of the Apostles* iv. 25 and was part of the Christian prayer offered by Christian community and carries with it the decree. Black (2016: 3) further notes that connotation to this is that kings and rulers do what God has decreed. He points to the fact that with Jesus such an OT verse with it decree shows a shift in role and perhaps theological application. Black (2016: 4) asserts:

The decree of Ps. ii. 7 here has a different role. There is a shift of application from the resurrection of Jesus to his passion. The decree mentioned in the middle of Psalm ii was evidently taken by the primitive church to be both prospective and retrospective. . . 'This means that the divine decree which related to the 'begetting' or creation of the divine Son embraced, in the Christian *peshet* tradition, passion, resurrection, ascension, and the final *parousia*.

Black (2016: 4) notes that this reveals the Christian understanding of bearing witness to the Davidic *testimonia* and is of significance in the development of Christian Christology in the New Testament, Black (2016: 4) asserts:

At any rate, it is sufficiently clear that the Christian understanding of this closely related group of Davidic testimonia (II Samuel, Ps. ii. 7, and Amos ix. 11) has had an important influence on the development of the Son of God christology in the New Testament. It is a new kind of Davidide messianism, however, or rather of Davidic christology, which the New Testament develops. Already in the speeches in Acts, and even earlier in pre-Pauline tradition it is little more than the outward shell of Davidic messianism which has survived. The traditional terms and titles, now reappearing in Greek dress as *Xpistos*, *vios*, are wedded to a new kind of messianic doctrine, 'how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he

was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures'. But according to what Scriptures? The central problem of New Testament christology lies here.

Perhaps what is sufficient and relevant from above is the shift in focus on the role of Christ and decree of Christ, which in the context of this research should implicate Christ, whom Christ was where he was born and grew up. These questions provide at least a leeway in grasping the God who emptied himself to die for humanity. What then does it truly mean to be the Messiah and Redeemer of Israel and the world and the suffering servant as well as the God of the oppressed, while also reflecting that the biblical world has been left behind in the theological reflection on Christology. For instance, the mention of the *Dead Sea Scrolls* which were written by the Essenes²⁷ give clarity even on the subject of Christology as they too, were awaiting the Messiah to deliver them. White (1998:2) recorded the following regarding the Essenes:

The Essenes are a group that literally abandoned Jerusalem, it seems, in protest... against the way the Temple was being run. So here's a group that went out in the desert to prepare the way of the Lord, following the commands, as they saw it, of the prophet Isaiah. And they go to the desert to get away from what they see to be the worldliness of Jerusalem and the worldliness of the Temple. Now the Essenes aren't a new group in Jesus' day. They too, had been around for a hundred years at that point in time. But it would appear that the reign of Herod, and probably even more so, the reign of his sons and the Roman Procurators, probably stimulated a new phase of life of the Essene community, [whose profile started] rising as [because of the] growing protest against Roman rule and worldliness.

The above statement reveals a deep theological gap that is often neglected, especially in areas of the Christ being on the side of the oppressed. In addition, this is an indication that the role of the Messiah, which has been marked by transcendence, adoption of the man Jesus by God at baptism and the immanence of God, is far deeper than reflections of theological thought. Similarly, the view that God's revelation is self-depended, negated and necessitated by the will of God seems to be problematic, especially if one would consider that the biblical text points to Christ's coming as expected, particularly by those facing the existential, despair, poverty and victims of injustice or foreign rule. This position can equally be tallied by the writing of

²⁷ Essenes White, LM, 1998. *The Essenes and the Dead Sea Scroll (From Jesus to Christ—The First Christians)* FRONTLINE PBS, Accessed 3/30/2016.

the Apocalypse of John (the Book of Revelation), who saw the blood of the saints before the altar of God, after the woman and beast have been drunk by the blood of the saints, implying the impending existential reality making the communion between God and humanity.

There is an indication on the transcendental and existential position of the heart of God; the God who tells the Apostle John in the Apocalypse that the time will be shortened for those who suffer. These points are mentioned to show White (1998: 2) and Black (2016: 23), how the existential implicates the vision of the Apocalypse or the eschatological, especially when God is expected to intervene in human history. Paul writes in the book of Galatians 4:4, that the fullness of time was a determinant for Christ to be revealed in birth and bound by the law. What White's (1998: 2) records on the Essenes, which is central to Christology is important in the vital role that the biblical world and Judaic apocalyptic groups play in revitalising an authentic Christology or the Messiah. This is preceding the dominance of the Western churches under Roman Catholicism and Protestant churches. This re-vitality coupled by insight into the biblical world reveals this expectation, necessity and anxieties on what in the West has been termed the "special revelation of God". This special revelation of God is in truth a part of the Old Testament and apocalypse. White (1998) has also noted the role of the Messiah or messiahs, which has been noted by Black (2016), who on both accounts Messiah or messiahs are thought of as being priestly and prophetic, an attribute that has been shared by the black church and black theology as a priestly and prophetic church²⁸. Barnes (2004: 202) asserts:

In their seminal work on the black church¹ and the African American experience, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya (1990) suggest a dialectical model that places the black church between its priestly and prophetic functions.² Priestly functions focus on the spiritual or "other worldly" dimensions of religious life; its polar opposite positions the black church as a change agent. Prophetic black churches are involved in events that lead to economic and political empowerment and the maintenance of cultural and racial/ethnic identity.

What is fundamental when considering the Christology, as inspired by the biblical world is that the Messiah comes in an eschatological and apocalyptic vision to lead the sons of light against the sons of darkness. These sons of darkness are led by the false priest, prophet and man of lie²⁹. It is significant to note that the black experience is within its own rights to hold Western

²⁸ Barnes 2004 discusses the central points of the priestly and prophetic.

²⁹ See Dead Sea Scrolls war of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness. This is a Christological and eschatological vision of the messiah and the coming reign that the messiah ushers in.

theology in the colonial framework of darkness. It is a false priesthood of wanting to guide or navigating all people with its theology, as authentic and the will of God. The Christology perhaps of blacks within the scope of biblical revelation is both general and special, hence, it can be sufficiently drawn and deduced from the biblical world, the Bible, the black experience and a self-developed hermeneutic. Renate (1974:38) correctly 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.

It is sufficient also to point out that for even within the caves of Qumran³⁰ (and the writing of apocalyptic groups such as the Essenes, there is a deep level of nationalism against the colonialist including those who defile the land, customs, beliefs, culture and traditions of the Hebrews. This then lays a profound grasp of the incarnation of God, if the act of the incarnation is placed within the locus of the marginalised. Furthermore, it is oppressed with a further stress to the emptying of God in the book of Philippians 2: 5-11 to be a servant, bearing in mind that this was a hymn for a far less theologically complicated early Christian community that grasped the *kenosis*, humanity and divinity of Christ, which was later forgotten by the latter theologically sophisticated churches and theologians.

5.3 KENOSIS, TELOS HUMAN PURPOSE, THE DEHUMANISED

The point of interest and significance is stressing that there is a deeper meaning of the incarnation of God. This relates to early marginal Christian community of blacks built into the concept of *kenosis*. *Kenosis* is not a defining point of discussing the infinite being or the absolute or the old classical debates that make God's dealing and descending on earth. This is therefore an act of ego, producing an egotistical theology that speaks of God, more than God could speak for humanity. God has only truly spoken to humanity not as a God, but as a human being whose nature is God. This point is significant because the incarnation is being part and parcel of the doctrine of God. According to Barthian (1936) terms, the doctrine of the word; instead fits with being a doctrine of humanity. This position is necessary especially when

³⁰ Qumran is a place where the Essenes lived and were their body of messianic and apocalyptic works known as the Dead Sea Scrolls were composed and written. Bruce (1996: 125-135) discusses the unity of Essenes and Qumran.

reflecting on the creation, the fall, soteriology and the purpose of the church in the world. McClintock and Strong (1870) records:

(κένωσις), a Greek term signifying the act of *emptying* or self-divestiture, employed by modern German divines to express the voluntary humiliation of Christ in his incarnate state. It is borrowed from, the expression of Paul, *But made himself of no reputation (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, emptied himself),*" etc. (Philippians 2:7). The same self-abasement is indicated in other passages of Scripture; e.g. the Son laid aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), and became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9).

The emptying of God and taking position of the poor reflects the heart of God. However, also the condition and context of the majority of human beings in society is affected by poverty, under development, justice and morality. A context and condition that God had in mind in becoming incarnate and finding poverty, marginalisation and being an outcast as an interlocutor. The reason being to existentially motivate the incarnation of God apart from soteriological position of a God who want to save humanity and be known. McClintock and Strong (1870) further point out on the difficulty of this *kenosis* in relation to what can be considered as assumed by the Western theology's definition of the God's nature, they record:

This term touches the essential difficulty in the doctrine of the incarnation. That difficulty seems to consist in the supposition that the Logos *in his absolute infinitude* of being and attributes united himself in one personality with an individual created man. On the other hand, it has been alleged as an objection to the kenosis theory that to assume any self-limitation on the part of God is inconsistent with the unchangeableness of the divine Being.

The point of the incarnation through *kenosis* is inconsistent with the unchangeableness of the divine "Being". This divine reflects how Western philosophy, Western theology and dogmas understand the dialectical relationship between God and humanity, or the mirror image and content of *Imago Dei*. Although the Edenic paradise of the first human reflects a God closely in touch with humanity as presented by Genesis 2 and 3, instead, Western theology has chosen to see and question the consistency and inconsistency of God, as they have done with questing the humanity and divine nature of those whom they oppress. It would seem that there is a deep theological and anthropological negligence of understanding of humanity, despite the deep love and identity. The love and identity are a motivation of creating human beings to be in God's likeness and *Image Dei*. This reveals a far deeper truth on human and God's nature imprinted as *you shall surely not die* or the aftermath of the apocalypse that has humanity living eternally and forever with God, as gods pointed out in Psalm (8: 2) and the conclusion of John's

Apocalypse. Psalm (8: 2) is an important scripture that is used by the incarnate Messiah in the book of John, especially with the charge from the teachers of the law of making himself, though a mortal man, a God. Secondly, it reflects how the difference of the mirror and image of God as a human saviour differs from the first followers of Christ, since they are not part of the bureaucracy and did not see the assumed “ambiguities” Furthermore, they did not see inconsistency in the nature of God and their own nature of *Imago Dei*, when God becomes human and dwell among them. Third and lastly, to this minor faith and the black experience, rejoice at incarnation that does make God communicate in human terms. It places the divine being in a position of discomfort, weakness and the existential condition. Hull (2009: 176) correctly asserts:

The governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor wrote to the Emperor Trajan around A.D. 110 describing Christian worship. Among other customs, he explained, Christians gather early in the morning and sing hymns to Christ, as if he were a god. What hymns, we wonder? By hymning Christ as if he were a god, were they trying to lift their spirits out of this mundane world and live for a while in the heavenly realms? If we are paying close attention to Paul, we will realize that our hymns are not so much designed to lift us out of this world and bring us to heaven, as to remind us that heaven has come down to us.

What Hall (2009: 176) describes as heaven coming down then challenged the Christian experience that wants to escape the mundane by going to heaven. It further questions how the early Christian church, (despite the persecution of the church and in light of being known by rulers) rejoiced for heaven that has come down and for the man Jesus worshipped as a God. It is important to suggest that Western theology has become the normative of believing in light of doctrine that does not understand God and human beings. This position is significant for a Christology, as well as grasping the nature and heart of God and humanity. Additionally, this position of seeing Western theology as limping and a confused view on God and humanity is fundamentally linked to individualism and a creation of a disconnected society and a disconnected theology. Fanon (1963: 36) correctly asserts concerning individualism and its effects on the black mind:

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.

The point that Fanon (1963: 36) is raising is fundamental, especially in the act of the colonialist, not only just hammered individuality for the natives. Rather this individualism is an act of stretching forth one's hand to meddle with the ontology of the oppressed and black people. This is further an act of readjusting the mind, soul and body of a black person, in which black physiological invisibility or lack of authentic human acknowledgement, because of a lack of whiteness. Whiteness has been used as a yardstick of both existential and physiological existence; hence it provides access to possess the purpose or telos of other human beings. Thus having inhibited access to the inner workings of physical bodies and minds of others, specifically black bodies. The access created through the hammer of individuality coupled with a mind that is not one's authentic one manages to also isolate and alienate blacks from the solidarity that is necessary for identity, experience and manner of existing in the world. This point of solidarity is precisely what makes early church survives persecution and continually be in the presence of the divine existentially. It is here that the *kenosis* of Christ and assumption of a human body gives rise to not just seeing the incarnation as the point of classical idealistic metaphysics, also that Christ in his emptying takes on a human telos. Telos not only restricted in soteriological purposes, inclusive of redemption, conversion of human hearts, but a purpose share by every living soul. As such, a validity of being made human parallels both soteriology and the general vehicle of human purpose. It is necessary to assert that white prescribed existence and the separation of solidarity and communal values of the natives. These values created an alienation from the self and more over alienation from God. Steiner (1997: 3), writing from a Marxist perspective, points even to the point of alienation within the social context and the theological paradigm of alienation, he asserts:

With Christianity, the concept of alienation is defined in theological terms. The fall of man inaugurated the condition of separation of man from god. The myth of the first man and woman being cast out from the Garden of Eden provides us with a new paradigm of man's self-alienation. The original unity that existed between god and his creation was disrupted by man asserting his will, thereby attaining the knowledge of good and evil. Conversely, the dream of a return to the primal unity of man with god becomes the passion of the mystic and Messiah.

Steiner's (1997: 3) point is important perhaps in mentioning that the return to primal 'unity of humanity with God becomes the passion of the mystic and Messiah'. However, more importantly what is relevant is that the Messiah or Christ becomes the epicentre for convergence and unity of existence. In the emptying of the self, God as Christ unites existence, physiologically, ontologically and existentially through soteriology. The ambiguities brought

forth on the *kenosis*, divinity and humanity of Christ have no place instead essence takes place. It seems that the Christ has been brought forth through the abstract lenses that mark Western interpretation of the New Testament. Subsequently, this Christ was given to Africans and the oppressed cannot be the true God in the *Kenosis* and doxology of the early Christian community marked by the *Kerugma* that provides the theology of the New Testament rooted in Philippians 2: 5-11. Ayelew (1875: 75) noted the issue of labour and resource central to colonialism, but what is relevant to add especially for theological traditions of the West is the rise of capitalism in 16th century. Europe also produced a different kind of view of humanity, Steiner (1997: 4) asserts:

Man emerged in a more mundane bourgeois form as a creature whose nature is expressed through the activity of buying and selling. A new content emerged within the theological notion of man's alienated condition. The ability to "alienate" one's possessions, transferring ownership from oneself to another, came to have a positive connotation, overcoming the religious and feudal restrictions against usury and the sale of landed property. It was from this usage that the term "alienating" derived its common law meaning of engaging in a contractual obligation.

He (1997: 4) further adds:

The Protestant Reformation most clearly elucidated this transvaluation of the traditional theology. It has today become a cliché, but no less true, to point out that the real content of the Protestant Reformation was the preparation and justification on theological grounds of the new morality of acquisitiveness and competition.

The points that Steiner (1997: 4) raises also opens up an inquiry to the theologies of Protestant and Catholic faith. These faiths are central in creating a theology that has kept large portions of blacks and people of colour in the misconception of their faith, linked with the esteemed theologians who have become idols for theology, Steiner (1997: 4) further adds:

The assertion of the absolute right to possess and thereby sell every single thing in nature and society did not go unchallenged, even within the framework of the theological debates of the time. The radical theologian and leader of the German Peasant's revolt, Thomas Munzer, directly challenged Martin Luther, declaring it intolerable, that all creation has been made into property, the fish in the water, the birds in the air, the offspring of the earth - creation too must become free.

It would seem that Munzer as noted by Steiner (1997: 4) is closer to understanding the human, divine and cosmological link and the inborn ability of freedom, as a necessity. While it is

necessary to mention that in Pauline's terms, Christ came to save humanity from the bondage caused by sin. Therefore, if there is an engagement between Paul and Munzer on freedom, then there is a resonance in theological tradition. This is a tradition that fosters freedom as central to human purpose. The Christology of a saviour, who saves because sin encroach the soul, mind and body and because sin is bondage, is the same saviour who frees the oppressed as expected. This is his role as the Messiah in Jewish Apocalyptic literature. It is significant to note that Europe or the West, especially in areas of thought, be it philosophical and theological and was filled with Christian myths of guilt and redemption (Steiner 1997: 4). This point is significant in noting that truly what Carmichaels³¹(1966) mentioned concerning the white man's burden should have not been preached among the natives is true. The mentioning of this point is to draw a series and serious outlook to theological thought of the West, which has been inherited by black believers and the Christian church. As such, it opens a door to have a distinct Christology that sees a point of convergence in Christ's *kenosis* and black oppression.

5.4 BLACK *KENOSIS* AND CHRIST *KENOSIS*

It is important to state that Christ in human experience and his human experience, is being fundamental in the understanding of the self. In both accounts the first of early church stands to give the theology of the New Testament. Secondly, it is in the context of blacks and their theological experience with the Christ's encounter and revelation. Boesak (2011: 5) correctly asserted that blacks met Christ in the slave ships and Christ name was sung by thousands, while black died. In a sense, this is a confirmation of the linkage of the theological experience and revelation such as hymns of the early church and its Christology. These were hymns of the black experience, the black church and its New and Old Testament theology. Boesak (2009: 56) is correct when he asserts:

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.

The link that black Christian faith has with the witness and testament of the biblical text is in parallel. Christ and blacks offer insight in using images concerning Christ and blacks, such as mapping the *kenosis* of Christ with the *kenosis* of blacks, similarly, in the attributes of humiliation, shame, scorn and death, though the premises of both Christ and blacks, differ epistemologically.

³¹Stockley Carmichael in 1966 BLACKLASH and Black Power hosted by Mike Wallace.

Therefore, to elaborate further, it is important to grasp that blacks through slavery and the extent of dehumanisation have gone through a *kenosis* of some form, which involves the emptying of the self to assume a different and imposed identity. This is an essence and substance of being as well as an ontological sense. This ontological disaster with physiological implication couples also with the authentic express of being human. This ontological disaster entails the existential context and contains history and its ontological influence. Dixon (1976: 35) in expression of the spirituals; *Sometimes I feel like a motherless Chile*, can be linked to this when he 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.

Fanon (1963: 168) rightly exposes this in pointing out that colonialism caused cultural estrangement and the belief that whites had come to civilise black, hence, the absence of white would lead blacks into degradation and bestiality. Biko (1978: 61) had observed that the church is plagued with bureaucracy that kept black away from the Christian God and themselves. Fanon (1963: 169) correctly points out: “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content.” While (1975:75) Ayelew 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.

This stripping away of existence warrants the basis of a black *kenosis* and is key in the black church’s understanding of the *kenosis* of Christ. The *Kenosis* that results in Christ being part of the group of the marginalised, outcasts, oppressed and him assuming human content that suffering is central to its core and his mode of being a human being. The *kenosis* of both Christ and blacks go parallel and links with a necessity of a distinct Christology, a black Christology. That is informed by the previously discussed Christology of biblical world and the role of the Messiah, as a suffering servant and redeemer of the oppressed. However, to fully grasp the *kenosis* of blacks is to firstly grasp that there is similarity between the two, unlike Western theology that posits the incarnation without existential and emotive aspect. The black Christology should consider the biblical testimony that Christ came to suffer for the redemption

of humanity. The gospel testifies that in the garden of Gethsemane, the dual responsibility of being God and human, which is the nature of Christ found the human in Christ. It is wrestling with God on the task lying before Him. He concluded the high priestly prayer in the Gospel of John 17 with accepting his lot, the biblical narratives records in the Gospel of Matthew gives indication of this struggle and accepting lot of suffering (KJV 26: 38-44):

³⁸Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. ³⁹ And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. ⁴⁰ And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. ⁴² He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. ⁴³ And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

The relevance of this prayer is to reflect that the incarnation is an act of sorrow, the *kenosis*; God's emptying to take up humanity in the state of the fall is fundamentally not the idealised metaphysics of God's or the Logos dwelling among us. Camus (2007: 46) has pointed out: "...the meeting of the divine and flesh in the person of Jesus Christ; the extraordinary adventure of a God taking responsibility for the sin and the misery of man, the humility and the humiliations, are presented as so many symbols of Redemption." Furthermore, it should be noted that the incarnation and its role should not only be seen in Christ suffering on the cross because of human sin. Rather be also seen with the group and class that the living word of God dwelt among and was counted with. As such, beginning to see God's revelation from God emptying the self and living from being a baby to an adulthood. This influences a serious Christology, which perhaps the theology of the West has not emphasised in their special revelation. They (western theology and *ecclesia*) have neglected to see God to be counted among biological components as bodiliness through the manifestation of the incarnate God (Christ). This links a far greater understanding of a personised general revelation that is daring as God redeems all humanity despite race or creed and intellect. For black faith it is a jubilee for the omnipresent spirit of the ages, the absolute picture and essence of Being which natives and blacks pre-colonialism believed in through their general revelation, despite the West's lack of sufficient and authentic study of African spirituality, this omnipresent Spirit has become a man that died on the cross as Yoheshua the Christ. These points are necessary for grasping the

lot of Christ not as God suffering on the cross, but suffering on the margins of society because of Roman occupation. Wright and Kelly (2013) point out that Jesus was unlike the heroes or gods of mythology that usually inhabited and puffed up the human, either Hercules etc. making those human to stand distinct from others. But instead Jesus stands at the opposite of that spectrum as he comes to be identical with common human beings. This fundamentally implicates *kenosis* as having an existential and historical character, thus completing to the human drama of salvation. Also it rescues the Christ from modern and western Christianity that would be unknown to the early Christian community that sang the hymn of Philippians 2: 5-11.

The same could be applicable for blacks and their own understanding of a Christology that mirrors discomfort as part of the intention of a *kenosis* and multi facets of the emptying process. Though the point of slight difference is that white supremacy is the very ambience that creates the forceful *kenosis* of blacks, which fundamentally has the colonial Christ central in the stripping process. Through the lenses of liberation theology we see a distinct and ambivalence in the history of Jesus, Jesus of history fuels faith more than the Jesus of faith, abstractionism, Western theology and colonialism. While as noted by Steiner (1997: 6) that the rise of atheism could be found in the rejection of religion and role religion plays in numbing and muting the human existential experience for other worldliness, he notes for instance:

Feuerbach was notable for developing the critique of religion into a radical atheism and humanism. He asserted, against the idealism of Hegel, that material conditions are the source of ideas. According to his method of “transformative criticism” the hidden truth behind religious mystification can be discovered by reversing the order of precedence between the subject, god and its object, man. Instead of god creating man, as traditional religious belief maintained, it was man that created god.

Perhaps religious experience and the abstract application of this experience are essential for God to be known. However, the point of difference in Western atheism is that in the case of blacks, white supremacy and colonial Christianity indeed did create god, who was not biblical. Instead is a myth in as much as it is true that material conditions are a source of ideas. The same logic is applicable to Western Christian theology, as an established religion that is sufficient for robbing the poor and oppressed, while prescribing belief in blind faith, while benefiting selected individuals. It is this mode of thinking that sees the point of the West unable to provide a coherent picture of Christ and authentic Christology rooted in human existence,

though it is necessary to point out that there were attempt of seeking the historical Jesus, which often did address the question of black slavery, colonialism, imperialism and institutional racism. For instance, the New Testament scholars such as David Strauss, part of the Young Hegelians wanted the historical aspect of religious truth, Steiner (1997: 6) records:

David Strauss, whose Life of Jesus was the first attempt to provide a rational and historical explanation of the myths contained in the Bible. Strauss sought to reinterpret religion as myth and parable instead of historical fact in order to reinforce the higher truths contained in religion. Feuerbach however, building on the work of Strauss and the other Young Hegelians, tried to demonstrate that the myths of religious belief, far from elevating man, degrade him by robbing him of his natural powers.

The generalised view of religion degrading humanity and robbing of natural power is perhaps relevant for the West and its problems. It is vague if the black experience, the oppression of the poor and racism is used as a litmus paper parallel to Western civilisation as the only “normal” way of living and is a place of being alive as being. Instead, it is white supremacy, its ecclesiology and theology that robbed black humanity of God given natural powers, specifically, in wanting to be Gods of blacks. Thus putting in danger *Imago Dei* for blacks and their abstraction of *Imago Dei*, for even the true nature of Christ. Erskine (1981:38) has noted:

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.

Biko (1978:100) is correct in noting the following:

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.

It is at this point of the ignorant learning to know that the *kenosis* of Christ and the emptying of blacks end in tragedy of death on the slave ships, plantations, in the social context and more fundamentally on the cross of the lynching tree. Thus creating a place for a far deeper and relevant Christology that binds and links the oppressed as well as in tune with delivering the wickedness in humanity. Cone (2012: 3) reminds blacks, but more fundamentally all of Christian theology:

The lynching tree joined the cross as the most emotionally charged symbols in the African American community— symbols that represented both death and the promise of redemption, judgment and the offer of mercy, suffering and the power of hope. Both the cross and the lynching tree represented the worst in human beings and at the same time an unquenchable ontological thirst” for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning.

Cone (2012: 3) thus in some sense reveals a genealogy of a Christology that shares a true human experience of both Christ and blacks. This genealogy is explicit in Christ the transcendental being emptying self to be human and black emptying of both ontological and physiological aspects by the colonial church and this is what ends in a humanising experience and validates *Imago Dei* even in suffering. This then sets forth a stage of scriptural interpretation in rebellion and rejection of Western theology’s monopoly of truth and expresses black as close children of God. Biko (1978:61) had stressed the irrelevance of scripture if truth is absent, when he asserts:

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.

It will then seem as if both Cone (2012: 3) and Biko (1978: 61) reveal the truth of the revealed God. In order to elucidate this point, it is significant to note that blacks who have been given blind faith, violence and torture have been disproved by the discovery of historical Jesus, through biblical scholarship. This development of the historical Christ is fundamental in taking the incarnation, not only as transcendental, but historic. This can be shared by many and also reveals that at the heart of rejecting the god of Western theology, this does not lead to black pessimism and atheism. Christology is far greater and significant, not for the pages of the New Testament, but for human existence. The lack of faith of Western thinkers who reject Christianity is not sufficient to attack black Christian faith. It is rather a contrary affirmation about God who is unknown. Steiner (1997: 6) had noted that God and religion meant the following:

But in religion man contemplates his own latent nature. Hence it must be shown that this antithesis, this differencing of God and man, with which religion begins, is a differencing of man with his own nature.

Furthermore, Steiner (1997: 6) records:

The attributes that are used to describe god are nothing more than the idealized attributes of man himself. Conversely, the religious mentality deprives man of his essential attributes, and leaves him with a meagre shell. Feuerbach expressed the kernel of his insight thus, Religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is - man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes: God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations.

The above indicates indeed differencing between God and humanity, if the West is the navigator for theology and atheism. However, for the black experience, the God who has emptied the self and taken humanity as a form of expressing and revealing the self is identical with humanity. The special revelation of God in Christ becomes a mirror of the oppressed and does not simply become a differencing of God from humanity. This then seems to point to a special and even general revelation of God. The God culminating in the appearance of Christ is a profound truth concerning the dialectical link of God, humanity and heaven and earth, while it also fosters and features in solidarity of both God and oppressed humanity. It is not rejecting cultural systems and theological truth contained in the native spirituality and metaphysical and physical conceptions of the divine. Biko (1978: 102) corroborates this view, when he asserts:

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.

For instance, the brotherhood of humanity has been a blueprint in cultural beliefs and is an inspiration to a religious and theological view concerning God and humanity's place in existence. Fanon (1963:36) has pointed out that even if the native intellectual rejects the colonialist view of the world and of their own self as described by the West, as a new appreciation of things becomes necessary, he asserts:

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.

Another point of interest that Fanon is raising is that white supremacy and Western civilisation when it comes to the quest of being human; is a world or sphere of existence populated by idolatry. The ego built into individualism as a Western way of life vanishes according to Fanon (1963: 36). Biko (1978: 102) adds another dimension on the view of colourlessness that perhaps shapes Christian theology and a God of spirit, but seems to be white in all other aspects that involve whiter supremacy and black invisibility. Fanon (1978: 55) asserts:

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.

The cocoon, which Biko points to, is rooted in black solidarity that in the context of this research marks black Christology and the unashamed view of God being black and for the oppressed. Fanon (1963: 36) asserts:

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.

Black solidarity that implicitly and explicitly central to the Christian faith and the breakage of illusions and the dead of idols of Western *ecclesia*, leads to a new frontier of Christology, black Christology in particular. The fundamental issue on a black Christology is what it means to be human and God in light of the Bible, the biblical world, world oppression, the apocalypse, eschatology and the black experience. These factors are essential in Christology in that whites have built the current modern and post-modern world. The whites established Western civilisation as the *modus operandi* for souls and all ontological beings to experience existence. This is what the *kenosis* in soteriological purpose and the incarnate Christ within the confines of history and theological allotment and decree came to save. As such, white supremacy is ingrained in all aspects of life, even with liberation theological dialogues. These dialogues seem

to particularise themselves in their engagements in the world and with oppression. However, a black Christology should be geared towards grasping the reality of two worlds, one white with large culture of white privilege and another one is the world of many people of colour and as such their solidarity requires a singular identity, which must be found in the opposite of whiteness. It is important to grasp this view and the grasping of it does not see race in particular whiteness as an authentic identity. Perhaps as a pseudo racial designation with the truth of the matter being that being whiteness is political. This whiteness is a political identity in the same way being black is a political identity and reaction to white supremacy and anti-blackness. Biko³² (1976) reflects this reality of political identities, one white and other black in the rendition of the SASO trial. This happened when he was asked by the judge as to why do they refer to themselves as blacks when they are more browner than black, similarly, Biko asking why they call themselves white when they are more pinker than white. This is revealing a political identity even necessary in theological discourse against white supremacy. This identity is against colonial Christianity more than ever the remaining and existential vestiges of colonial Christianity. Deloria (1977: 15) perhaps is among the few who share the idea of even transcending confinement of theological bounds and artificial barriers of theological engagements. That usually results in the illusion of stones moved and mistaken for moving rocks and mountains. In order to elucidate this point shared by Deloria the main issue is that unless authentic and truthful theological engagements with justice at its heart comes from the poor and oppressed, who are fighting or scowling at white supremacy no true theological and meaningful change will be achieved. The failure will be felt by black ecclesiology, unless the theological engagements come from the black existence. Black existence that runs parallel within the surrogates of black Christian faith namely: the white mother churches, which are the incubators also of oppression, because their historical white churches that are part of black subjugation entailed in conversion. The revelation of God, either general or special could not be authentically conceivable to the oppressed and dehumanised. This could not be authentically conceivable if theological historic amnesia continues to reign or falsified to meaning forgiveness, reconciliation and engagement. This could happen, despite evasiveness that continues to mislead in navigating black faith and ontological and existential experience to behold the divine revelation, in both so-called special and general terms. While robust discourse remains to avail, Deloria (1977: 15) asserts:

³² Biko SASO Trial this is a reacting of the Trial by Denzel Washington in the Biko movie entitled Cry Freedom 1978 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyr0SHHrtT4> Accessed 2017-06-27.

Liberation theology is simply the latest gimmick to keep minority groups circling the wagons with the vain hope that they can eliminate the oppression that surrounds them. It does not seek to destroy the roots of oppression, but merely to change the manner in which oppression manifests itself. No winner, no matter how sincere, willingly surrenders his power over others. He may devise clever ways to appear to share such power, but he always keeps a couple of aces up his sleeve in case things get out of control.

Deloria (1977: 15) asserts:

Liberation, in its most fundamental sense, requires a rejection of everything we have been taught and its replacement by only those things we have experienced as having values. But this replacement only begins the task of liberation. For the history of Western thinking in the past eight centuries has been one of replacement of ideas within a framework that has remained basically unchanged for nearly two millennia. Challenging this framework of interpretation means a rearrangement of our manner of perceiving the world, and it involves a re-examination of the body of human knowledge and its structural reconstruction into a new format.

These points are of significant value if indeed they rise to new epistemology, theological reflection is considered and indeed Jesus is the God of the oppressed. A consideration of how and when the native met both the man and God, Jesus is significant. In that, it renders a time of authenticity and its symbolic gesture that becomes the amazement. This is amazement seen by the Apostle in seeing the resurrected man and God Jesus with scars and wounds in his body. It is significant to also point out that indeed what Deloria (1977; 15-16) raises about liberation theologies is unavoidable, because the same church involved in colonialism and the promotion of white supremacy has in some sense a share at liberation theology. Secondly, this is because the liberation theologians remain Protestant and Catholic, despite the history. This is also perhaps linked to the point of interest for reflection in seeing the *Exodus* account that black theology uses as a point of departure. Therefore, in that *Exodus* account, God did not become revealed to the Israelites through their remaining in Egypt, rather He depart from the nominatives of “accepted” and “established” faith is the very basis of blacks meeting the man Jesus from Nazareth. Thus necessitates the very rejection of established and an imagination that is inspired by the oppressed. While it is necessary to note that the Jesus of faith was not necessarily preached out of true conversion, but wealth and heaven was sold for black. This happened in order the masters could have both body, land and souls of blacks. Rhodes (1991:2) captures this when he asserted: “The white interpretation of Christianity effectively divested the slaves of any concern they might have had about their freedom in the present.” While the

Christ manifested to slaves, the oppressed and blacks were far from the pacifist. Raboteau (1978: 290) has noted this reality when he asserts: “Revolutionary interpretations of the Bible by such slaves as Vesey and Turner were proof to American slaveholders that slave Christianity could become a double-edged sword.”

Thus black *kenosis* or emptying finds point of convergence in Christ *kenosis* and has its legitimacy in the life of Jesus and further rests of the cross. However, the unity of black and Christ meets at the centre of the existential human condition and the ability to arise from death bodily and ontologically.

5.5 THE BLACK MESSIAH, CHRISTOLOGICAL EXPRESS

One of the fundamental problems to be observed in black theological logic is black humanity’s misreading of the text expressed on obsession with idealistic divinity. This idealistic divinity is opposite to the sacredness and sanctification to be performed in the secular world (communities & societies). This idealistic divinity expresses over spirituality of God, heaven and human beings as spiritual beings that are existing and living in the material world. Ignoring that, the secular world forms the ambience where sacredness can be assumed, observed from the scheme of things and judged. This is particularly a point of departure from dogmatic expectations and the meaning of secularisation. This misreading is due to the perpetual mentorship of black African spirituality by the “master” pedagogy of life; the Western world, whiteness and its interpretation and misunderstanding of the biblical text and the biblical world and even the Christ. The Christ who despite *kenosis*, the incarnate of the transcendental being is a secular figure that must be rescued from being buried by religiosity and fundamentalism of both the Hebrew faith and Christian faith. This occurs especially since Christianity has thought to know God through dogma preceding experience of the divine, Biko (1978: 102) correctly asserted within the African context:

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.

Perhaps considering Biko, it is important for the church of black believers to ask in truth despite the injustice and dehumanisation of blacks and natives that were cocooned in the “gospel”, what exactly is this Christian message? Following that is who are Christians? It is also fitting

while engaging this question to consider what De Gruchy (2004: 2) has pointed out, when he asserts:

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.

The major issue to deduce is that European Christianity came already divided among themselves and then blacks inherited personal issues between them. That is far removed from the God who had made the high priestly prayer that emphasised solidarity and unity of humanity. As if the bowels and loins of Western patriarchal faith were not enough, the issue of world dominance and race makes the matter of theological authority even more congested for knowing Christ and preaching the Christian message. It is fundamental perhaps for the black faith to see the Christian message between the secular and divine, implicating general revelation and special revelation. More fundamentally, grasping the point of the incarnate where biology expressed in the human body meets the indwelling of full divinity without contradiction, rather, instilling a transcendence that is both ontological and existential. A proper black theology and Christology will have to secularise the black Messiah. Therefore, this happened in order to properly affirm his divinity from the disarray that permeates the secular world, in which God is presently active. The secular and divinity of the Messiah will translate into a revelation that is ecclesiastical, political, and cultural and addresses economic situations. The economic implications of the Messiah or Christology are necessary in considering the economic intents of missionaries and colonialism. The black Messiah becomes the divinity embodied in secular existence, a development of a Christology outside lofty and peripheral idealism and ecclesiastic muting of the role of the divine in the world. Fanon (1963:36) has pointed that individualism will disappear when there is the return of the self to the self, which is expressed in returning to the people, culture and manner of living. This is critical to seeing Christology, especially the incarnate as God's solidarity with the rest of humanity that suffers marginality, dehumanisation and poverty. Imarogbe (2001: vii) has correctly analysed the inherent lie and misunderstanding of Western theology and the impact it has for black faith.

However, specifically the reason blacks continue to suffer, despite their confession, doxology and soteriology, Imarogbe (2001: vii) she asserts:

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

It is significant that the success of programming blacks should be met with rejection and rebellion to its creeds and positions. It is also important to note that the colonial powers who have claimed the gospel and promoting both Christ and his message seem underneath to understand the role and position of the Messiah, which is rooted in the secular world as the express of divinity, for instance, a glance at black liberation struggle in the era of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and other black revolutionary groups and particularly, Malcolm X's engagement with fellow black leaders and revolutionaries. The CIA, FBI and the America (America, the Christian nation responsible of slavery) vowed that now more than ever they needed to prevent the coming of the black Messiah, who would electrify what they termed as "black nationalist groups and black militants"³³. In having to consider Stewart's (1990: 100 & 104) view of the influence of the black church to black humanity and black leaders, one cannot dismiss that the Western world has in some respects read the scripture beyond idealistic divinity and located messianism in the black context as pivotal in the secular world. That had justified black oppression in all aspects inclusive of ecclesiastical institutions and bondage of the poor. The prevention of the black Messiah converging and emerging in the secular was also passed down to the youth, since youth sought to change the black condition and lot of the oppressed. To elucidate this position consider the following from the FBI COINTELPRO that records the following objectives:

Prevent the COALITION of militant Black Nationalist groups. In unity there is strength; a truism that is no less valid for all its triteness. An effective coalition of Black Nationalist groups might be the first step toward a real Mau Mau [Black revolutionary army] in America, the beginning of a true black revolution. Prevent the RISE OF A MESSIAH who could unify, and

³³ COINTELPRO was a programme of the FBI which was useful in the 1960's to suppress black organisations. See COINTELPRO war on Black America https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zb1O_u1n1p0 Accessed: 2017 November 9.

electrify, the militant Black Nationalist movement. Malcolm X might have been such a Messiah; he is the martyr of the movement today. Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael and Elijah Muhammed all aspire to this position. Elijah Muhammed is less of a threat because of his age. King could be a very real contender for this position should he abandon his supposed obedience to white, liberal doctrines (nonviolence) and embrace Black Nationalism. Carmichael has the necessary charisma to be a real threat in this way.

The above makes it clear to see that indeed the concept of messianism, black messianism or Christology, rests on both shoulders of the divine and secular. They are resting to express what is in the heart of sacredness and God's revelation. It reveals that the reading and understanding of the Gospel message, which was sufficient for the West through the cross and violence to subdue the earth for the West. Thus creating subordination of the natives to authority of "Jesus Christ" in the church and their secular world (characterised by oppression) was and is hoax and is part of human division. Biko (1978:52) has placed an important call of solidarity of the oppressed in black, Biko (1978: 52) asserts:

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.

While Cone also calls for the same solidarity, Rhodes (1991: 4) 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.

What both Biko and Cone point to reveal in the inner works of the black Messiah in reconciling the people of colour with God. They are confronting white supremacy on the level of the sacred and divine. The struggles of the secular world come with the view of being a creature of God and become the human of general revelation. This is human who is using intellect, experience and the sense of awe to God creation and knowledge. Thus dismissing Western abstraction and undermining of the human, especially people of colour, while the

sacred world is the work of Christ in the world, with existential problems that need God's intervening to shape the world and balance heaven and earth.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to explain what Christology and the New Testament provide and how points of similarities of early church and the black church meet. The position of the *kenosis* of Christ finds coherence in the dehumanisation of blacks, as the emptying process that amounts in a kenotic experience. This chapter sees the links of the Old Testament's theology of revelation and that of the New Testament. Furthermore, the chapter sees how human experience of God as Christ is instrumental for authentic Christian theology. The chapter also signals the aspect of ontological human experience in light of Western theology and white supremacy, as represented by colonial Christianity. As such, blackness as a physiological and ontological expression, sees black Christology engaging in the realm of existence that is both secular and sacred in nature. It is in that realm of the bodiliness of the Messiah that the secular and divine meet to give a new expression to the understanding of God's revelation even through general and special revelation.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 FINDINGS

Throughout the study, it has been found that the subject of God's revelation, either special or general, has been fundamentally identified and articulated by Western theology. Thus setting the mode of Christian theology, especially since the ecclesiastical traditions of the West have been part of the colonial process and colonial Christianity in South Africa, Africa and the Third or black world. As such, there is a point of departure from authentic and first century in Christianity that was cognisant of the human experience of God, which is essential in revelation and soteriology. The current Christian theology, excluding attempts of liberation theologies, has taken an abstract turn to seeing and explaining Christ. This is the picture even in special revelation of God and in Christ that we are left with. The subject of God's revelation and the attempts of explaining it can emerge from the oppressed and marginalised groups. These are attempts that are defining both the human and Christian experience of the divine. The black experience and its facilitation to the question of existence in white supremacy through the use of Western theology and theology, underlines colonial Christianity. This Western theology gives the black church a stimulus in rescuing or serving as an apologetic for the authenticity of the Christian experience. In that regard, blacks and all oppressed people who accept the Lordship of Christ can reinterpret Christianity and can even put it in its original place (Boesak 2009: 56). The subject of God's revelation should be rescued from abstractionism of God to the human condition. The human condition, descriptive of poverty, suffering, slavery, colonialism and wretchedness is precisely central to the message of gospel and to the theology of *Imago Dei*.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendation emanating from this study is that black Christianity should define and defend itself in terms of history, content, and God's revelation and in light of the whiteness of the biblical text. Black theology as tool of analysis should be used to enter into the realm of metaphysics, thus implying that black theology is instrumental even in discussing matter of doctrine. The reason these points are essential is that, black Christianity should find its voice and character. Fundamentally, it should link with the long history of Christianity in Africa or the African Christian heritage, as noted by the Abuna (Wilmore 1998: 1). The entry of black theology and the black church in matters of doctrine, the realm of metaphysics, will work to diminish the influence and hegemony of the West; ecclesiastically and intellectually.

6.3 CONCLUSION

Throughout the research, the aim of the study was to adequately confirm an enigmatic character of faith and belief, at least within the Christian context, by fundamentally holding into the monotheistic belief of the revelation of God to humanity, the self-disclosure of the divine to the Sapient creature of God. The revelation of God becomes a transcendental navigator or light beneath our feet and as a bringer of good tidings, if one is to use biblical language, that revelation is translatable into the existential context. The revelation of God has been looked at, from the spectacles of human being, with emphasis upon the biblical image of humanity that is rooted in *Imago Dei*. This finds expression of revelation as a personal and a persisting resonant of an active God, contrary to the God of deist, who does not intervene in His creation. What the study has also attempted to underline is that the view of God even from accepted Christian creeds and dogmas has in uncertain terms given the oppressed a picture of a desist God. (i.e. God) who created the world and all in it, in order to neglect it. Thus the cries and groans of the poor, oppressed, dehumanised, enslaved and marginalised lay on deaf ears, which are not ready to listen or have a view of listening, as if it is imprinted in the plan of creation and the allotment of burden and success.

It is at this point that the research begins to uncover and unequivocally differ with accepted versions of the revelation of God that lay dominated by Western definitions of Christianity. That usually evade firstly the fact of the Bible as Hebrew Scriptures, the Hebrew people whom God revealed Himself through rebellion, defined in the texts as *Exodus*. Thus the Hebrews are the progenitor of Christianity, therefore, through Western theology and the establishment of white supremacy have placed European or whites as the people of the Bible. These Europeans can speak and act on behalf of God, as that was enacted out into historical processes through colonialism. Secondly, the problem becomes more serious when considering the monopoly and hegemony of past and present on matters of Christian faith and dogma. This Christian faith does not represent even the functions and belief of the early Christian community that existed without sophistication. That Christianity became too inherited when attached to imperial Rome and “imperial Europe and America. Christianity further inherited as well as white colonies that practised slavery, colonialism, imperialism and the self-proclaimed “chosen” boers through institutional racism. Boesak ((2004: 9) correctly asserts: “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.” What Boesak puts forward dares a forceful and painstaking realisation on historical white churches and the ground work they lay for blind

faith. This task will require a deeper analysis than the practice of racism in Africa, specifically in South Africa. It is an ecclesiology and dogmas marred with white supremacy that cannot be dismissible by good intent, even of white liberals and Christians. Deloria (1977: 15) again forces theologians, specifically those of colour not to simply embrace even liberation theologies that create a monolithic approach to oppression. This is a point that is serious, especially in the South African context and applicable to other African and underdeveloped countries that are still under the former rulers, despite proclamations of change, transformation and democracy. Biko (1978: 55) correctly asserted:

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.

Biko (1978: 55) further adds that the exploitation of blacks is the continuation of white supremacy over minds and bodies of the oppressed as facilitated by agents of change. These agents are continually enforcing a common humanity, thus Biko (1978: 55) solidifies Deloria's (1977: 15) point concerning liberation theology being a latest gimmick for the oppressed, to circle around the wagons in vain, with the naïve-ness of believing that winner can easily give up power. It is necessary then to not excuse at any given cost the embedded psyche of racism in the Western theological traditions. 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.

This point of extinction and a theology entrenched in supremacy of the West is essential for the doctrine of the revelation of God. This is especially that Western Christianity is an albatross for black self-determination and their encounter with the divine.

At the centre of an authentic view on the subject of revelation, are contending voices that begin from the position of grasping *Imago Dei* and God's sovereignty, as indicated in the Bible that God is supreme and is known by all nations. The dominance of the West in social, political, historical, economic, theological and intellectual traditions have sought to speak on all areas of life. This is so, especially infringing on existential, social, experiential and theological experience of those deemed subhuman and dehumanised. The contending voices should be

challenging doctrinally and in placing the life and destiny of humanity in God's hands. More fundamentally to the positing of God's essence and substance to humanity expressed biblically is *Imago Dei*. This is dismissed as white Christianity and as the dismissal of the knowledge of God found in cultural systems of the natives and indigenous people. Thus the general revelation which seems to suggest the existence of God discernible through reason has been found wanting with regards to blacks by whites. At the same time there is a consensus and sentiment that is contrary to the miseducation of blacks by the missionaries. The white or Europeans knew that blacks knew about God, but used the idea of God to subdue the earth, hence Weisbord (2003: 35) and Pheko (1995: 78) note the deceptive methods used by missionary work. The subject of God's revelation in the general revelation becomes also challenged in that God is dogmatised and Western Christianity insists on even the general revelation, which should be beyond its scope of analysis. The idea of general revelation that has been agreed upon by the churches and theologians of the West should factor in a sense of incompleteness. This should be in contemplation and reflection on the native's spirituality and idea of God. This spirituality is seen in the elements of nature and is far more complex than explained by the West. On the other hand Fanon (1963 & 1952) has expressed how being black is perceived by those who question the humanity of black and sees them without profound "Aquinas" thought. It is not just merely in philosophical reflection that the omnipresence, omnificence and absoluteness of God is expressed and found, but it is rather in the context of blacks that the profoundness of thought especially in the realm of the divine and general revelation requires to understand symbolism that is physical, but abstract in definition, as well as the mode of expression which it conceals for those who are strangers. Raboteau (1978: 9) in reference to the pertinent question of symbolical gestures asserts:

European travellers frequently identified African gods with demons or devils and accused Africans of devil worship. Or they mistook the image of the god for the god himself and called them fetish worshipers. However, the representation of the gods as fetishes is a mistake. A fetish, properly, is simply a charm or amulet, and the place or object where the god dwells is properly called a shrine; neither should be confused with the gods themselves.

The point that is raised by Raboteau (1978: 9) on European travellers deciding on theological matters and separating the divine from the profane and between God and the devil is deeply rooted in Western theology and it's racial hermeneutic on people who are not of European descent. It informs the epistemological and practical framework later on through the colonial express between the distinction of the human and non-human. By positing and portioning

Africans as demon and devil worshippers signals what Boesak referred to by Christian Europeans or white's racism is rooted in the white church. These definitions matter theologically and further point to the arrogance of the West on aspects of the monopoly and hegemony of truth and theological legitimacy. This also leads to how the idea of God and God's revelation proclaim sovereignty from the elements of nature. In some sense, the symbolical gestures provide the experience of limitation and awe to engulf the natives. These is the appreciation of the God, contrary to the God revealed through reason and subdues the earth and exploit it. It is also significant that to a certain extent, the general revelation or to seek to explain within the African reality is inclusive of the spirit of God. Thus the kind of general revelation is pneumatological, eschatological and ecological. It is also necessary not to see ecological reflection linked to the revelation of God. This revelation of God is only from the effects of destruction caused by Western civilisation through industrialisation, urbanisation and the sudden threat of life caused by the Western way of life. Black ecclesiology and its African history should in its own conception of revelation see a *telos*, purpose, rooted in soteriology with emphasis that reveals an aspect that does not put special revelation separate from creation and material reality, which is central in general revelation. There is also a need to fundamentally see ecology linked to worldview, ontology and the existential condition, especially in the doctrine of revelation. Perhaps this is a point of linking the ecological and revelation and has been evasive in understanding black theology and African theology, which is to see the dialectical link between the human and world and the barren exploited land similar to the condition that blacks are in, barren in expression. Further, to see the mode and mobility of the exploited in existence through their assumed essences and substances that white supremacy and its chief mode of conveying the white way of life through Western civilisation avails.--seemingly availing them as the only embodiments, bodily experiences and mental expression for a white *Imago Dei*. This has allowed Western theology to hurt and heal blacks, but more fundamentally it has neglected deep truth about God. This is God whose physical existence was symbolised only later to be realised in Christ by the African or black prophets. Daneel (1999: 209) asserts:

In some respects, the AIC prophets of Africa probably understand and experience the life-giving power of the outpoured Spirit better than either Calvin or Moltmann does. Their knowledge is shaped by their non-Christian forefathers, who sensed as well as any Old Testament sage that the *mweya* (spirit) imparted by God the *musiki* (creator) was the source of all life. This intuition ultimately blossomed into an all-pervading testimony to the life-giving power of the *Mweya Mutsvene* (Holy Spirit) in the Spirit-type churches, especially in their healing colonies.

What Daneel (1999: 209) asserts are deep seated truths that should overthrow Calvin and Western theologians and their ecclesia from the high seat of speaking for God by being God. The profound and condescending outlook of the West seems to suggest the shallow theological lenses to viewing, seeing, experiencing and knowing God, whereas general revelation lacks theological properties, if defined within the black African world view. This African view has an ethical and moral dimension fitting with the ethics taught by Christ and which are central to soteriology. The following is confirmed by a *Letter from King Leopold II* of Belgium to colonial missionaries, 1883³⁴ records the following statements and guides for missionaries:

Reverends, Fathers and Dear Compatriots: The task that is given to fulfil is very delicate and requires much tact. You will go certainly to evangelize, but your evangelization must inspire above all Belgium interests. Your principal objective in our mission in the Congo is never to teach the niggers to know God, this they know already. They speak and submit to a Mungu, one Nzambi, one Nzakomba, and what else I don't know. They know that to kill, to sleep with someone else's wife, to lie and to insult is bad. Have courage to admit it; you are not going to teach them what they know already.

The Letter further records the following:

Your essential role is to facilitate the task of administrators and industrialists, which means you will go to interpret the gospel in the way it will be the best to protect your interests in that part of the world. For these things, you have to keep watch on disinterested our savages from the richness that is plenty [in their underground. To avoid that, they get interested in it, and make you murderous] competition and dream one day to overthrow you.

The following quotes then prove that definitions of general revelation and its applications should not be homogenous and monolithic. For if so it is an act to slip into the divine hidden in the clouds and it is to bury one's head in the ground, yet blind to see the wealth beneath and the presence of God that surrounds us. At the same the gospel is preceded by interpretation and hermeneutics that is not rooted in biblical scripture, but rooted in personal interest and gains for the West. The gospel is further used to disinterest the natives from the wealth of their land. Truthfully, this is absurd to a God discernible and evident in the grandeur of creation. The view expressed in this letter on the ethical base of African societies, communities and cultures and their belief in the divine who is intrinsic in their value system, has a God already known who guides the world. This realisation of the idea of God among the natives questions the ethical

³⁴<http://allafrica.com/stories/200510060035.html> - The letter which follows is Courtesy of Dr. Vera Nobles and Dr. Chiedozie Okoro.

base of God. This is conceived in the constructs of Western theological doctrine of revelation as defined in special and general revelation. The God who is hidden, somewhat invisible in the true sense of Being, is known and revealed in nature using the African paradigms. This God has much influence on the people against exploitation of resources, hence the communal maintaining of life which poses a serious question on the nature of the theology of the West, considering that the “invisible” of God in Africans assumes visibility through the way of life. The God seen and known by Europeans in Jesus Christ allows the unethical and immoral behaviour of whites that seems to suggest a lack of fear for God in His Self-Revelation. Western ecclesiology disregards whether God is visible and is the content of general revelation or even if God has bodily expression in Christ, thus special revelation is also in crisis in Western theology that ambiguous about the divine.

General revelation in contrast to special revelation has proven to be confusing Western theological traditions, despite the orthodoxy latter theologians sought. It is possible that there is tingling feeling of a misappropriation of truth. Actually, there is an act of heresy evident in preaching a different gospel than that of the early church in Africa. Special revelation emphasised what God revealed in Christ as a human being and that human being-ness of Christ for colonial Christianity and white supremacy became a symbol of pacifism to people of colour. God becoming human and then misappropriating his manliness with European culture and white aesthetic erased the Christ of Palestine, as the Hebrew prophet murder by the council of the Roman occupiers and the Jewish bureaucracy to a Christ of the colonial church. Christ became a symbol of “authentic faith”, domination and subduing the world for Europeans. This is alluded to by Deloria (1977: 15), who critiques and shows suspicion for liberation theology that is still attached to the oppressor’s definitions of faith, while leading the masses in an unending voyage for justice, reparation, retribution and truth. The starting point is not to elaborate complex and sophisticated rhetorics of transcendence limited in space-time, history and the existential of which God is made human in Christ. This is rather for their complexity including the church fathers. The incarnation and humanity of God does not appeal firstly to their humanity. The reason for this is that Christ is simply used as a pawn for soteriology and human sin, as opposed to the human who sins. It is fundamental to assert special revelation in Christ, as warranted and guaranteed white domination over blacks. This special revelation emphasised a superiority of Europeans in the world and bringing Western civilisation. It is significant to note that the so-called “intelligence and the profoundness” of Western theology did not understand the aspect of incarnation. What it means for God to be human and the

repelling effects of incarnation is the potential of the human being. At a later stage that includes slavery, colonialism, imperialism and white supremacy. However, the incarnation and humanity of God is precisely what is used to dehumanise the world. This is all about Christ losing his historical ethnicity as a Hebrew, to being white and creating a superficial culture, race, privilege and feeling against people of colour. Farley (1997:457) correctly asserts: “Whiteness is not color; it is a way of feeling in and about one’s body.” It is also significant to add that bodiliness of Christ that places him as part of creation and personified God of general revelation evades the theological mind of the West. That continues in pursuits of truth, reflecting rather anxieties of seeking to escape any given accountability and responsibility of humanity and identity. Furthermore, the west hides true human identity behind metaphysics that neglects being a creature of God in aspects of physiology and the ontological.

Throughout the research in discussing special revelation, the emphasis has placed that special revelation and the absoluteness of God in Christ. Therefore, for blacks, it entails land confiscation, destruction of cultures and the will of God identical with that of Cecil Rhodes, Jan Van Riebeeck etc. The God in Christ in some sense became the devil for black people, though it is necessary to assert categorically that the God in revealed Christ become problematic by being white and championing the cause of whites. At the same time special revelation is not only critiqued from merely the colonial period, but even within church that has been filled with bureaucracy as noted by Biko (1978). As such, the prevalence of the emphasis on the transcendental, high, mighty and immanent God in human flesh has been a metaphysical act. This physical act has been exalting God in humanity or human form without separating the existential meaning of being human outside simple allotment of the incarnate restricted in soteriology. This exercise that the church of bureaucracy represented by the Roman imperial crown and church engages part of the misunderstanding and misappropriation of the gospel. This is because metaphysical reflection on Christ is vilifying bodiliness of God the truth of *Imago Dei*. Such truth of *Imago Dei* seems to operate to exonerate humanity in bodily form in aspects of physiological and ontological existence rooted in soteriology. It is in Christ bodiliness and embodiment of humanity that black theology and the black church meditates on God’s revelation, inclusive of a new definition of the revelation of God. Boesak (2004: 20) argued: “Black theology, as liberation theology, rewrote the agenda for Christian theology in South Africa.”

Central to the change of agenda is how the black church responds to the revelation of God, in cognisant of revelation and an ecclesiology that sees general revelation and special revelation, while paying attention to the view that the black church is a form of a new Christian interpretation of revelation. It is therefore, a church born outside the traditional Christian creeds and dogmas. This aspect is fundamentally built on what God and Christ is, mindful of the knowledge of God among blacks before white supremacy. There has been a serious discovery on the subject of God's revelation or at least as it should be understood by black Christians and the black experience. The discovery and development of black theological thought and expression seeks to expose colonial Christianity. This colonial Christianity can be traced from imperial Rome up to the present period. With the West projecting their theological and ecclesiastical traditions as legitimate navigators of theological thought. These ecclesiastical traditions have at least in areas impacting the black church. This world is coupled by two bodies, one divine or sacred and is white or emulates white values and even in the question of being, while the other is black and worldly, but bound by unacceptability, inferiority and a physiological positionality, revealing the lot of a world that is anti-black. The invisibility of blacks and their bodies is precisely the downplaying of Christ's own bodily suffering and a fundamental positing of Christ as the aspect and subject of other worldliness. The definition of secular and sacred is fundamentally linked to dispossession, because colonial Christianity helped to condition black. It really conditioned blacks to think in terms of other "worldliness", escapism with fruits of heaven in the world to come and not of this world. Through this cheap faith, Western civilisation and Western Christianity gain legitimacy through dispossession of land and dispossession of the ontological expression of black bodies. Being human is being who God is interested to be as part of the recipients of God's revelation. Thus having a shattering effect between the distinction of sacred and secular, especially when Christ the previously hidden God is revealed.

Another aspect that should be raised is the view of colonialism, slavery, imperialism and racism being used with faith. Colonial Christianity brings to the fore that doctrine or accepted dogmas should be viewed with suspicion, especially since some of these dogmas are outside of the first early Christian community and a later development of church fathers and Bishops. This view might be considered radical in that it would seem as an aim of changing or challenging Christianity. However, the aim is not to transform Christianity, but to legitimise God's benevolence, immanence, existential and transcendental character. Even in revelation through the personhood of the man Jesus Christ, both pertinent in the content of general and special

revelation. There is an understanding of God in Christ, especially assuming a physiological and ontological position of being human. Since this is existing and fulfilling God's revelation in an existential context, it has to be something that Christianity takes serious. Also if it is necessary, the influence of Western Christianity change where it has gone astray by focusing on the superflux and abundant bombardment of classical metaphysics in the doctrine of revelation. This position is essential in the life of the church of the Lord, primarily when western civilisation and colonial Christianity has changed the very life force of people of colour, whom Christ as a man identified with as a person of colour.

The concept of the sacred and secular that has over eclipsed has been the reality of the world. The divinity has to be central in the subject of God's revelation in the world. Christianity as the experience of people of colour has emphasised divinity outside the secular world. God's act of forgiving through the bodily suffering at the cross has evaded the people. It is really moving people who live in the world and are converts to the Gospel. The revelation of God perhaps signals the intrinsic linked what Setiloane (Masoga 2012) raised on divinity, the existential world, the living and the dead. This is especially if black Christology finds expression not only as response to white supremacy alone, but also as a claim to Christian orthodoxy. The revelation of God ought to be fostered by social praxis that sees divinity manifested in society mingled with history, biology and all things that fall under realism. For instance, the African theologians that see Christ as ancestor links him to biology, history and the existential, while in some sense appealing to the unseen God, hope for the indigenous faith and Hebrew religion speaks. It is necessary to mention that the humanity of God does not only confirm the transcendental and divine coming down to humanity, but a fundamental lift of humanity to the realm of God, thus providing an *Imago Dei*, typical of the Edenic picture of humanity that emerges from the magnanimity and benevolence of God. That has led God to be benevolent even in death through the shame of the cross. As such, the resurrection proclaims victory and the elevation of humanity. Therefore, this is a picture that is fundamental for the black faith as well as fundamental in grasping the cross of the man Yoheshua, rooted in physiological suffering and victory, while providing the illusion of time on the invisibility of God and a visibility of God, pressed upon by soteriology for God to be seen. Furthermore to be from the pre-creation stand that is accompanied by love for that which God has created.

Furthermore, meditations of the black church in existential times assert a re-evaluation of faith, cherished dogmas and great theological insights that might become irrelevant. The role of

radical theologies (black theology) as a carriage of the revelation of God is necessary and presently under pacifism³⁵ and democracy. This democracy has somehow neutralised their radicalism, leaving it to traditional belief of the revelation of God as special and general revelation, as subjects of historical, lofty romanticism and idealism. These aspects of revelation of God (special or general) are universal and occupy a special and classical body of theological knowledge on the Christian subject of revelation. However, these concepts are irrelevant to the black existential context, because they do not delve into a context when God has been an idea of the West through colonial Christianity and the remnant effects of the revelation of the colonial God. Weisbord's (2003: 35) writing on evangelisation and missionary efforts and goals (2003: 35) supports this point, when he asserted that colonialism was camouflaging greed and ethnocentric arrogance with sanctimonious language of a civilising mission set to uplift the downtrodden, to enlighten the benighted and to Christianise the heathen ("Africans"), a handful of European countries forcibly portioned the African continent.

Thus such a revelation of God—through deceit, greed and subjugation-- in the black world poses a serious historical account of how things became what they became and remain as they are. The black world has not been associated with God, thus the black world and God in the West both are denied and thought to be incompatible. The incompatibility is due to an emptying out of people and requires a filling up again of a people and their God, whom they discover is Christ and in Christ.

As part of the revelation of God, there is a need for a doctrine of God that comes from the black church, black spirituality and black suffering and freedom. It also emerges from the bottom up and is grounded in a God of meaning and sense. The revelation of God to blacks is not an ecclesiastical manifestation or phenomenon, but social and historical justice, since this is informed by black suffering and black ecclesiology. This is the source of both divinity and the secular material reality. This revelation of God should be leading the black church to be existential in nature. There should be a mission for black people first before inclusivism of other

³⁵ The pacifism which one speaks about is reflected in John Pilger's book *Freedom Next Time* 2006. The importance being the section on which he speaks of reconciliation with Ahmad Katharda under the topic apartheid did not. Pilger (2006: 177) makes mention of what Katharda termed "amazing luck", he asserts: "He took me to Mandela's cell and I started in awe at its confinement; then we walked out into the sunshine and laughed about idle things and reflected on what Kathy called the 'amazing luck' of the white population as the beneficiaries of a generosity called 'reconciliation'". What stands out here is the reconciliation process favouring one section and continuing a tradition of black exclusion under democracy and freedom.

Christians. In the revelation of God and existential times, blacks should not only know of the God of the oppressed, but see the power, victory and pride given to them by God. Black theology and African theologies are relatively new in the theological discourse and even in the history of theology. In that they emerge between the colonial and post-colonial periods of African history. That has been characterised in that particular period of history by colonialism, imperialism and racism. All that embodied within the historical contents and experiences of the dehumanisation of blacks in Africa and out of Africa. Kunnie (1994: 5) asserted:

Black theology has emerged in response to European and Euro-American theologies that have either largely ignored black experience or excluded it from the domain of theology. Black theology therefore tapped into the wellspring of the history of resistance to racism as one source for its thesis of liberation. The *raison d'être* of black theology, in fact, is the tenacity of racism and its clever subversion of the reality that black humanity is indeed created in God's image.

The creation and acknowledgement of black humanity as created by God points to Aquinas. Aquinas is positing that human beings have the capacity to conceive God's revelation and existence from nature (general revelation). However, the difference of Aquinas's explanation is that Western metaphysics and theology excludes those of European descent and as such cannot be taken to mean humanity for all.

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