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Crossbearers as the Messianic Generation: Towards a

Black Radical Christology by

Obakeng Africa

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Declaration

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Crossbearers as the Messianic Generation: Towards a Black Radical Christology

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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Finally, to my beloved wife, Mambanjwa—thank you for walking this journey with me. Your willingness to share in both the highs and lows, to be my constant audience and support, has been indispensable. You are amazing, and I want the world to know that.

Abstract:

South Africa is in crisis, and theologians have been grappling with the theological significance of this state of affairs. In the realm of black theology, many have expressed concern around the discursive malaise this theological tradition is currently experiencing. On the other hand, theologians are still coming to terms with the epistemological break that Fallism introduced into popular discourse in the country. Some theologians have responded to the movement, but no theologian has articulated a theological contribution from the movement itself.

The following study is an attempt to articulate a theological expression of Fallism while not falling into the excesses of the philosophical framework. Through the black Christology of Takatso Mofokeng, I seek to articulate a Fallist response to the central question of his Christological framework, "how can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation?" (Mofokeng, 1983, p. x) To answer this question, I stage a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology.

This theoretical encounter is staged in the following manner. First, I make the case for the discursive contact between black theology and radical theology. Second, I do a thematic survey of the motif of identity in Mofokeng's Christology. Third, I explore an alternative hermeneutical orientation that can help address the limitations of the motif of identity in Mofokeng's Christology through John D. Caputo's radical theology. Specifically, I explore his hermeneutics of the call. I then bring this to a head by articulating a Christian Fallism and its corollary circumfessional orientation.

In short, Christian Fallism is my post-1994 answer to the central question in Mofokeng's Christology. This answer is inflected with the critical intuitions of Fallism. An inflection which serves as a theoretical extension to the Black Consciousness philosophical framework that Mofokeng had to work with. Fallism extends this by also drawing from black radical feminism, and Pan-Africanism with specific attention to the historical conditions of South Africa today. The corollary circumfessional orientation that I bring into the discourse is a measure that is meant to guard against the logics of community that both black theology and Fallism run afoul of.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background:

March 9th, 2015 will go down in history as a moment that triggered seismic shifts in South African political discourse. It represents a watershed moment in the politics of resistance in "post"-apartheid South Africa. The myth of the rainbow nation was destroyed, and a difficult conversation was initiated. (Turner, 2019) Out of a grotesque moment of resistance came a movement that is known as *Fallism,* a movement that pushed decolonial thought into popular discourse. *Fallism*, by some accounts, represents for Systematic theologians what Mofokeng would call "a series of epistemological ruptures in the hermeneutic circle." (1989, p. 38) The following study seeks to participate in this difficult conversation. It seeks to explore the potential for Takatso Mofokeng's Christology to shape the theological discourse that can develop from within the Fallist tradition itself. In 1983, Mofokeng made an important contribution to the theological tradition of black theology with his *The Crucified among the Crossbearers*. His study was undertaken during the apartheid era, and it was in direct conversation with the student movement of its day, the Black Consciousness Movement. The current study is a follow up to Mofokeng's contribution which attempts to develop a post-1994 response to his central question "how can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation?" (Mofokeng, 1983, p. x) To answer this question, I stage a theoretical encounter between Mofokeng's Christology and John D Caputo's radical theology. This critical encounter is brought to a head by using Fallism as a discursive platform to develop a confessional position and its corollary circumfessional orientation.

Fallism as Discursive Context:

Abdul Ahmed notes that *Fallism* is an umbrella term that refers to movements such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall. (2019, p. 146) In an interview with Ahmed, Wandile Kasibe asserts that the "greatest contribution of #RMF is the introduction of the philosophy of Fallism" (Ahmed, 2019, p. 146) Fallism must be understood within the context of what many consider to be its inaugural act; Chumani Maxwele throwing excrement onto the bronze statue of Cecil John Rhodes. What significance did this action have? In my reading, this action was an artistic performance that brought to full relief the structural embarrassments that are kept invisible by the status quo. According to Wandile Kasibe, Maxwele got the faeces from Khayelitsha. (Kasibe, 2021) How did he get access to the excrement and why Khayelitsha? Ahmed recounts:

> [Maxwele] persuaded a sedan taxi driver he knew, to drive him to Khayelitsha where he picked up two plastic containers filled with human faeces that was left on the side of the road for collection by Cape Town sanitation services. Khayelitsha residents were still using the portable toilets that Lile's protest drew attention to in 2013. (2019, p. 109)

Khayelitsha has a dire sanitation problem. The sewage infrastructure does not adequately serve the entire population of Khayelitsha. (Mail and Guardian, 2013) Consequently, the city of Cape Town resorted to outsourcing the sanitation service to a private contractor who is responsible for setting up chemical toilets. What is deeply problematic about this "solution" is that it is a temporary solution to a permanent problem. What makes matters worse is that even this solution is not adequately executed. According to a social audit that was conducted by the *Social Justice Coalition (SJC)*, of the 256 toilets that they inspected, "54% of toilets were in an unusable state and a further 66% of toilets were damaged." (Social Justice Coalition, 2013, p. 5) It should be noted that a further 90 toilets are missing. This, according to the audit report, has made the municipality's initial goal of 5 families per toilet to fall short to 10 families per toilet. The worst case is the one where 26 families share 1 toilet. All these facts paint a stark picture, but things are made worse by the fact that a half an hour's drive will put you in Clifton, one of the richest neighbourhoods in South Africa. These are the conditions that gave Maxwele access to sufficient human excrement and motivated his performance.

Method to the Madness

There are a few things that I should note about this performance. First, the performance was not spontaneous. Careful planning went into this performance. Kasibe is the one who suggested the idea of throwing excrement to the statue. He recounts, "[a]fter those long hours of trying to find an effective way to deal with the statue of Rhodes, we looked at all possible actions and reactions, but settled with the idea of throwing human faeces as a simple but effective political strategy that would give us the desired outcome." (Kasibe, 2021) Second, it was not only the act that was premeditated, the date on which he did it was also intentional; March 9, the day a public art festival titled *Infecting the City* was being opened in the city of Cape Town. Third, the act of using human excrement to protest was not a novel act. Maxwele notes that "he drew inspiration from earlier protests" (Ahmed, 2019, p. 108) The earliest record of this form of protest in South Africa was dubbed "the night soil march". A community led protest was organised under the leadership of the Duduza Civic Association. "Early in 1985, a symbolic march by township residents ('the nightsoil march') saw residents dumping nightsoil at the local municipal offices." (Manganyi, 1990, p. 297) In post-1994 South Africa, this protest tradition was taken up again during the *Occupy Grahamstown* protest under the leadership of Ayanda Kota, the founder and leader of the *Unemployed People's Movement*. In 2011, "Kota and a handful of his fellow activists charged into Grahamstown's City Hall (where the Makana municipality's offices are housed) and dumped bucket loads of human excrement in the foyer." (Knoetze, 2013) Another instance of this type of protest is what has been dubbed the "faeces wars". In June 2013, a group of African National Congress Youth League protesters under the leadership of Loyiso Nkohla "dumped buckets filled with human faeces at the domestic and international departures terminal at Cape Town International Airport" (Dano & Barnes, 2013) In response to the arrest of Nkohla and his fellow protesters, the ""poo fighters"

struck again, emptying portable toilets on the steps of the provincial legislature." (Koyana & Damba, 2013) It is noted in the article that this was not the first time that excrement was dumped at the steps of the Western Cape provincial legislature. Ahmed notes that Maxwele drew inspiration from the "faeces wars". The point here is that there is a long history behind this form of protest, and Maxwele's own protest/performance is just contributing to that history. I point all these facts out to say that there is a rich context behind the inaugural act of Fallism.

Fallism represents a shift from resignation to radicality. Biko describes a defeated man who "[i]n the privacy of his toilet his face twists in *silent condemnation* of white society but brightens up in sheepish obedience as he comes out hurrying in response to his master's impatient call." (1978, p. 30)[emphasis added] Maxwele and the "poo fighters" went to take the excrement of the man Biko described and they condemned whiteness and white supremacy as loudly and as publicly as possible. Fallism therefore must be understood as a disruptive philosophy. The statue of Rhodes represented the conquest and oppression of black people by white people. Fallism is a tapestry of pre-existing intellectual traditions. It does not suffer from what Harold Bloom called *The Anxiety of Influence.*

On the Differences and their Significance

Concerning the inspiration that Maxwele drew from for his performance, Ahmed remarks that "I recognized that even though the faeces in both cases emanated from Khayelitsha, its destination (both geographically and ideologically) was fundamentally different." (Ahmed, 2019, p. 109) He notes that where the "faeces wars" were a critique of the Democratic Alliance led legislature in the Western Cape, Maxwele's protest was a critique of the colonial legacy of the British empire and the institutional embrace by the University of Cape Town. He also notes the difference in motivation between the "faeces wars" and Maxwele's performance; the former is motivated by electoral politics where the latter is motivated by a decolonial framework. Following from these differences, it is important to take note of Ahmed's opinion that "the location of the protest—the historically white university—is just as important to consider as the form the protest took, as well as the ideological framework that was developed following the protest." (Ahmed, 2019, p. 110) This means that even though this inaugural act was embedded in pre-existing protest traditions and it was not making new claims, it's novelty was the manner in which this one act interweaved different struggles. This act was a critique of the Marikana massacre. "Rhodes was a British mining magnate and a politician in southern Africa who served as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896" (Chowdhury, 2019, p. 288) This places him at the nexus of the colonial legacies of the socio-political and economic arrangements in South Africa today. In a public statement the Rhodes Must Fall movement released in 2015, they stated that:

> In the next phase of our development of our movement we prepared to stand in solidarity for justice for Marikana. This decision was not in any way coincidental, in fact the connection was at the forefront of our conceptualisation of the movement as we decided to organise under a

decolonial mandate at this decisive time in South Africa's history. (Rhodes Must Fall Movement, 2015)

The Marikana massacre was an indication that colonial violence is in remission, but if coloniality is sufficiently challenged, it will rear its ugly head to restore colonial relations. Second as already mentioned above, this performance was a critique of the sanitation crisis in Khayelitsha and South Africa at large. Jay Pather and Catherine Boulle describe Maxwele's performance as "an act of calculated political significance that was also a searing physical manifestation of emotional overflow." (2019, p. 2) Excrement was a powerful weapon in the battle of ideas because it concretized unemployment, inequality, and poverty in the most visceral way possible. The pain and suffering of the shack dwellers of Khayelitsha was not discussed in abstract terms. The excrement was a forceful conceptual tool in the hands of Maxwele. "This action," Pather and Boulle argue, "and the subsequent Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement to which it gave rise, tapped into expanses of feeling, which, once released, could not be contained." (2019, p. 2) Fallism, therefore, is a philosophy that centres affect. Like Black Consciousness, it "seeks to channel pent up forces of angry black masses to a meaningful and directional opposition basing its entire struggle on the realities of the situation." (Biko, 1978, p. 33) It connected the "faeces wars" to the *Report of the Khayelitsha 'Mshengu' Toilet Social Audit.* This is to make the point that different tactics were used in the overall struggle around the Khayelitsha sanitary crisis. What made the "faeces wars" and Maxwele's protest to be so potent is that there was an audit report to back their claims up and there was a deep commitment to using non-violent means in this struggle. Lastly, Maxwele's protest was a critique of the university's complicity in the colonial legacy of Rhodes and the benefit they derive from this legacy. The RMF movement also stated that: "in our decision to focus on Cecil John Rhodes as a central symbolic figure of the legacy of colonisation, it was clear that the material and ideological realities of UCT related to that very legacy." (2015) At a material level, UCT benefitted from Rhodes' legacy because the university was built on land that he "donated". This statue was unveiled in 1934 "to honour his donation of land to the university" (2019, p. 15) This gesture fails to recognize, at best, and at worst it is in favour of the fact that Rhodes donated land he had stolen in the first place. This critique extended beyond the symbols and artwork of the university to the institutional culture and its problem of coloniality of knowledge. In short, the object that Maxwele chose to deface critiqued the Marikana massacre and the colonial legacy that is still embraced by UCT and society at large. The tool he used to deface the statue invoked the "faeces wars" and the *Khayelitsha 'Mshengu' Toilet Social Audit* which were both a scathing critique of the Khayelitsha sanitation crisis.

As mentioned above, Mofokeng articulated his Christology during the apartheid era. Analytically speaking, this socio-political setting is different to that of the current situation in South Africa. The complication however is that even though these are different political arrangements, they still produce results that are largely similar i.e. black suffering, the same suffering that pushed Mofokeng to write

The Crucified among the Crossbearers. This state of affairs makes liberation seem and feel impossible. This is where Caputo becomes relevant. Caputo's theopoetics is a radical theology, a deconstruction inflected radical theology that is expressed in the form of theopoetics. For ease of reference, theopoetics will be referred to as radical theology. As it turns out, deconstruction has a penchant for the impossible, in the words of Caputo, "the paralysis and impossibility an aporia is just what impels deconstruction, what rouses it out of bed in the morning, what drives it on and calls it into action. Indeed, one might say… being in an impossible fix, is just what deconstruction is all about." (Caputo, 1997, p. 32) This makes Caputo's radical theology to be well suited to address the impossibility of liberation. The state of the debate on Mofokeng's Christology does not feature an intervention that addresses the problem of the impossibility of liberation under the current regime, the value of putting Mofokeng's Christology in conversation with Caputo's radical theology is that it will infuse the discourse with deconstructive impulses where impossibility does not paralyse the discourse but impels it to move forward and rouses it to action.

Contribution

There are three discursive measures that I will be responding to. First, it is the commentators of the post-1994 political situation in South Africa. Scholars like Joel Modiri[1] and Tendayi Sithole [2] have argued that post-1994 South Africa made cosmetic changes to the social, political, economic and juridical arrangements. This is evidenced by the striking similarity of black suffering and state oppression that we see. The similarity between Steve Biko's death and Collins Khosa's death is one example (Molatoli, 2020). The Sharpeville Massacre and the Marikana Massacre is another example (Pijoos, 2017). This study leverages the discursive contribution that Fallism made to show the continued relevance of his intervention. This is to say, I will use the conceptual resources of Fallism itself to bring Mofokeng's black Christology into post-1994 South Africa. Second, I am responding to those who keep discussing the question of the relevance of black theology post-1994. I affirm its continued relevance, but I don't do that by making the case, I just do black theology. Specifically, I will investigate how the self-understanding of a community of believers can empower them in their struggle for liberation. Third, I am responding to scholars that recognise the value that radical theology brings to the theological discourse of South Africa today. My study will also make the case for the value of this discursive contact between the theological traditions.

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[1] Modiri, J. (2017). *The Jurisprudence of Steve Biko: A Study in Race, Law and Power in the "Afterlife" of Colonial-Apartheid.*

[2] Sithole, T. (2014). *Achille Mbembe: Subject, Subjection, and Subjectivity.* Pretoria: University of South Africa

Aims and Objective:

This study is predicated on the assumption that Takatso Mofokeng's Black Christology remains relevant to this day. Be that as it may, it also acknowledges that there are differences between the apartheid regime (the era Mofokeng wrote under) and the post 1994 constitutional democratic regime (the present era). The aim of this study is to explore a Black Christology that can empower Black people that are still struggling for liberation in post 1994 South Africa. The objective of this study is to make a constructive contribution to Mofokeng's Black Christology by making explicit the radical potential in his Christology.

Methodology

In this section, I will describe the epistemological assumptions that underpin my study, and I will close by providing a brief procedural description of my method. First, a radical rendition of Mofokeng's Christology will aim to "distance, dislodge, and disengage the actors from their mundane roles…" (Caputo, 2013, p. 100) The religious actors in question will be forced to rethink Mofokeng's *double grounded hermeneutic of praxis.*[3] This means that the anthropological question and the Christological question will undergo a phenomenological reduction of sorts, together with the related praxiological implications. Second, a radical rendition of Mofokeng's Christology will "raise the suspicion of the event in the actors." (Caputo, 2013, p. 100) Caputo's characterization of the relationship between the *event* and the *name* that contains the event will be useful analytically.[4] Third, a radical rendition of Mofokeng's Christology will "attach a coefficient of historicizing irony to [religious actor's] beliefs and practices" (Caputo, 2013, p. 100) This is precisely the appeal that Mofokeng found in Sobrino's Christology. That is to say, we will take what Mofokeng is doing in his Christology a step further by suspending the natural attitude. Fourth, a radical rendition of Mofokeng's Christology will "insert a distance between their mundane vocation and the more obscure prompting of the event." (Caputo, 2013, p. 100) Since the *raison d'être* of Mofokeng's Christology is to help Christians fighting for liberation to find their faith in Jesus to be empowering in struggle, a radical rendition of his Christology would be helpful because it will help the Black Christian in struggle to "insert a distance between their mundane vocation and the more obscure prompting of the event." (Caputo, 2013, p. 100) Such a rendition of Mofokeng's Christology would put the *Crossbearers* in a position to engage in liberating liturgical practices, reflect in liberating ways on these liturgical practices and the hermeneutic sensibilities that help them to have moments where they break out of the confessional borders to a deeper order of questioning and reflection, a radical order that helps them to see the historical contingency of the

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[3] (Mofokeng, The Crucified among the Crossbearers, 1983)

[4] In *The Weakness of God: A Theology of Event,* 2003, Caputo offers eight characterizations that delineate relationship between the event and the name.

confessional community they are in and the struggle they are engaged in. Caputo further explains what he is saying in these terms:

> A theopoetics is a deployment of multiple discursive resources meant to give words to the event, but without miscasting it as a gift coming down from the sky (supernaturalism) and without laying claim to the high ground of the Concept (metaphysics) which dominates it from above, without asserting that one knows the secret, the code, the rule that governs events. (Caputo, 2013, p. 102)

In sum, a radical rendition of Mofokeng's Christology will involve a "deployment of multiple discursive resources meant to give words to the event." In this case the discourses I seek to deploy are Black Christology and radical theology. I will use the sensibilities of radical theology to search for moments in Mofokeng's Christology that go beyond the confessional borders from which he is writing. I will search for textual markers that indicate an attempt to "give words to the event" of Black suffering from a theological standpoint. I will also search for tensions within his thought, where I see a movement of uprooting of classical theology on the one hand, and the deployment of discursive resources that might miscast the event as "a gift coming down from the sky" on the other. All things considered, Christopoetics can be understood to be a theopoetic treatment of the cluster of questions that form Christology. In this instance, this study will follow the cluster of questions that preoccupy Mofokeng in his Black Christology. Particularly around the motif of identity. Multiple discursive resources will be deployed to "give words to the event" in Mofokeng's Christology. To talk of Christopoetics is to talk of the *logos* in Christo-*logy* being haunted by the poetics of the event.

In short, I will develop what I call Christian Fallism and its corresponding circumfessional orientation. I start by making the case for a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology. Second, I sketch out the conceptual frameworks of the theological interlocutors I will engage in this critical encounter. For black theology, I have chosen Mofokeng, for radical theology, I have chosen Caputo. Third I draw on Mofokeng's Christological framework; his answer to the Christological question and the anthropological question to engage Fallism and articulate a confessional position I call Fallism. I then deconstructively read this confessional position to expose the problems with the logics of community in Fallism and black Christology. This leads me to articulating a circumfessional orientation to one's confessional tradition. That is, I articulate a theopoetic engagement with the confessional tradition.

Structure:

Chapter 2 of this study will make the case for a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology. To do this, I turn to Daniel Magaziner who provides us with a detailed history of the

development of black theology in South Africa. Based on his historical account, I argue that there is historical precedence for a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology in South Africa. I then turn to Calvin D. Ullrich to sketch out, in specific terms, what this critical encounter looks like. He identifies three points of contact between the two traditions: the hermeneutic of positive identification, the question of theodicy, and the abstraction of radical theology. In this study, I will concern myself with one point of contact, the hermeneutic of positive identification.[5]

After making this case, I then turn to Mofokeng in chapter 3 where I discuss his Christological framework. This framework has two dialectical poles that the reflection moves between, the Christological question (who do you say that I am?) and the anthropological question (who am I? how can I be liberated to my authentic self?). I frame his engagement with Black Consciousness as an answer to the anthropological question and his engagement with Jon Sobrino and Karl Barth as his answer to the Christological question. The purpose of the answers to the Christological and anthropological questions is to show how the motif of identity in Mofokeng's Christology facilitates a liberative self-understanding. That said, Mofokeng identifies some areas of concern in his answers to the anthropological question and the Christological question. This then serves as my motivation to turn to radical theology as an alternative hermeneutical orientation to address the limitations that Mofokeng identified in his Christology.

Chapter 4 is an engagement with the work of John D. Caputo. In my engagement with Caputo, I situate his theological contribution so that it is clear how he fits into the case I made in the second chapter for a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology. I show how he is related to the first wave of radical theology, also known as theologies of secularisation. I discursively and genealogically locate him in the radical theological tradition of Hegel and Tillich. Having done so I then discuss his big ideas. After that general survey, I hone in on his hermeneutics of the call. The purpose of our exploration of his hermeneutics of the call is to get an understanding of the epistemological underpinnings of his theology and to get a clear understanding of how the conceptual operations of his theology unfold. With that in place, we then turn to the constructive contribution of this study.

This is where I bring back the context I set up in this introduction, and I draw on the insights of Mofokeng and Caputo to develop a theological contribution that speaks from the Fallist movement. In chapter 5, I discursively situate myself in the Fallist movement and identify Christian Fallists as the primary audience of the confessional position that I proffer in this chapter. I make the case for Fallism rigorously engaging the questions of religiosity by pointing out that it draws on Biko, and he was a big advocate of movements of liberation also coming up with a liberative statement that can be used as a vehicle of conscientisation in the process of liberation. Having done so, I then use Mofokeng's

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[5] I have chosen to leave the other two points of contact for further research after this study.

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This is where I bring back the context I set up in this introduction, and I draw on the insights of Mofokeng and Caputo to develop a theological contribution that speaks from the Fallist movement. In chapter 5, I discursively situate myself in the Fallist movement and identify Christian Fallists as the primary audience of the confessional position that I proffer in this chapter. I make the case for Fallism rigorously engaging the questions of religiosity by pointing out that it draws on Biko, and he was a big advocate of movements of liberation also coming up with a liberative statement that can be used as a vehicle of conscientisation in the process of liberation. Having done so, I then use Mofokeng's

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[5] I have chosen to leave the other two points of contact for further research after this study.

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Christological framework to articulate a confessional statement from within the Fallist movement. This means that where Mofokeng only had Black Consciousness to answer the anthropological question, I bring in the other two traditions that Fallism draws on; black radical feminism and Pan-Africanism. The careful reader will note that I only draw on the Christological insights that Mofokeng gets from Sobrino.

This is because, like Martin Forrest, I believe that "Mofokeng's whole approach is so much closer to that of Sobrino than to Barth's that the value of such a detailed engagement with Barth's Christology is not clear." (Forrest, 1987, p. 172) Having articulated a Christological framework that speaks from the Fallist tradition, I still find it necessary to challenge the unguarded acceptance of the logics of community. I then show how these logics are harmful and ultimately undermine the liberative intent of Fallism and black Christology. On this basis, I then turn to the hermeneutics of the call that I discussed in chapter 4 to articulate a critical posture that I call a circumfessional orientation to the confessional position of Christian Fallism.

Having made my constructive contribution, I then conclude this study in chapter 6 by reflecting the personal, national, and global significance of the argument I articulate here. I explain how each of the interlocutors I engaged helped me to address the crisis of identity I experienced. I then discuss the limitations of the study and clearly delineate the contribution this study makes. In board strokes, I reiterate my invitation that we circumfessionally engage our confessional tradition.

Chapter 2: Black Theology and Radical Theology: The case for a Critical Encounter

Introduction:

In recent years, several theologians have contemplated the possibility of,[6] made the case for,[7] or staged a critical encounter between continental philosophy of religion and South African theologies.[8] This shows that there are intersecting points of concern that have gained purchase for both discursive measures. These considerations coincide with the disconcerting observation that black theology is experiencing a discursive malaise. Different diagnoses have been given for this phenomenon. Mokgethi Motlhabi points to the lack of a paradigm as one of the key causes of this discursive malaise. (Motlhabi, 2009) Urbaniak on the other hand, points to the co-optation of theological discourse by politicians as one of the causes. (Urbaniak, 2017a)Though both above-described discourses are concerned with improving the state of South African theology, none of them explicitly bring these concerns together.

In what follows, I will make the case for staging a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology. The central claim I am making here is that there is historical precedence for a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology, and this historical moment has lessons that can lead to fruitful developments in South African theology. To this end, I will draw on Daniel Magaziner's historical account of the early stages of the development of black theology. In this account I will draw attention to the fact that black theology was developed in the University Christian Movement, an organization that fostered a discursive environment that had both the postcolonial and the secularising impulses. (Magaziner, 2010, p. 8) The postcolonial impulse is represented by black theology and the secularising impulse is represented by secular theology. The polemic thrust of this historical account lies in the fact that it clearly demonstrates that both the postcolonial and the secularising impulse sought to undermine the socio-political and the theological imagination of apartheid that was underpinned by a metaphysics of presence. [8] Commenting on those early stages of the

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[6] (Delport, 2022)

[7] (Verhoef, 2017)

[8] (Ullrich, 2021)

[8] I draw on Joel Modiri's characterization of colonialism and apartheid as being a metaphysics of presence here. (Modiri, 2017, p. 135)

development of black theology, Magaziner observes that "just as SASO's philosophy of liberation broke with the political theories of the past, so too did black South African Christians open a space for a radical rethinking of the faith." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 57) I seek to revisit the assortment of theological influences that were on the table as the space was being opened for

"a radical rethinking of the faith." This will all be in service of exploring the possibility of a generative encounter between black theology and radical theology.

The Hegemonic Ideo-theological Orientation:

In an effort to understand the interpenetration of the theological and political discourse that congealed between black theology and Black Consciousness philosophy in the 1970s, Magaziner invites us to take a "detour from student struggle to consider wider debates about the relationships between church and state that conditioned this discourse's emergence." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 59) This choice is in epistemological and methodological agreement with Mofokeng's own assumptions. He would call Magaziner's historical account a study of the "epistemological ruptures in the hermeneutic circle [of theology]." (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 38) Magaziner notes that the church, particularly the Dutch Reform Church, gave its unfettered theological sanction to the apartheid government. The Christian mythos was crucial to the development of the collective political identity of the Afrikaner people. As a Calvinist community, they made use of Calvin's doctrine of election to style themselves as a people chosen by God. The irony of this identity construction is that it draws from the Hebrew mythology but is also anti-Semitic. "This is because," Derrida explains, "the "Hebrewistic" mythology of the Boer people, coming out of its nomadic origins and the Long Trek, excludes any other "Chosen People."" (Derrida, 1985, p. 297) The Calvinism that the Afrikaner community drew from was a peculiar kind. Mabogo More's account of the institutional history of philosophy and theology in the country signals to us the source of these peculiarities. He writes, "from the outset, the dominant tradition in most Afrikaans universities has been Kuyperian neo-Calvinism combined with neo-Fichtean nationalism, both of which provided the bases for the apartheid system." (More, 2018, p. 204) Interestingly, both Magaziner and More turn to Bantu Affairs minister, M. C. de Wet Nel's 1959 House of Assembly speech to flesh out the official ideo-theological self-understanding of the Afrikaner community. In this speech, he says:

> The philosophy of life of the settled white population in South Africa, both
> Englishspeaking and Afrikaans-speaking in regard to the colour or racial problem . . .

rests on three basic principles . . . The first is that God has given a divine task and calling for every People in the world, which dare not be destroyed or denied by anyone. The second is that every People in the world, of whatever race or colour, has an inherent right to live. In the third place, it is our deep conviction that the personal and national ideals of every individual and every ethnic group can best be developed within its own national community. Only then will the other groups feel that they are not being endangered.

This is the philosophic basis of the policy of apartheid… To our People this is not a mere abstraction, which hangs in the air. It is a divine task, which has to be implemented and fulfilled. (M.C. de Wet Nel, quoted in More, 2018, p. 205) [my emphasis]

The first of the above-stated principles demonstrates that, they were not only the philosophic basis of the policy of apartheid, but they were also its theological basis.[9] (Derrida, 1985, pp. 296-297) Operating out of the conviction of the veracity of this first principle, "white theologians were doing their best at theological dehumanization of blacks - their ideological task as theologians at work on behalf of the Christian oppressor class to which they belong." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 1) The white theologians in question, embraced this neo-Calvinism that is being articulated above by de Wet Nel, Magaziner further explains, "the DRC followed the lead of the prominent Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper, whose "neo-Calvinism" proclaimed that *God's will manifested itself in the maintenance of "diversity of nations, tongues, etc."*[10] (Magaziner, 2010, p. 61)[my emphasis] Where Kuyper's theology gave theological justification for the development of apartheid, Fichte's influence was felt philosophically. More writes:

Fichte invoked the concept of "nature" to justify the maintenance of the separation between groups of different "origins" or "languages." Coupled with his view that the individual is subordinate and only an aspect of the self-development of the Absolute Spirit as that which reveals itself historically in the life of a community, Fichte's philosophy found favour with apartheid ideologists. (More, 2018, p. 204)

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[9] Derrida gives an example of this theological imagination unfolding in political life when he cites the Institute for National Christian Education's position on the role of Christianity on public life and in education. Their policy recommendations for education were informed by this Kuyperian neo-Calvinism.

[10] A qualification I would add to this assertion is that the theological discourse in the DRC was not monolithic. Ernst Conradie's account of the reception of Kuyper's theology provides some caveats that are important to highlight. First, not every DRC theologian was a proponent of apartheid theology. (Conradie 2011, 29)

These were the intellectual foundations of the apartheid political philosophy and state theology that the black theologians and the philosophers of the Black Consciousness Movement contended against. It was a theology and philosophy that "was *built on a binary or dualism* that not only separated whites from Blacks but *also established a hierarchy between them that privileges whites and devalues Blacks*." (Modiri, 2017, p. 135) Interestingly, Modiri follows this description up with a footnote where he says, "This resembles what Jacques Derrida in the Margins of Philosophy (1982) 195 – 196 refers to as the "metaphysics of presence" in the way that it "installs hierarchies and orders of subordination in the various dualisms it encounters" and "privileges one side of an opposition and ignores or marginalises the alternative terms of the opposition"." (Modiri, 2017, p. 135) This characterization brings to relief the significance of this historical account for the purposes of my argument.

It should be noted that even though black theology and Black Consciousness responded to apartheid, they did not see the government as their interlocutor. Instead, both black theology and Black Consciousness philosophy directed their energies to empowering black people as opposed to directly entering into fruitless debates with these Kuyperian neo-Calvinist theologians and neo-Fichtean nationalist philosophers. This attitude is wonderfully captured by Biko when he says, "we tend to dismiss ASB [Afrikaanse Studentebond] as an incorrigible group with whom no worthwhile contact can be maintained." (Biko, 2004, p. 15) Despite avoiding direct engagement with the government in their theologizing, black theology faced considerable resistance and censorship. Mofokeng recounts that the development of the fundamental concepts, methods and epistemological assumptions of black theology took place under extreme conditions. "This very important element of theological reflection", writes Mofokeng, "was done in an atmosphere of extreme tension which is characteristic of black existence in South Africa. It was done in an ideological battleground…" (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 1) What follows is an account of the intellectual environment of resistance to the abovedescribed ideo-theological orientation.

The Dissenting Theological Voices:

There was a variety of theological voices that dissented to this political state of affairs. Among these was the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society, the South African Council of Churches, and the University Christian Movement. The stated intention of the SPROCAS project was, to present "a conscious attempt to get beyond the elusive simplicity of the established party positions and to formulate a theory of change which, by a multiple-strategy approach, takes account of the complexity of the South African political dilemma." (Mathews,

1973, p. 18) This intervention represented the sentiments of the liberal church that saw the alliance between the DRC and the apartheid regime as a disastrous state of affairs. Magaziner notes that some of the English churches refused to bow to the pressure of the State that they cede their schools to the government. But to some extent, this really amounted to window dressing because in the final analysis, there was very little, if any, substantive political support that these churches lent to blacks involved in struggle. Magaziner observes, "during the 1960s, then, English-speaking church authorities typically conceded the theology-politics debate to the DRC's extant achievements, and most black Christians accepted this state of affairs." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 65)

Another major liberal theological intervention in South African politics is represented by the South African Council of Churches' 1968 *Message to the People of South Africa*. In this message, "It asserted that "Christians are called to witness to the significance of the Gospel in the particular circumstances of time and places in which they find themselves," and it argued that this necessitated speaking out against apartheid." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 65) This message was an appeal to the liberal Christians to reconsider their loyalties so that they first lie with God and then the state comes after. Two years later, another major liberal theological intervention came in the form of *Twelve Statements: A Christian Election Manifesto.* It reminded Christians of the moral obligation they have to use their vote to build a government that is in accordance with the precepts of scripture. This intervention was met with some resistance, especially from the Afrikaans community. One of the objections levelled against it was that it drew religious matters and political matters too closely together and it was too prescriptive in that it all but pushed Afrikaner Christians to vote for the Progressive Party. Magaziner notes that the commitment that the *Twelve Statements* was calling for was already being shown by the likes of Beyers Naude; a rising star in the DRC who made the choice to give up his position in the church so that he can continue with his work of critiquing the DRC and the state through the Christian Institute and *Pro Veritate* the institute's magazine. *Pro*

Veritate, according to Magaziner, "had emerged as one of the few Afrikaans voices against apartheid" (Magaziner, 2010, p. 67) Such efforts caught the government's attention and the government sought to enforce strict censorship through a crackdown on any of the proponents of the above messages and its sympathizers. Government sought to enforce a strict demarcation between religious affairs and politics. Not only did this affect the Christian Institute, but the crackdown also affected the Black Theology project that was running under the aegis of the UCM. Basil Moore recounts:

> Black Theology from the beginning was subjected to severe harassment. Many students who participated were suspended from their universities and/or banned. Academics were not infrequently dismissed from their posts and/or banned. Clergy were deported, banned, imprisoned and in various ways hounded by their own church establishment. (Moore, 1991, p. 27)

The state characterized dissident theological voices such as the UCM and the CI as ""spiritual terrorists" who aimed to destabilize the state." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 68) This is why it was the security branch that acted on behalf of the state to undermine these efforts.[11] (Derrida, 1985, p. 297) Despite this being the consequences, there are people who continued to support resistance against the state's intimidation. An example that Magaziner cites is A.Z Mzara who sought to impress it upon his readers that it is non-sensical to try to make a clean demarcation between religious life and political affairs. In his letter to the newspaper editor of *World*, "Mzara blurred conceptual lines in search of wholeness." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 69) Mzara's argument sought to do away with the demarcation that was created between the secular and the sacred. This blurring of lines was part of a larger trend in theological discourse the world over but also in South Africa more specifically. The UCM was another such example, the most radical of all the examples given up to this point. What makes the UCM to be particularly radical is the fact that while all the other organisations that we have discussed until this point drew from the same metaphysical well as the hegemonic ideo-theological orientation, the UCM sought to destroy it.

Secular Theology in the UCM:

Magaziner describes a religious sensibility that not only challenged the secular/sacred distinction, it collapsed it. He writes, "the UCM sought to change the meaning behind the very terms *sacred* and *secular*." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 70) This is seen in the liturgical practices and theological reflections that came out of the UCM from its inception. From the outset, there was a call for a relevant faith; faith that responded to the concrete conditions that the people lived in. They called this a secular faith. "Secular faith meant fully aware subjects working in a world made free by the breaking down of old structures. (Magaziner, 2010, p. 71) As a result, some members of the UCM began to embrace talk about the death of God. According to Magaziner, "They created an environment in which the avowedly Christian treasurer of a Christian

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[11] Derrida points out the irony of the situation. Where the name of Christ is used to both support and to condemn the state. He also calls attention to the hypocrisy of formally having democratic governance and yet, excluding almost three quarters of the population from the democratic processes.

organization could write to a Christian general secretary and sign off "God is dead, Love, Rob" without raising doubts about his faith." (Magaziner, 2007, p. 90) This is where the secularising impulse I noted above is at its starkest. Where apartheid developed a politico-theological

discourse that rested on a "Calvinist reading of Scripture [that] condemns democracy…"[12] the UCM's response was God is dead.

The UCM drew inspiration for their theology of secularization from Harvey Cox, the author of *Secular City*. In this book, Cox argued that secularization is in fact a good thing. According to him, secularization should be seen as an indication that society is ready to assume responsibility that God had all along charged it with. "For Cox, the central message of the Gospel was a call for people to become "mature and responsible stewards" of the world by constantly seeking social change…" (Magaziner, 2010, p. 71) This, according to Cox, expresses itself in a variety of political modalities. He sought to impress upon his readers that answering questions about how we ought to live together in this world was also talking about God and the kingdom of God. The underlying message that attracted the UCM to Cox's theology is, "Faith was concerned with human relations, and politics was its business." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 72) This led some of the figures in the UCM, with Moore leading them, to rethink the idea of God. "Moore made God concrete, seeing "it" exclusively in human affairs. "It" was not something a mature person sought but something that a mature person "did" by participating in "ethical behaviour," choosing and living to bring more liberating experiences into the world."" (Magaziner, 2010, pp. 75-76) This theology had its detractors both from outside the organization and from within. For the purpose of the argument this chapter seeks to make, we will only consider critiques from within the organization, specifically critique from black members.

Black Theologians' Response to Secular Theology:

There was a variety of responses to secular theology among black theologians. We will consider two responses from the black members of the UCM, Mokgethi Motlhabi and Gabriel Setiloane. Motlhabi represents the positive response among the students. According to Magaziner, he found secular theology to be a breath of fresh air. Secular theology was a welcome alternative

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[12] (Derrida, 1985, p. 297)

to the conservative theology that he was taught. It provided one with the latitude to use practical wisdom when assessing the ethics of a given situation. Put differently, Motlhabi felt liberated from the strictures of the prescriptive and inhibiting theology he was being taught. Setiloane on the other hand, rejected the propositions of secular theology. By his assessment, "it was pernicious—yet another foreign concept designed to separate the black man from his God. "We are smothered to death by Western theologies," he wrote, "vying with each other in seeking so much to cut God to size that some have now actually got rid of Him

(I mean the God is dead thing!)." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 76) Setiloane was not the only one who held these sentiments. The likes of Sabelo Ntwasa and Barney Pityana also share this outlook. Consequently, secular theology was condemned to irrelevance, particularly among black students in the UCM. That said, Magaziner does note that, secular theology "transformed the relationship between faith and politics for many South African students. Secular theology had opened new possibilities for articulating what it meant to be a Christian, and even its critics bear witness to its legacy." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 77) According to him, the three benefits to its existence include that it undermined the hegemonic position that the DRC enjoyed theologically. Second, it found a language to incisively describe the problem with the English churches' liberal response to apartheid policies. Third, secular theology's call to turn to your neighbour or one's community allows it to be contextualised and therefore gives opportunity to tampering its Euro-American influence.

Concluding Thoughts:

This leads us to several conclusions that are important for the theoretical encounter I wish to make the case for between black theology and radical theology. First, the above history shows us that Black theology did not have fully formed ideas from the start. The development of black theology's fundamental ideas was a confluence of responses to a set of historical circumstances and debates about the appropriate theological response to the circumstances in question. One of the possible directions that black theology could have taken is that which was proposed by secular theology. Second, black theology was not an isolated theological response, it was developed in the midst of an array of theological positions that represented a wide variety of ideo-theological orientations. For some orientations, it was easy to see why they had to be dismissed. Others, particularly the liberal and the radical theological orientations, they required a more nuanced engagement and more deliberate efforts at distinguishing themselves from them. Third, the UCM, the organisation that opened discursive possibilities for both Black

Consciousness and Black Theology, turned to secular theology in response to the incestuous relationship between the church and the state.

Even though secular theology never gained traction within black theology circles, it influenced black theology in ways that matter. In Magaziner's words "Secular theology might have been dismissed as foreign by some black South Africans, but its insights were keenly felt." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 79) The most important of these influences was the development of the hermeneutical gesture of destabilizing the distinction between the secular and the sacred.

Where secular theology took this in the direction of embracing the death of God, black theology took to reconsidering the thought forms of their ancestors that did not make a distinction between the secular and the sacred.

The Case for Radical Theology:

Magaziner's historical account represents a meticulous history, what Caputo would call a "micrological"[13] history. The intention of this micrological reading is to reopen a crucial debate that was closed in the early stages of the development of black theology. A debate that opened some futures and foreclosed others. In the introduction, I situated my intervention between two discourses; that of the theologians that see the potential fecundity of a critical encounter between black theology and continental philosophy of religion, and theologians that are concerned with the discursive malaise of black theology in post-1994 South Africa. In what follows, I will respond to two theologians, each representing the above-mentioned discourses. Concerning the discursive malaise of black theology, I will respond to Mokgethi Motlhabi. For the black theology/radical theology discourse, I will respond to Calvin Ullrich.

On the Discursive Malaise of Black Theology:

In his essay, *Phases of Black Theology in South Africa: A Historical Review*, Mokgethi Motlhabi argues that black theology has had five phases in its development. By his observation, black theology in post-1994 South Africa has experienced a lull. "So far there has been no recovery from the latest lull, which is attributed mainly to the need for a new paradigm." (Motlhabi, 2009, p. 162) My response to this diagnosis is two-fold. First, it is not so much that black theology in post-1994 lacks a paradigm. Instead, a greater appreciation for the programmatic character of Biko's call for the development of a black theology would open a

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[13] (Caputo, 2020, p. 25)

space that could create the possibility of developing a paradigm.[14] By this, I mean that each time Biko called for the development of black theology, his call was always subtended by discrete aims. The implications of this response will be fleshed out thoroughly in chapter 5.

My second response to Motlhabi's diagnosis is that one of the reasons black theological discourse in South Africa has stalled is because the socio-political context of post-1994 South Africa is more complicated compared to South Africa in the apartheid era. To elaborate on this, I turn to Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh's text, *The New Apartheid.* The central thesis of this book is simple, *apartheid* did not die, it was privatized. He further explains, "for *apartheid* to be privatized, it also had to be marketized, de-legislated, denationalised, digitised, fractalized, internalised, deracialised, and de-territorialised." (Mpofu-Walsh, 2021, p. 17) He explains how each of these features buttressed the emergence of a privatized apartheid. For the purpose of brevity, I will only pay attention to two of the listed features, the marketisation and deracialisation of apartheid. I choose these because race and class are the two dominant analytical categories that informed black theological discourse in apartheid South Africa.[15]

On the marketisation of apartheid, Mpofu-Walsh explains that apartheid was a system of racism that was codified by laws and enforced by the state. Post-1994, financial barriers have replaced legal barriers. Furthermore, this shift comes with benefits, a financial and a moral benefit. Now that it is pricing and not legal statutes that regulate access, there is a profit to be made by private entities. Also, this type of regulation does not carry the moral stigma of apartheid laws. With rhetorical flare, Mpofu-Walsh asserts that, "[b]y replacing legal barriers with financial ones, segregation is transformed from a public burden to a source of private profit. In classic neoliberal fashion, apartheid oppression now works on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis." (MpofuWalsh, 2021, p. 18) Since exclusivity is no longer legislatively regulated, it means that black people who have the means can participate in the logics of apartheid domination. This leads us to Mpofu-Walsh's second observation. Apartheid was deracialised. He qualifies this characterization by explaining that "*Some* Black South Africans can now participate in its

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[14] I single Biko out because of his stature and influence in the project of South African black theology. On this matter, John Lamola comments, "no historical account of Black Theology, or of the debates accompanying its development, would be complete without taking account of the philosophy of Steve Biko, which was seminal in the development of Black Theology in South Africa." (Lamola, 1990, p. 1)

[15] The following remarks from Frank Chikane support my claim: "Although the division on the surface seemed to be between the Black Consciousness Movement and the progressive democrats [the non-racial, Freedom Charter adherents] based on a play between the class and race models or the combination of these models in trying to understand the South African society, it seems that the real decisive matter was the attitudes of these groupings to the historical liberation movements African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)." (Chikane quoted in, Hopkins, 1989, p. 94)

spoils, though *most* still experience the vast disproportion of its evils." (Mpofu-Walsh, 2021, p. 19) Where apartheid strictly used the rubric of race for both inclusion and exclusion, the new apartheid complicates things by continuing to exclude based on race but no longer strictly using the rubric of race for inclusion. Here lies the rub, "Black enmeshment in the system of privilege is *a key feature of the new apartheid.*" (Mpofu-Walsh, 2021, p. 19) [My emphasis] This is where the complication is painfully brought to full relief. Black enmeshment, according to Mpofu-Walsh, serves two functions in the new apartheid. First, it serves to turn attention away from the continued vitality of this system of oppression. Second, it encourages black people to be silent in the face of oppression. The great success of the new apartheid lies in its ability to decouple self-interest and social interest. Mpofu-Walsh observes that "[t]oday, self-interest and social interest diverge, as Black South Africans are increasingly torn between contradictory desires for spectacular wealth and revolutionary equality." (Mpofu-Walsh, 2021, pp. 19-20) By my assessment, black theologians need to sincerely confront these complications and others if they are to develop a paradigm that speaks to post-1994 South Africa.

On the Radical Turn of Black Theology:

In his article titled *Theopoetics from Below*, Ullrich stages a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology. This intervention comes out of his conviction that the social issues we are faced with force us to re-think theology in South Africa today. He notes that public theology has been the most prolific theological respondent to this state of affairs. Part of what made this to be the case is that public theology is in constant conversation with other theological traditions. However, several theologians have shown the limitations of the contribution that public theology can make. This calls for a search for alternative theological interlocutors. This is where Ullrich then makes the case for a critical bi-directional supplementation that can happen between black theology and radical theology. His case study for this critical supplementation is Takatso Mofokeng and John D. Caputo. The former representing black theology, the latter representing radical theology.

Before engaging the substance of his argument, it is necessary for me to explain why I believe that Caputo's radical theology represents a compatible conversation partner for the discursive intervention that Ullrich and company are advocating for. In the above discussed historical account, we see Magaziner attributing the radical theological tendencies of the secular theologians in the UCM to Harvey Cox's influence. Specifically, his text, *The Secular City.* The influence of secular theology on black theology in its incipient stages forms the basis of my case for reconsidering the radical turn of black theology. Why then, turn to Caputo instead of

Cox for this radical turn? Jeffery Robbins' genealogical account of postmodern theology provides a helpful answer.

Robbins locates Cox in the radical death of God theological movement. A movement that had a variety of voices that addressed a wide range of concerns. "What they all shared in common," writes Robbins, "was a collective sense that the Western culture in general, and the JudeoChristian tradition in particular, had entered a profound 'ideological crisis.'" (Robbins, 2007, p. 2) This was a crisis of meaning. "Either religious language lost its meanings or, even worse, the inherited meanings had grown perverse in the wake of a long list of modern atrocities." (Robbins, 2007, p. 2) this discourse, broadly speaking, gave a language to describe the limits that religious language and practice had come up against in the face of the undeniable suffering of the oppressed and the existential threat that nuclear weapons represented. This movement, according to Robbins, "helps establish the genealogy that would develop into what we now know as postmodern theology." (Robbins, 2007, p. 3) This is why Ullrich situates Caputo within this very tradition. A tradition that Mark C. Taylor would characterize as "the hermeneutic of the death of God." (Taylor quoted in, Robbins, 2007, p. 3) This ideological crisis brought to relief, a distinction between Christendom and Christianity. A distinction that was essential for creating the milue which gave birth to radical theology. The legacy of this theological tradition is that it laid the groundwork for the critical intuitions of postmodern philosophies and theologies against the ontotheological God.

Theologies of secularization may have inagurated the radical theological movement, but there has been a marked transition from secularism to postsecularism. This is because the imagined future predicted by this cohort of theologians has "given way to a new "postsecular" understanding of the postmodern condition in which the return of religion is more determinative than the collapes of Christendom." (Robbins, 2007, p. 11) One could even argue that the problem-space has shifted from the circumstances that occasioned the development of theolocgies of secularization. It also becomes understandable why black theologians in South Afrca rejected secular theology. Chances are that in their assessment, black theologians concluded that secular theology's problem-space was not compatible to that of black theology. Mofokeng intimates as such when he avers that, "[t]he interlocutor of classic theology is an individual modern man (bourgeois) or a collective of modern men who have come of age. In Black Christology as in Black Theology the one whose questions and concerns are given priority is the black community which is struggling to remove all the obstacles which prevent it from coming of age *in its own way.*" (Mofokeng, 1987a, p. 7) This brings to relief the

incompatability of secular theology and black theology on two fronts. First, the historical circumstances and political conditions that gave theologies of secularization their salience and discursive purchase in the Euro-American discourse no longer hold. Second, even though they both sought to subvert the colonial metaphysics of European modernity, there remains an enduring incompatibility between the critical intuitions of theologies of secularisation and the critical impulses of black theology. This is best articulated by Gayatri Spivak when she laments the unfortunate fact that the most critical interventions to come out of the Western philosophical tradition tend to -wittingly or unwittingly- reinscribe the tendencies they aim to subvert. (Spivak, 1988, p. 66) In the case of secular theology, the effect of its attempt to undermine the metaphysical infrastructure of apartheid's Christian nationalism unwittingly reinscribed the same tendencies that destroyed the African onto-metaphysical infrastructure as well.

The above reflections demonstrate two things. First, there is value in returning to the historical moment when the influence of secular theology on black theology was still an open question. For one thing, it reopens futures that, for complicated reasons, were foreclosed for black theology. Futures that have the potential to provide an appropriate theological response to today's complicated context. Second, a retrieval of this historical moment cannot be a wholesale, uncritical retrieval. Instead, it needs to be one that shows sensitivity to the shift within radical theology from secularism to postsecularism, and one that shows a critical awareness of the discursive currency that religious language still holds in South Africa.

With all this in mind, let us return to Ullrich. We have already noted above that the motivation for his intervention comes out of his belief that the problems that South Africa is faced with need a theological response. He has a specific kind of theological response in mind. One that facilitates a critical, bidirectional supplementation between black theology and radical theology. Chapter 5 will explore Caputo's relationship to theologies of secularization/death of God theologies. The purpose of my description is to situate his theology in a manner that makes legible its salience for Mofokeng's theology. In what follows, we will explore the three areas of contact between Mofokeng's theology and Caputo's theology in Ullrich's account.

Positive Identification:

Ullrich argues that radical theology can critically supplement black theology's hermeneutic of positive identification by constantly accentuating its potential risk to become an "act of classification and stratification [that] might be in fact a re-enactment of the gaze of the 'White Face.'" (Ullrich, 2021, p. 14) A good example of this risk materializing is in the work of Albert

Cleage. Allan Boesak describes Cleage's theology in the following terms: "Cleage's theology is determined by his belief that Jesus was a *black* leader of a *black* people struggling for national liberation against a *white* Rome." [my emphasis] (Boesak, 1976, p. 117) My italicization of "black" and "white" in the preceding quote seeks to underscore that Cleage's use of these terms denotes race. Unlike Cone, Cleage's identification of Jesus as black is not simply a hermeneutical gesture of Jesus' identification with, and a preferential option for the poor. Instead, it is a phenotypic characterization of Jesus.

This has ethical implications that Cleage himself draws out. Boesak uses two examples of Cleage's interpretation of the bible to make his point, namely, the Sermon on the Mount, and the story of the Good Samaritan. Both of these instances serve to concretely delimit what Cleage calls the Black Nation. From these two examples, Boesak concludes that Cleage's contention is that "[f]or Jesus, the whole idea of brotherhood and love had to do with love *within* the Black Nation." (Boesak, 1976, p. 118) We see the risk that Ullrich identifies and cautions against in the hermeneutic of positive identification starkly unfolding here. In his words, "it is important to be reminded that any and all identification or naming is an act of othering made possible only by a distinction between 'us and them.'" (Ullrich, 2021, p. 14) Cleage most explicitly articulates his brand of positive identification in the following terms:

> Nobody can love everybody. The white man does not love you… You have less reason to love him than he does to love you… [To love the enemy] is ridiculous. We have to concern ourselves with justice, not love. We can't go to the white man and ask him to love us… It's futile. We want justice, we are going to fight for justice… Love is only something for *inside* the Nation. [my emphasis] (Boesak, 1976, p. 119)

Not only do we see the act of othering unfold in this brand of positive identification, we also see the ethical implications this "us and them" dynamic comes with. This is why Ullrich asserts that "this first area of supplementation that refers to 'positive identification' is not merely a linguistic exercise in responding to the exigencies of nomination, it also has concretely felt implications." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 14) Boesak shows sensitivitiy to these concretely felt implications in his judgement of Cleage's theology. He writes, "Cleage's total identification of the gospel with his particular brand of Christian Nationalism is totally unacceptable." (Boesak, 1976, p. 119) The source of his reculcitrance to Cleage's theology is that "[h]is concept of an 'ethic of the nation only' is disturbingly reminiscent of the 'for the *Volk* only' theology black South Africans must reject." (Boesak, 1976, p. 119) Put differently, Cleage's theology evinces the very metaphysics of presence that black theology seeks to overturn in its quest for justice.

Further still, Ullrich's turn to Mofokeng also shows us that this risk that the hermeneutic of positive identification comes with does not only unfold between groups, but also *within* a group. A matter that will be discussed at length in chapter 5 when I use the Fallism as a test case for the cofessional space I proffer. He notes that Mofokeng sees the limitation of his nomencliture of "crossbearers". This is why Mofokeng further differentiates between "crossbearers" and "the crucified people". Ullrich's contention is that the acknowledgement of this limitation "reveals the importance of Derrida's formulation that 'every other is wholly other,' because it assigns infinite value to anything and anyone that is excluded." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 14) The stakes of this caution, Ullrich asserts, are most trenchantly revealed by the womanist critique on the place of the black woman in black theology.

The Theodicy Question:

Ullrich goes on to adumbrate a second area of supplementation of black theology by radical theology. He points out that Mofokeng remains concerned about the problem of the Long Good Friday. The strength of this preoccupation, in Ullrich's assessment, is that it does not glorify suffering. Instead, it evinces a sensitivity to the tragic character of the condition of the crucified people. In his words, "Mofokeng goes a long way to avoid entering what radical theology would call an 'economy of redemption,' that somehow sinful structures are to be endured for a justice to come." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 15) That said, Mofokeng's tragic sensibilities do not go far enough. Ullrich demonstrates this by asking a pointed question, "what are we to then do with these 'crucified people'?" (Ullrich, 2021, p. 15) This question accentuates the exigencies of suffereing in the here-and-now. This second area of supplementation is an enactment of one of the key tenets of radical hermeneutics. That is, "hermeneutics as an attempt to stick with the original difficulty of life, and not to betray it with metaphysics." (Caputo, 1987, p. 1) Mofokeng's treatment of the question of theodicy is akin to Caputo's description of the tendency of the metaphysician who opens the question of Being as presence and then quickly forcloses this line of questioning when things get tough. It falls back on the metaphysical theology of "the God of classical 'two worlds' Augustinianism." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 5) This is seen with stark clarity everytime Mofokeng uses the word "glory" in his work.

In effect, this critical supplementation is an invitation to "[unleash] a radical force in [the question of theodicy], a deeply critical power which [is] intent on keeping the question of

[theodicy] open, on letting [black theology] to tremble so that the whole would shake (solicitare) and give way to movement (*kinesis*)."[16] This takes the Black Consciousness maxim "black man (sic) you are on your own." to a whole new level. It transforms the selfunderstanding of the crossbearers so that they see themselves as what Caputo would call the messianic generation. A generation that does not wait for the Big Other to save them from the Long Good Friday. Crossbearers who take this critical supplementation seriously would describe themselves by declaring:

> *We* are the ones who have all along been expected—by the dead. *We* occupy the messianic position—to make right the wrongs that have been done to them. But our messianic powers are weak. We cannot make the dead live again. We cannot alter the past and restore them to a life in which they will not have suffered these wrongs or will have been compensated for them. So we can at best remember them, recall them, mourn them with an impossible mourning, by righting the unjust conditions now from which they suffered then, by seeing to it that… their death will not have been in vain. (Caputo, 2016, pp. 57-58)

Idealized Discourse:

Ullrich argues tht black theology can supplement radical theology's idealized discursive register. By his assessment, radical theology runs the risk of "[operating] potentially as an Anglo-American theology of *abstraction from lived experience*." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 4) [My emphasis] I italicize the phrase "abstraction from lived experience," to underscore the strained relationship between Caputo's theology and the question of materiality, in his critics' account of his work. What gives credibility to Ullrich's proposed area of supplementation is the fact that he does not only address this concern in response to the potential criticism of epistemic colonialism of black theology by radical theology. He also raises this concern in other places in his work. A good example of this is his article *Theopoetics to Theopraxis.* Where Mofokeng provides a critical supplementation in *Theopoetics from Below*, Simon Critchley provides a critical supplement in *Theopoetics to Theopraxis.* In the latter, Ullrich articulates the central objection against Caputo in the following terms, "… the political-ethical implications of

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[16] This is a rephrasing of Caputo's description of Heidegger's intervention in *Being and Time.* (Caputo, 1987, p. 2)

Caputo's radical theology are seen for some to be too compromising in the face of the hegemeony of the neoliberal order. A theology of event on this reading still dreams of a 'worlddisclosure' that appears to denigrate the materiality of the particular because too much distance is created in the passage from undecidability to decision." (Ullrich, 2020, pp. 164-165) Ullrich's evaluation of this criticism is that it has credence, but in the final analysis, it is not a completely fair representation of Caputo's theology. That said, Caputo himself does concede that the political/material implications of his theology are still nascent. Ullrich's intervention then, is an attempt to push past this nascent phase into a more well developed and explicit political theology.

Read in this discursive context, the Mofokengean supplement opens discursive forays that can fully ground Caputo's theology in the political register. Such a critical supplementation is a more rigorours enactment of what Caputo calls "the political reduction". In his own words, "[t]his is the reduction of theo*logy* to theo*praxis*, which is *theo-poetics* in the most literal sense of God-making (making), making God happen here and now, making the kingdom of God happen come true." (Caputo, 2020, p. 19) In Ullrich's account, a Mofokengean supplement reminds radical theology of two things. First, its particularizing gesture supplements radical theology by reminding it of the importance of the concrete aspects of a community's identity. Second, a hermeneutic of positive identification, "is a part of the very calculus that makes it possible for a radical theopoetic reading to occur." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 15) Put differently, Mofokeng's historicizing hermeneutic serves as a crucial reminder that it is the material conditions of the lived experience that give occasion to the desire to turn to the activity of making the kingdom of God happen here and now. In Ullrich's words, "irreducible particularity [has] to be entered into." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 16) Also, Mofokeng's insight that the anthropological question is embedded in the Christological question, opens the conditions of possibility for the Caputian chiasm to congeal. Beneath this hermeneutic of positive identification lies the Fanonian whisper that, "black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality for something, I am wholly what I am." (Fanon, 2008, p. 103)

With all that said, it seems that Ullrich himself is in need of a Mofokengean supplement. By this, I mean his hermeneutic needs to more fully enter into the irreducible particularity of the South African situation. There is an insufficient acknowledgement of the specter of whiteness in his critical reflection. This should not be conflated with the vacuous performance of acknowledging one's positionality in service of superficially demonstrating reflexivity. That is virtue signalling and it is unhelpful. What I am refering to comes out of his own stated

motivations for staging a critical encounter between black theology and radical theology in the first place. He names two South African social issues that underscore the potential fecundity of this critical encounter, i.e. gender based violence and xenophobia. I read Ullrich's hermeneutical choices as a black theologian. A theologian that is black and a theologian who is doing black theology. The key theological contribution that black theology makes is to show how race irreducibly conditions the lived experience of black people and how theologically significant race is. This is not to say that Ullrich must do black theology, but when engaging black theology, the fact of blackness and the specter of whiteness need to be more explicitly acknowledged. That would be truly engaging black theology on its own terms. This does not reduce the value of his contribution to the conversation, to the contrary, it demonstrates how important it is. I highlight this limitation simply to caution those who, like me, are sold on his argument for the critical supplementation between black theology and radical theology. Our shared investment in the reinvigoration of black theology in South Africa and making radical theology to have contextual significance for South Africa must carry with it a sensitivity of the risk of hermeneutic colonisation of black theology.

Lessons from an Historical Moment:

My turn to the historical moment that Magaziner so maticulously sketches out comes from my belief that historical conditions give rise to the development and articulation of ideas. When this is done well, these interventions give conceptual clarity to the exigencies of the historical moment in question. In this instance, I argue that the call for the critical engagement between black theology and radical theology in post-1994 South Africa is an astute and historically sensitive suggestion. Magaziner's historical account affirms this argument in two ways. On the one hand, it shows us how the concretely felt pressures of life that gave rise to the development of black theology and radical theology in South Africa still persist today. On the other hand, the very same historical sketch shines a light on the (obvious and not so obvious) way in which present historical conditions differ from those of the past.

Viewed in this light, Magaziner's historical account assists us in a few ways. First, it provides a conceptually rigorous reconstruction of the past that servs as a helpful backdrop for constructing a useful picture of South Africa's political present and concomitantly anticipated future. Second, it presents, with consumate clarity, the epistemic contours that the theologians in question were operating within. Third, it convincingly draws connections between the historical conditions of the period it is investigating, the questions these conditions gave rise to, and the answers proffered by the participants of the discourse.

In short, it gives us a reliable starting point to construct what David Scott calls a problem space. That is, "an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs." (Scott, 2003, p. 4) Toward the end of his book, Magaziner reflects on the different relationships that blacks across the political spectrum have with the past. He sees an impasse that all these groups come up against. To parse out this impasse, he turns to David Scott, who cogently identifies a limitation that most postcolonial responses are beset with. Magaziner expresses full agreement with Scott's contention that our engagement with discursive contexts of the past run the risk of amounting to an uncritical retrieval of the interventions of a given problem-space. Scott asserts that, "an adequate interrogation of the present (postcolonial or otherwise) depends upon identifying the *difference* between the questions that animated former presents and that animates our own." (Scott, 2003, p. 3)

It is my contention that a theological intervention that facilitates a critical engagement between black theology and radical theology will provide adequate conceptual resources for identifying and responding to the animating theological questions of South Africa today. The particularizing gesture of the hermeneutic of positive identification provides us with the critical sensibilities and conceptual resources to adequately interrogate the post-1994 present. Radical theology , on the other hand, gives us the critical resources to facilitate the task of "identifying the *difference* between questions that animated the former presents and our present." (Scott, 2003, p. 3) This is the value of a theological disposition that is intent on exposing the historical contingency of any given community of believers together with their beliefs and practices.

Conclusion:

This chapter is an attempt to demonstrate that there is historical precedence to the efforts of facilitating a generative conversation between black theology and radical theology. this argument is made in service of buttressing the claim that revisiting this historical moment can lead to fruitful developments for both theological traditions in South Africa today.

The historical account details the philosophical and theological foundations of the apartheid regime and the array of theological responses to this hegemonic ideotheological orientation. Of particular interest is the theological responses that came out of the UCM, namely, black theology and secular theology. For complicated reasons, black theologians chose not to entertain the possibility of a critical engagement between the two theological traditions. Turning to the present day, I then call for the reconsideration of this historical moment in light

of the discursive malaise that black theology is experiencing today. I nuance this call by engaging two theologians, Motlhabi and Ullrich. Magaziner's historical account brings to sharp focus the discursive potential that both theological traditions' to respond to the animating questions that South Africa has today. A critical encounter between the theological traditions that draws lessons from this historical moment can benefit both traditions. For black theology, it will facilitate the construction of a new paradigm that is both relevant and sustainable. For radical theology, it will improve its contextual relevance in South Africa today.

Chapter 3: Mofokeng and the Motif of Identity

Introduction:

I opened this study by situating it in the Fallist tradition and explained that the Fallist trifocal decolonial framework will serve to frame the concerns of my study. I then used the intellectual history of black theology in South Africa to demonstrate that there is historical precedence to the discursive contact between black theology and radical theology. Considering that I situated my study in the Fallist tradition, it means that I will make my contribution primarily through black theology; Takatso Mofokeng being my interlocutor in this tradition.[17] Keep in mind that I drew from Ullrich who identifies three points of discursive contact between black theology and radical theology. This study will only focus on the hermeneutic of positive identification.

The following chapter is an exploration of the motif of identity in Mofokeng's Christology. This will be done by exploring the two poles that anchor the hermeneutics of his Christology, i.e., the Christological question, and the anthropological question. On the Christological side, our interest is in figuring out how Mofokeng identifies Jesus with the oppressed. On the anthropological side, we seek to explore what, according to Mofokeng, is the self-understanding of the black community. This exploration is situated in the context of the central question of Mofokeng's Christology, "how can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation?" In light of this fact, the aim of this chapter is to figure out how the motif of identity serves to answer this question. Put differently, the central question of this chapter is how does Mofokeng use identity to articulate an empowering faith for black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation? There are two guiding questions to help us to answer this question. First, what is the self-understanding of the black community in Mofokeng's Christology? Second, how does Mofokeng's Christology create a sense of identification between Jesus and the black community? My contention is that there are ways in which the motif of identity facilitates the empowerment of black people engaged in a struggle for liberation, and there are ways in which this motif of identity undercuts the liberative intent of his Christology. To this end, we will provide an account of Mofokeng's answer to the anthropological question. Second, we will describe the decisions Mofokeng makes to answer the Christological question. Third, we will take a detour into a debate that gives context to a shift in Mofokeng's thought. Finally, we will look at the ways Mofokeng evaluates some of his positions in his theology.

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[17] In chapter 5, I will demonstrate how black theology has an organic connection to Fallism.

The Anthropological Question: The Relationship Between Black Theology and Black Consciousness

As noted above, Mofokeng's Christology moves between two poles, the Christological question, and the anthropological question. The answer to the Christological question is our confession of faith in Jesus, and the answer to the anthropological question is an expression of the self-understanding of a community of believers. In Mofokeng's case, the answer to the anthropological question is an expression of the self-understanding of the black community. Concerning these two questions, he has this to say:

> black Christological reflection occurs in an interplay between the present context of praxis for liberation that is a response to Jesus Christ who is present and active among the oppressed, as spelled out above and in scripture. This interplay that has the present praxis as its starting point is expressed in the following dialectically related questions: "Who am I'? How can I be liberated to my authentic self'?", on the one side, and "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8,29 cf also Matt. 16,16). (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 241-242)

The premise of this Christological framework is that there is something liberative about having faith in Jesus. Therefore, he believes that a critical engagement in their faith in Jesus will have an empowering effect on black people engaged in struggle for liberation. This section then, is a description of the answer to the anthropological question. What I am implying by framing things in this way is that Mofokeng draws his systematic description of the self-understanding of black people from Black Consciousness philosophy. That is to say, both the description of the problems and the potential solutions in his Christology come from Black Consciousness.[18] In his delineation of Black Consciousness philosophy, Mofokeng starts out with the social analysis. He describes South Africa as a stratified society where race and socio-economic status coincide. (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 10) His description of South Africa concurs with Biko's characterization of apartheid. Apartheid, according to Biko, can be characterized by white supremacy, capitalist exploitation, and deliberate oppression. Similar to Biko, Mofokeng notes the deliberateness of the social structure. "According to this stratification of society", Mofokeng contends, "the whites are automatically members of the oppressing, exploiting and discriminating group while blacks are the oppressed, exploited, discriminated, and dispossessed." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 10) Following Biko, Mofokeng argues that this complex system of oppression had multifaceted effects on black people. Not only were blacks disenfranchised socially, politically, and economically; they were also affected psychologically, blacks began to develop an inferiority complex. Conversely, whites began to develop a superiority complex. In Biko's words: "while the race problem started as an offshoot of the

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[18] My post-1994 iteration of this intervention is to draw from the philosophy of Fallism.

economic greed exhibited by white people, it has now become a serious problem on its own. White people now despise black people, not because they need to reinforce their attitude and so justify their position of privilege but simply because they actually believe that black is inferior and bad." (Biko, 1978, p. 97) Due to these beliefs that were replicated and generalized among blacks and whites, they became institutionalized and internalized. In other words, South Africa is a place that is meant to persistently militate against the subjectivity and agential capacity of black people. It is important for us to recall that these are the people that Mofokeng would be confronted with when he "ascended the pulpit on Sunday and [he] saw the empty pews but also the scarred figures of the black congregation and their searching eyes." (1983, p. ix) His concern was with undoing a situation where black subjectivity is submerged in a situation of oppression and blacks are not agents that can change their situation. It was in the midst of this situation, a situation that Mofokeng calls a crisis, that a group of young people emerged. According to Mofokeng, "young black Christians who had started to regain their consciousness and using the freedom of their consciousness had started to analyse the general situation of the country and of blacks in particular." (1983, pp. 11-12) They did not only want to understand their situation, they also sought to change it. This attempt at changing their situation of oppression is what came to be known as Black Consciousness. What is crucial to note at this point is that Mofokeng's theological response, by his own account, is a direct result of this particular group. He observed a sociopolitical phenomenon that was pregnant with theological significance. It is my contention that Mofokeng constructed his central question around this group, which to him represents a spiritual awakening of black people. A phenomenon that he hoped could be replicated and generalised in the black community.

Black consciousness, as a response to the situation of oppression, represents three things to Mofokeng. First, Black Consciousness represents what Mofokeng calls "the birth of a new subject." (1983, p. 12) This phenomenon represents itself in the form of a generalized rejection to the situation of oppression and its attendant worldview. This process involves confronting the social, political, and economic contradictions in the situation of oppression, even as one's awareness, and understanding of this situation deepens. Second, Black Consciousness represents, "a critique of conformist action" (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 12) Black consciousness rejects and is critical of any negativized *sociological schema.*[19] It also actively combats resignation to such a negative social construction for black people. This is because spiritual poverty/psychological damage, according to Biko, "creates mountains of obstacles in the normal course of emancipation of black people." (1978, p. 30) Third, Black Consciousness represents a "critique of theological language" (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 14) Black

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[19] In his seminal text, *Being-Black-in-the-World*, Chabani Manganyi describes the sociological schema as a constellation of socially constructed value judgements on the body. There was a deliberate divide between the black body and the white body. The white body was "good" and the black body was "bad". (Manganyi, 1973, p. 37)

Consciousness saw Christianity not simply as complicit in colonialism, rather, it was *constitutive* of the colonial project. Biko reasons that, "if Christianity in its *introduction* was corrupted by the inclusion of aspects which made it the ideal religion for *colonisation* of people, nowadays in its *interpretation* it is the ideal religion for the maintenance of the *subjugation* of the same people." (Biko, 1978, p. 61) [original emphasis] Consequently, Black Consciousness sought not so much to eliminate Christianity, rather, it sought to introduce a critical posture which would expose religious language as a tool for justification and legitimation of social, political, and economic subjugation of black people.

With the emergence and articulation of Black Consciousness philosophy, there was a concomitant need to develop a praxis. Mofokeng notes that there was a general recognition that liberation, as the ultimate goal of the movement, was only possible if there were programs and practices that corresponded to the philosophy. These programs would only become viable in communities. In Mofokeng's words, "[t]he young people possessed what was felt to be a promising philosophy while the community had the manpower that is necessary in the process of self-liberation." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 16) In line with this assessment, the BCM developed programs and practices that would "serve as vehicles for conscientization and liberation." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 16) He lists a number of these programs, one of those was black theology. Following this historical background, it is safe to conclude that the relationship between black theology and Black Consciousness is that; black theology was a program that ran under the aegis of Black Consciousness philosophy. To use Mofokeng's language, Black Consciousness was a social force that introduced the epistemological rupture[20] which resulted in the development of black theology. Mofokeng further explains it in these terms, "blacks had always tried to reflect theologically on their situation and their experience. What happened now is that the Black Consciousness praxis (philosophy and practice) provided a different, new and dynamic context for such reflection." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 18) This is why the Black Theology Project, an organisation that formed as a result of the split that took place in UCM, "appointed Sabelo Ntwasa, a theological student, a member of the S.A.S.O. and *an exponent of Black Consciousness* as a travelling secretary for Black Theology in 1971." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 18) [emphasis added] What does this tell us about the motif of identity in Mofokeng's black Christology specifically and black theology generally speaking? First, it tells us that the identity constructs of Black Consciousness philosophy are intimately related to the identity constructs of black Christology in particular and black theology generally. Second, the successes of these identity constructs apply both to the philosophy and the theology. Inversely, the limits of these constructs apply both to Black Consciousness and to black theology. With this in mind it would help that we turn to the method and content of black theology.

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[20] (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 38)

The Method and Content of Black Theology:

Now that we have established what the relationship between Black Consciousness and black theology is, we now need to explore the question of method and content of black theology. Mofokeng notes that black theology, like Black Consciousness started out as a purely theoretical exercise, but it later developed into one of the community programs of liberation and conscientization. Mofokeng asserts that the question of method was answered in the years prior to him developing his Christology. He follows Bonganjalo Goba in his articulation of the method of black theology. He explains that "Black Theology unfolds along with the unfolding praxis of liberation and makes a selection of themes that occupy its task of reflection within the frame-work of this praxis of liberation." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 20) The community of believers, the *locus theologicus*[21], is the theatre of struggle where this praxis of liberation unfolds and the attendant theological reflection takes place. The praxis informs how the critical reflection of theology develops as the praxis is guided by the theological insights of black theology. In specific terms, Mofokeng concurs with Goba who asserts that "Black theological reflection is a critical reflection on the praxis of the Christian faith, one which participates in the ongoing process of liberation within the black community." (Goba cited in Mofokeng, 1983, p. 20) Mofokeng asserts that black theology inherited its methodological assumptions from Black Consciousness.

What is the corollary method to the methodological assumptions he outlines above? Mofokeng calls this method a hermeneutic of praxis. He describes it in the following words, "The Word of God functions in this case to criticize and dynamize the praxis of liberation. During the process of this reflection the process of liberation also throws light on the Scriptures making the Word of God perceptible." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 21) There is a dialectical relationship between first order religious practice, that happens among the community of believers, and the corresponding theological reflection. At the heart of religious practice in this instance is liberation practices. This means that theological reflection in this instance is a critical reflection on liberation practices, a critical reflection that is meant to further enrich liberation praxis, a liberation praxis that also enriches theological reflection. At this point, I seek to highlight the significance of the category of the Word of God as a key element in the method of black theology. I will demonstrate below how the category of the Word of God is in fact a theological identity construct that requires further scrutiny.

The thematic concerns of black theology, according to Mofokeng, are born from the problematic of alienation. He argues that, there is "a constant disintegration of black personality and community as a result of alienation from elements that kept the black personality and community together, wellmotivated and oriented." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 21) Mofokeng offers three examples of the alienation that he is referring to; alienation from history, alienation from culture, and alienation from land. Alienation from history took the form of an elaborate and persistent distortion of African history as

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[21] (Gutierrez, 1988, p. 9)

barbaric and superstitious. Bemoaning this phenomenon, Fanon says "[w]ith a perverted logic, [colonisation] turns its attention to the past of the colonised people and distorts it, disfigures it and destroys it." (Fanon, 1963, p. 210) One of the tools used in this project of distortion is theology. Shining a light on the role of theology, Mofokeng notes that, "[African history] has been demonized (by white theology)." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 22) He notes, however, that Black Consciousness sought to contest such

portrayals of African culture. This project of contestation seeks to take moments that were portrayed as humiliating defeats for Africans and to turn it into moments of heroic courage. Alienation from culture manifests as the oppressor attempting to disintegrate the social cohesion that is facilitated by culture. There is a constant messaging that says the culture of the conquered is inferior to the culture of the conqueror. The pneumatic activation of Black Consciousness involves contesting this form of alienation also. The third type of alienation Mofokeng discusses is alienation from land. He notes that the loss of land dealt a decisive blow to black people. They lost their sense of security, their means of subsistence, and the ground of dignity. Alienation on this front basically served as the platform for all other forms of alienation. He remarks that, "[t]he black man who is portrayed above is the interlocutor in Black Theology wherein the concrete issue is the creation and growth of the black human person who can be the acting subject of his own history of liberation that is in progress." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 23) In a later article (1987a), Mofokeng uses this problematic of alienation to develop the anthropological pole of his black Christological reflection. This represents his most elaborate account of the self-understanding of the interlocutor of his theology.

Having briefly explored the problematic of alienation, Mofokeng then begins to discuss black theology and what it represents. To start with, he offers his perspective on the history of liberation. He contends that the history of liberation should be understood through the rubric of the *Exodus-Creation dialectic*. He writes, "The Exodus event is therefore an event of creation and the event of creation is an event of liberation." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 24) In as much as the Exodus was an event that liberated slaves from the house of bondage, it was also a moment for the creation of a new subject. "God", according to Mofokeng, "created people, a new people for himself out of a shattered and dehumanized shadow of a people." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 24) In other words, Mofokeng sees two processes happening simultaneously. There is an extraction of a people from a dehumanising situation of oppression and the creation of new humanity in the same people going on at the same time. He further remarks that, "This dialectic of Exodus – Genesis has to apply to history and culture since it's a comprehensive dialectic that views and approaches man, oppressed man as a totality." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 25) This dialectic involves a creative and constructive interaction with the history and culture of the ancestors of the oppressed. He does caution however, that "this does not mean a wholesale incorporation of everything black. Only the practice of black solidarity which is the basic tenet of African culture is regarded as important enough to be retrieved." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 26) This caution introduces a critical tension in

his work where on the one hand black liberation praxis can only claim to be black if it retrieves from the ancestral archive but this retrieval should not be a wholesale and uncritical retrieval.

The above discussion is a description of the anthropological question in Mofokeng's Christology. Here are the key points we should take from it. First, the anthropological question: "Who am I'? How can I be liberated to my authentic self'?" is best answered by Black Consciousness. Second, Mofokeng sees black theology as one of the vehicles of conscientisation in the Black Consciousness project. This is to say, he sees the theological response he is developing as being a contribution to the larger project of conscientisation in Black Consciousness praxis. Third, the problematic that the anthropological question is responding to is the problematic of alienation. This means that Mofokeng's answer to this question has three aspects: history, culture, and land. Lastly, black theology moves between two poles in its critical reflection: the Word of God, and praxis of liberation. That is to say, all praxis of liberation needs to be evaluated through the critique of the Word of God, and all confessions of faith need to be concretised in, and adjusted by, the praxis of liberation. This transforms both the praxis of liberation and the confession of faith.

The Christological Question: Insights from Sobrino and Barth

Up to this point, we have discussed the relationship between black theology and Black Consciousness, and we have teased out the methodological implications of this relationship. But Mofokeng recognises that black theology in South Africa is still a young theological tradition and therefore needs to consult other traditions that have made gains in the area of theological reflection that he is concerned about. Where he draws insights from Black Consciousness to systematically answer the anthropological question, he turns to Jon Sobrino and Karl Barth to answer the Christological question. From each theologian, he draws insights that assist him in developing his own black Christology. Below, is a survey of the insights that Mofokeng draws from each theologian in turn.

Insights from Sobrino:

Right from the onset, Mofokeng declares that he is coming to Sobrino's Christology with specific questions in mind; the questions that he posed in the first chapter of his book. He draws two key insights from Sobrino's Christology. He offers his understanding of Sobrino's Christology from a methodological standpoint. By his reading,

> Sobrino intends to develop a dialectical Christology in which the liberation process is the new hermeneutical *locus* where the new image of Christ emerges as the participants see him with new eyes and where this new image opens their eyes, evokes an engagement for liberation and a reflection on liberation. (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 66)

This is to say, Sobrino's Christology moves between text and context, much like the methodology of black theology as described by Goba. Scripture is understood in light of praxis and praxis is undertaken

in light of scripture. This is a reciprocal process that does not prioritize liberation praxis nor scripture, instead, they are held in creative tension. This leads us to the first insight that Mofokeng draws from Sobrino.

The first insightful contention that Mofokeng draws from Sobrino is that historical Christology is the most compatible Christological approach to a situation of struggle. This is quickly qualified so that it is not confused with the 19th century historical Christology. He writes, "there is no preoccupation here with the intellectual demands of man in the climate of the first stage of the Enlightenment in relation to what could be known about the historical data concerning Jesus." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 69) Instead, the historical Jesus emerges out of the portrait of the Jesus from the New Testament, "especially in the Gospels and [tales] of the praxis of the Jesus of Nazareth." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 70) The value of taking this approach is that instead of Jesus telling the community of believers who he is, it is Jesus who asks the community of believers who he is. Jesus' question demands critical reflection. This, according to Mofokeng, creates an opening for an historical materialist reading of the Jesus story so that the social, economic, political, and juridical dynamics of the narrative are brought to full relief in their conflictual state. Such an approach avoids the dogmatic approach to Christology, which has its place, but has limitations. Mofokeng points out that dogmatic confessions such as the Chalcedonian formulation use limit concepts which are abstract and do not readily appeal to the average everyday experience. He explains the power of historical Christology in the following terms:

> The basic significance of the application of history as a key to the truth of the Chalcedon formulation lies in de-ontologization. Ontological perception and description are replaced by dynamic ones with the concept of becoming as the key, and this becoming filled out by a particular history that is concrete and conflictual. (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 71-72)

The rhetorical velocity of this approach quickly becomes apparent when one turns to M. Shawn Copeland. Copeland, who centres the body in her theological reflection, notes that the body is marked by race, sex, gender, culture, and socio-economic station. The logics of empire created the differential power dynamics by using these marks. In this instance, the case in point is the body of Jesus. She writes, "the body of Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh, was subjugated in empire." (Copeland, 2010, p. 57) So the "particular history that is concrete and conflictual" that Mofokeng is concerned with, is brought to relief by Copeland's attention to the flesh of Jesus. Copeland notes that the marks on Jesus' body determined (better yet, overdetermined) his living conditions and his method of death. In her words:

> Jesus of Nazareth was born and died in subjugation to the Roman Empire. His flesh, his body, was, and remains marked by race, gender, culture, and religion: he was a practicing Jew in territory controlled by Roman political, military, and economic forces… In his flesh, in his body, Jesus knew refugee status, occupation and colonization, social regulation and control.

(Copeland, 2010, p. 58)

This description of Jesus' lived experience, in many ways, coincides with the black lived experience under the apartheid regime. Political control was exercised by denying black franchise. Forced removals created refugees out of black people. Social regulation and control figured prominently in the form of pass laws, group areas act, immorality act and more. Onkgopotse Abraham Tiro exemplifies what happens to bodies marked by empire. Daniel Magaziner discusses a poem titled *Casualties*. He notes that Roli Karolen "compared Abraham Tiro, who had recently been assassinated in Botswana, to Jesus Christ." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 58) Jesus' method of death, like Tiro's death turned out to "be a politicizing thing."[22] In short, historical Christology is an approach to Christology that was not only befitting to Sobrino's situation, but also to the situation that Mofokeng was writing from.

The second quality Mofokeng finds to be insightful in Sobrino's Christology "concerns the incorporation of current Christian liberative praxis into Christological reflection." (Forrest, 1987, p. 155) The impulse to de-ontologize Christological affirmations, both the Nicaean and the Chalcedonian, is then drawn out in its epistemological and praxiological implications. Epistemologically, deontologization takes place in two registers i.e., the objective hermeneutical key and the subjective hermeneutical key. Mofokeng explains, "the history of Jesus is proposed to be an objective key for the understanding of the Chalcedonian formulations. It is this history that unfolds to a point where Jesus of Nazareth is recognized and confessed as the Christ, the Son of God." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 103) The subjective hermeneutical key can also be located in the first followers of Jesus. Commitment to the way of Jesus Christ is key. He says, "they were followers of Jesus Christ who resorted to the life of Jesus to understand and explain their faith from within and for the benefit of their commitment." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 103) This commitment, according to Sobrino represents an epistemological opening that makes it possible to authentically engage in Christological reflection.

At a praxiological level, Mofokeng notes that the "history of Jesus is indispensable for the historicization of Christian existence." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 107) This is to say, the manner in which the Jesus story unfolds is indispensable to the critical reflection on the lived experience of the oppressed and the concomitant response to these oppressive structural conditions. The significance of this point is that just like Jesus, the oppressed have their own cross to bear, but unlike the oppressed who are still bearing their crosses, Jesus has borne his cross and he has trodden the path to the end. In this way, Jesus stands as a promissory note to the Crossbearers today that even as he confronted the conflictual conditions and made it to the end, they too can.

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[22] (Biko, 1978, p. 173)

Insights from Barth:

Mofokeng draws six insights from Barth's Christology. Before doing his analysis of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation, Mofokeng starts out by contextualizing the dogmatics in question. Forrest presents that contextual analysis in the following terms:

> The immediate political context within which Barth developed his doctrine of reconciliation - Church Dogmatics IV,1 and IV,2 1 upon which Mofokeng concentrates - was the reconstruction of Europe after the intense suffering of the Second World War. It was a time when decisions had to be made, about the kind of Germany, the kind of Europe that was going to be rebuilt and Barth became actively involved in these issues both in the Church and in politics. (Forrest, 1987, p. 159)

At the centre of this suffering were the Jews. The holocaust proved to be an unignorable point of theological reflection, and for Barth, the catastrophic moral failings of Europe in the two world wars demanded theological reflection. In his first point of analysis, Mofokeng traces Barth's history of the nation of Israel and their relationship with God over time. Barth already draws an intimate connection between Jesus and humanity. Barth's imbrication of humanity and Christ is articulated in the following terms:

> In being gracious to man in Jesus Christ, God acknowledges man; He accepts responsibility for his being and nature. He remains Himself. He does not cease to be God. But He does not hold aloof. In being gracious to man in Jesus Christ, He also goes into the far country, into the evil society of this being which is not God and against God. (Barth, 2009, p. 151)

This imbrication serves the important function of helping us to understand the historical background of God's relationship with Israel. One of the reasons this background was so significant, for Mofokeng, is that Barth saw the need to make the point that Jesus' incarnation, the moment he was made flesh, he was made "Jewish flesh and not bourgeois." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 131) Mofokeng proceeds to underscore Barth's point that when Jesus was made flesh he was occupying the precarious position of the poor and oppressed. The Jewish flesh, however, had a moral signification that could not be lost on Germans. In the words of Mofokeng: "The Jews re-present Jesus Christ here and now (i.e., in World War II). "So that whatever and however much you did this (murdering the Jews) to them, you did it to me." (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 132-133) When we turn to Mofokeng's central question "how can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation?" (1983, p. x) We see faith in Jesus empowers black people by linking their contemporary struggle with the suffering of Jesus. The polemic thrust of this insight gives theological legitimacy to the struggle of blacks for their liberation.

Second, Mofokeng indicates the importance that Barth places on accepting the realism of Jesus' resurrection. Mofokeng here seeks to underscore that, "[the] Crucified and dead Jesus is raised to life in space and time." (1983, p. 133) Accepting the realism of the resurrection, Mofokeng surmises, will address the hermeneutical concern of the continued relevance of Jesus' resurrection in contemporary times. The resurrection event in this account has two dimensions. First, it is important that we recognize the intrinsic trinitarian character of this event. Jesus did not raise himself nor did he assist the Father in raising him. The resurrection, "is an exclusive and unique act of God the Father through God the Spirit, an act that can be likened to creation, and that transcends human agency and perception." (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 133-134) Similarly, the pneumatic activation of subjects involved in struggle has the same trinitarian character. Like Jesus, the Father resurrects us through the Holy Spirit. Second, the physical materiality of Jesus after resurrection is another essential element of Barth's Christology. He reasons that, the materiality of the body of Jesus post-resurrection anchors his past, present and future. It gives special significance to the period that Jesus spent with the disciples in the period between Easter and Ascension. "What happened during these days", Mofokeng writes, "is something unique, something that places the disciples high above the contemporary community, but also unites them with it. They came face to face with the Crucified as the living God himself." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 135) As a black person who is engaged in struggle for liberation, why does this Christological insight matter? This insight matters because this understanding of the resurrection of Jesus also has a promise embedded within it; what Mofokeng would describe as, "the promise of the actual raising of the *Crossbearers* everywhere in the world *today*." (1983, p. 136) This is to say, those who are suffering under the privation of *freedom-in-security* [23] find hope in the promise of that delicate balance between space and time being restored.

Third, Mofokeng brings our attention to Barth's understanding of the significance of the resurrection. The resurrection is a related but distinct event from crucifixion. In other words, our understanding of the crucifixion must not overshadow the significance of the resurrection. Barth, according to Mofokeng, sees the resurrection as God's validation of Jesus' life and death. The resurrection is a response to the cry of dereliction of Jesus on the cross. This stamp of approval is both retrospective (Jesus' life and death) and prospective (followers of Jesus engaged in struggle for liberation). In Mofokeng's words; "[they] are given a divine, legally binding demand and command, to follow the living Crucified Jesus and be critically involved in their situation." (1983, p. 137) In other words, the resurrection is both a stamp of approval to those actively involved in struggle and an invitation to join the struggle to those who are oppressed. Mofokeng points to the first community of believers as an example of those that

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[23] Freedom-in-security, according to Manganyi, is the state of being one experiences when a delicate balance between space and time is achieved. In such a situation, "an individual has potential. Time appeals to such potential." (Manganyi, 1973, p. 44) That is to say, the passage of time is the function of the free individual realising their potential.

responded to the invitation that the resurrection event extended to them. Our contemporary participation in struggle is in concert with that first community of believers. Having explained the independent signification of the resurrection, Mofokeng then places it back into relationship with the cross in these terms: "[the] cross is, therefore, also the beginning of the transformation of the world, while the resurrection is also the goal of transformation, the goal that is both present and future." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 139)

Fourth, the work of reconciliation in the cross and resurrection corresponds to the work of transforming the material conditions of this world. Mofokeng spells out Barth's call to praxis in these terms; "[Jesus] summons the Christian community to participate actively and vigorously in making this life of resurrection visible, tangible and enjoyable reality to all people both in political and socio-economic dimensions of human existence." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 141) Mofokeng cautions that enacting the reconciling work of the cross and resurrection, does not mean repeating the crucifixion. With respect to the cross, the Christian community of believers is enjoined to engage in the work of critiquing crucifying realities regardless of where they are. This means the church might have to critique itself, the church might have to critique other social, political and economic actors and lastly the church might even have to be critical of the powers-that-be. Participating in the reality of the cross in this instance entails the community of believers taking up their own cross, and not that of Christ. This participation in the reality of the cross ought to be understood in light of the resurrection.

Fifth, while the identity, self-understanding, and praxis of the community of believers is grounded in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the community of believers also has an eschatological orientation. Jesus, who is the genesis of their faith is also the fulfilment of their belief and praxis. "The coming Jesus Christ deepens and enriches present Christian praxis immeasurably, creates and sustains an unshakeable confidence in the future liberation, and makes radical engagement for liberation, by itself almost always a painful burden, a joyful event." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 145) This eschatological orientation becomes important when one considers how conflictual the context of most communities of believers is. Living in step with the call of the Christ event results in suffering but it also gives eschatological hope for liberation.

Sixth, true humanity (past, present, and future), according to Barth, is ontologically anchored in Jesus Christ. This manifests itself on the objective and subjective level. At an objective level, "[there] are concrete situations, movements and people in the world today, as they have always been present right through history, that give a glimpse of the presence of the being of Jesus Christ and of concrete true humanity in the world." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 148) Barth cautions us, however, that this concretion is sporadic and therefore cannot be conflated with the revelation of true humanity in Jesus. At a subjective level, "[the] emergence of Christian subjectivity and praxis is affected from the other side, from the being of Jesus Christ and our being in him… In this regard, as we have stated before, the emergence of

Christian subjectivity and praxis are the work of Jesus Christ the resurrected." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 150) For Barth, Christian subjectivity is activated by the telling of the Jesus story. He contends that the Jesus story has a totalizing effect on human subjectivity. By Barth's estimation this story "is power for a permanent revolution." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 150)

An Evaluation of Sobrino and Barth

This section has been a systematic survey of the insights that Mofokeng draws from Sobrino and Barth's Christologies. From Sobrino, he finds value in his approach of historical Christology which historicizes ontological dogmatic formulations. The value of this is that Christological confessions could be operationalized so that the development of the Jesus story could be juxtaposed to the unfolding of the praxis of liberation of the black oppressed. Historical Christology also opens up the epistemological possibility of seeing Jesus *become* the Son. This has clear value to anyone who seeks to use faith in Jesus to empower black people engaged in struggle for liberation. Faith in Jesus, in this context, becomes a conduit for working out a praxis of liberation. Sobrino's answer to the Christological question creates a close identification between the oppressed blacks and Jesus. That said, the issue with Sobrino is that his Christology lacks the appreciation of how deep the dehumanization of the oppressed subject goes. He assumes that the activation of the radical subject of history can happen at will. This is where Barth's intervention is of value.

Barth helps to introduce that separation between human agency and divine agency to address the inadequacy in Sobrino's Christology. One of Barth's insights that Mofokeng draws on is quite instructive. Barth states that it was not Jesus who resurrected himself, instead it was the Father who resurrected him. For subjects who are ostensibly dead, the pneumatic activation, it must be understood, is not a spontaneous occurrence. It is through divine intervention that we witness the pneumatic activation/creation of new subjects happen. The problem, however, with this radical separation of divine history and human history, is that one encounters what Mofokeng calls a "Barthian Hermeneutical impasse". (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 198) This consists in an excessive focus on divine action in history to the point where there is no differentiation of humanity in general. This is to say, there is no substantive distinction between people with power and oppressed people. These two groups of people stand before God with the same moral standing. Also, the dialectical hermeneutic that Barth sets up between divine action and human history is undermined by this hermeneutical impasse. In effect, the Barthian hermeneutical impasse creates the risk of a praxeological malaise where the oppressed end up seeing themselves as passive objects of divine actions in history. Having drawn insights and identified limitations in both Sobrino and Barth, Mofokeng then turns back to black theology.

The Problematic of Identity in Black Theology

In Black Consciousness, Mofokeng finds a philosophy that gives black people a coherent and liberative self-identification. In Sobrino, Mofokeng finds a dynamised Christology that easily facilitates close

identification between Jesus and the oppressed black community. In Barth, he found the regulating voice that reminds the oppressed that the actions of their liberation praxis is not synonymous with God's works of salvation in history. Having considered all the strengths and limitations of Sobrino and Barth, Mofokeng takes recourse to Cone who is able to keep Sobrino's close identification and Barth's radical separation in productive tension. Cone advises that this tension must be navigated in the following manner:

> When oppressed people are feeling proud of their success in the struggle of freedom, and thus begin to think that any action is justifiable, as if their ethical judgement is infallible, then theologians, preachers, and others in the oppressed community must remind the people of the utter distinction between their words and God's Word. But when the oppressed are passive and afraid of the struggle of freedom, then they must be reminded that the gospel is identical with their liberation from political bondage. (Cone cited in Mofokeng, 1983, p. 199)

Cone's advice reveals several important insights. First, the tension of identification is a call to humility of the oppressed and also a call against apathy to the situation of oppression. Second, there is practical wisdom and ethical sensitivity that is needed to know when to lean towards identification and when to lean towards separation. Mofokeng calls this practical wisdom "hermeneutical consciousness". Third, even though all the members of the oppressed community have the responsibility of excercising their hermeneutical consciousness, pastors and theologians have a greater responsibility to do so. This is linked to the above discussed methodological assumptions of black theology. The Word of God functions to critique praxis, similarly, praxis shapes how we read the Word of God. With all this in mind, let us take a detour in service of sharpening the problem of identification further. To this end, we will turn to Allan Boesak and Itumeleng Mosala's treatment of this problem.

Boesak and the Question of Ideology:

In the fourth chapter of his book *Farewell to Innocence,* Boesak discusses the relationship between black theology and ideology. The central question of this discussion is, "does not Black theology repeat the mistakes of white theology by operating within an ideological framework?" (Boesak, 1976, p. 99) To give his question conceptual clarity, he defines the term "ideology" and highlights the multiple meanings the term has in the history of its usage. For the purpose of our discussion, it is important to note that Boesak's investigation of the term is motivated by the concern about potential pitfalls of black theology's intimate relationship with Black Consciousness. His intent is to respond to potential critics of black theology by making a distinction between the negative use of ideology and black theology's use of it. Once he has done this, he then turns to the relationship between the form of black theology he agrees with and the ways it makes use of ideology.

To begin with, he draws insight from C. J. Labuschagne who studied the religious politics of the nation of Israel. From Boesak's observations, Labuschagne identified a phenomenon he called *volksideology,*

a term which denotes the ideology of the people. One outstanding feature of this ideology is "its *ethnocentric*, national-political religiosity." (Boesak, 1976, p. 103) [My emphasis] I italicised the word "ethnocentric" to bring attention to the fact that Boesak's preoccupation with the ideo-theological orientations that he discusses centres around the problem of identity and the potential pitfalls of its machinations. As further evidence to this claim, let us note how he deepens his point on ethnocentrism by turning our attention away from the nationalistic iterations of the concept and instead turning it towards the operative logic behind the term. He writes, "[o]ne can substitute 'the nation' with any privileged group in society that uses the gospel to defend its own interests and its own position in society." (Boesak, 1976, p. 104) The point here is that ethnocentrism is a form of identity that operates by distinguishing a given group from everyone else and introducing a hierarchy that favours the group in question. To see how this unfolds, let us explore the two examples of ethnocentric theologies that Boesak investigates.

White Christian Nationalism:

The first type of ethnocentric ideo-theological orientation that he discusses is white Christian nationalism. He sets the scene by drawing insights from three case studies: an extract from a nineteenth century missionary report, J. Sperna Weiland's appraisal of Rudolf Bultmann's theology and the *Landman Report*. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on his remarks on the *Landman Report*. I choose the report because it provides further substantiation to the claims I made in the second chapter of this study where I portray Dutch Reform theology as a hegemonic ideo-theological orientation. Three key points stand out in his discussion of the report. First, he holds that the report is an authoritative representation of Dutch Reform theology under the apartheid regime. It gives documentary evidence to the claim that says Dutch Reform theology provided theological justification for apartheid. Second, he asserts that the report revealed the ethnocentric character of Dutch Reform theology by the manner in which it subordinated Christian ethics to the nationalistic ideology of apartheid. Boesak deems this theology to be invalid. It is his contention that ideology ought to be subjected to "the critique of God's liberating Word." (Boesak, 1976, p. 108) Third, this ethnocentric ideo-theological orientation served to ease the consciences of the dominant group at the expense of the victims of the ideology.

C.W.H Boschoff's theological justification of apartheid helps Boesak to bring the insights he draws from the *Landman Report* to a head. For our purposes, we will focus our attention on Boesak's definition of Christian nationalism, its beliefs, and its problems. He explains that Boschoff defines Christian nationalism in the following terms, "'Christian' stands for adherence and devotion to Christ… and 'nationalism' signifies devotion to one's nation." (Boesak, 1976, p. 113) Pay close attention to the radical identification between the white nation and Christ in his definition of Christian nationalism. Boschoff, according to Boesak, prefers the term *volk* as opposed to nation. If we are to take what Boesak says about white Christian nationalism, then we must see Boschoff's concept of the *volk* as an ethnocentric category, one that seeks to privilege and defend the interests of Whites. The term

"Christian" is meant to give moral and spiritual legitimacy to the ethnocentrism. Boesak continues to explain that "Christian Nationalism believes that God is the Supreme Ruler of the church and the state and demands *responsibility to him alone* from the church and political leaders." (Boesak, 1976, p. 113) [My emphasis] By conflating the interests of the state and the interests of a certain community of believers, this ethnocentric ideo-theological orientation solidifies the legitimacy and power of the group in question.

Boesak points out two problems with this. First, the church ends up becoming a mouthpiece of the group that holds political power, and it castigates anyone who opposes the group in power. Second, Christian nationalism displays a pathological aversion to change. It is appropriate to turn back to the methodology of black theology to understand why Boesak articulated his objection against white Christian nationalism in this fashion. Like Goba and Mofokeng, Boesak understands the Word of God to be the rubric Christians must use to judge their praxis. In this instance, ideology replaces the Scripture as the governing framework. To put it in the terms set up at the beginning of this section, the problem of white Christian nationalism is that it identifies the *volk* and their action too intimately with God's actions in the world. It is identification without qualification. Considering that the group in question were in support of apartheid, it is not difficult to see why it is easy to dismiss this group. Things get complicated when we turn to groups that seek to liberate themselves from oppression.

Black Christian Nationalism:

The second ethnocentric ideo-theological orientation that Boesak engages is black Christian nationalism. His case study is the theology of Albert Cleage. Boesak brings it to our attention that Cleage's black Christian nationalism is not simply a political ideology dressed in theological garb. Instead, it is a nationalism that has theological convictions at its foundations. Cleage held that Jesus was phenotypically black, and this was of fundamental significance to his understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus. He held that Jesus' teachings on love and forgiveness were applicable exclusively to the Black Nation. Boesak explains Cleage's position in the following terms, "[f]or Jesus, the whole idea of brotherhood and love had to do with love *within* the Black Nation." (Boesak, 1976, p. 118) [original emphasis]

Cleage's theology proverbially answers Mofokeng's anthropological and Christological questions. Its primary goal is to develop a self-image for the Black Nation, one that radically identifies the Black Nation with Jesus without qualification. It also has the key feature of self-differentiation. To clarify who is included and who is excluded from the Black Nation, Cleage admonishes black people to "[t]urn the other cheek, go the second mile, go a hundred if necessary, if in this way you can save a Black brother." (Cleage cited in Boesak, 1976, p. 118) In sharp contrast, he opposes loving those who are outside the Black Nation. He contends that, "[w]e have to concern ourselves with justice, not love. We can't go to the white man and ask him to love us." (Cleage cited in Boesak, 1976, p. 119) Boesak disagrees with

Cleage. He posits that Cleage's total and exclusive identification of the gospel with black identity is problematic on several fronts. First, the claim that Jesus was phenotypically black is not evidence-based. Second, his use of scripture is not theologically and hermeneutically sound. Last and most importantly, his theology reinscribes the most problematic features of white Christian nationalism, an ideo-theological orientation his theology sought to overturn. The key insight from Boesak's criticism of Cleage is that the ends do not justify the means. Even though Cleage's stated goal is ostensibly the same as that of black theology, it fails the acid test of black theology by not leaving any room for the Word of God to critique his envisioned praxis of liberation. Second, and more importantly his ontological fusion of the identity of Jesus and the identity of the Black Nation means that Cleage has unconditionally sanctified the actions of the Black Nation.

Mosala's Critique of Black Theology

Where Boesak challenges white Christian nationalism and black Christian nationalism by problematizing the ethnocentric categories such as the *volk* and the Black Nation, Itumeleng Mosala challenges black theology by problematizing the category of the Word of God. By his reading, black theologians have a problematic understanding of the Bible. He questions the category of the Word of God because it is predicated on the assumption that a non-ideological appropriation of the Bible is possible. Here lies the contradiction of this position, "Black theologians condemn white people's view of God and Jesus as *apolitical*, that is, above ideologies, on the one hand; but they maintain the view of Scripture as the absolute, non-ideological Word of God that can be made ideological only by being applied to a situation of oppression on the other hand." (Mosala, 1989, p. 16) [original emphasis]

This contradiction creates a situation where black theologians say they are doing theology from below, but performatively, the category of the Word of God forces them into commitments of a theology from above. This issues from the black theologian's failure to recognise that it is not only the interpretation of the Bible that is a site of struggle, as Gerald West contends, "[t]he Bible itself is a site of struggle." (West, 2016, p. 337) The cost of this failure, according to Mosala, is the fact that "it leaves the privilege of a political reading of the Bible to the hegemonic sectors of society; and they often do not have to strain after an explicitly political reading since the texts of the Bible are themselves already cast in hegemonic codes." (Mosala, 1989, p. 6) This critique, according to Mosala, is applicable to figures such as James Cone and Cornel West. It is also applicable to South African black theologians such as Boesak and Tutu. This is important because it takes us back to Boesak's critique of the *Landman Report*, a white Christian nationalist document. As already noted above, Boesak contends that "[t]he Report's treatment of Christian ethics is invalid because it forces the Christian ethic into a framework of *Apartheid* and subjects it to national ideology instead of subjecting ideology to the critique of the liberating Word." (Boesak, 1976, p. 108)

This contention is beset with the contradiction that Mosala describes above. On the one hand, Boesak correctly problematizes the nationalist co-optation of the Bible to legitimize a crime against humanity.[24] On the other hand, his assumption that subjecting ideology to the critique of scripture will reliably produce liberative results undercuts his central argument. This assumption puts his theology at risk of reinscribing the very ethnocentric ideo-theological commitments that he seeks to overturn. Mosala explains it in the following terms,

> The point, therefore, is not that Boesak and other black theologians are mistaken in finding a liberating message in the Bible. Rather, I contend that the category of the Word of God does not help to bring out the real nature of the biblical liberation because it presumes that liberation exists everywhere and unproblematically in the Bible. I argue here that this category is oblivious, even within biblical communities themselves, to the history of ruling-class control and co-optation of the discourses and stories of liberation of the ancient Israelite people. (Mosala, 1989, p. 20)

This is ironic when one considers that it is Boesak himself that teaches us that ethnocentric religiosity does not only come in its nationalistic variations, but it also appears in the form of a group identity of a dominant class attempting to cement its privilege in a given society. This is to say, Boesak provides Mosala with resources to do a penetrating critique of Boesak's theology. What does our discussion of white Christian nationalism, black Christian nationalism, and black theology tell us about the hermeneutical consciousness that Mofokeng drew from Cone as a regulating ideal? Three lessons can be drawn from this. First, just because you identify with Christ, does not mean your actions are morally justified. White Christian nationalism is the clearest example that illustrates this point. Second, having a worthy cause does not mean all your actions get moral sanction from God. This is why Mofokeng turned to Cone's hermeneutical consciousness as a regulative ideal. It is also why Boesak was critical of Cleage's black Christian nationalism. Third, the category of the Word of God, which is one of the two poles of critical reflection in black theology is also riddled with problems of its own, thereby undermining the liberative intent of the hermeneutic of black theology. In other words, Cone's hermeneutical consciousness breaks down since Mosala has demonstrated that his use of the category of the Word of God is beset with the above discussed contradiction.

An Economy of Othering? Evaluating Mofokeng's Christology

This section will bring to a head the central claim of this chapter, that is, there are ways in which the motif of identity in Mofokeng's Christology facilitates the empowerment of black people engaged in a

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[24] "In 1966 the (United Nations) General Assembly labelled apartheid a crime against humanity (resolution 2202 A (XXI) of 16 December 1966) and in 1984 the Security Council endorsed this determination (resolution 556 (1984) of 23 October 1984)." (Dugard, 1973)

struggle for liberation, and there are ways in which it undercuts its liberative intent. This claim is demonstrated by examining Mofokeng's answer to the anthropological question, and his answer to the Christological question.

The anthropological question Mofokeng poses is, who am I? How can I be my authentic liberated self? The first part of this question is the diagnostic element of the question. His response to this part of the question is that black people are a people who are faced with the problem of alienation. Alienation from history, alienation from culture and alienation from land. The question also has a therapeutic element, how can I be my authentic liberated self? He works out his response to this part of the question by delineating the relationship between black theology and Black Consciousness. This is to say, the liberative praxis of the Black Consciousness project in general and black theology as one of its vehicles of conscientisation, answers the therapeutic element of the anthropological question. The strength of this answer is that it gives the black Christian community a coherent and systematic framework for developing a liberated self-understanding. It takes two identity markers that ordinarily work at cross-purposes and demonstrates how they can plausibly work together to create a liberative outcome. In this framework, the two poles of black Christological reflection are then regulated by a hermeneutical consciousness to ensure that they are not collapsed, but also that they are also not severed from each other. That said, this framework has some limitations.

We will start by exploring the limitations of his answer to the anthropological question, then we will turn to the limitation of the Christological question. As noted above, Mofokeng believes that the black community answers the anthropological question through Black Consciousness on three levels: history, culture, and land. Between his 1983 book *The Crucified among the Crossbearers* and his May 1987 article *Black Christology: A New Beginning*, Mofokeng's views remain consistent on almost all the identity constructions that he is concerned with. This is true of his notion of the black community, the black community's relationship with ancestors, class, and gender. However, there is a noticeable shift that takes place in his November 1987 article *Following the Trail of Suffering,* and his 1993 article *The Crucified and Permanent Crossbearing*. Following Calvin Ullrich, we will call this shift, an acknowledgement of "the economy of othering."[25] In effect, what I seek to demonstrate here is that the economy of othering in Mofokeng's Christology, by his own assessment, is more pervasive than what Ullrich saw it to be.

Let us start with the notion of the black community. In *Following the Trail of Suffering,* Mofokeng concedes that this category was much too nebulous, and it needed further clarification. This concession places emphasis on the importance of having a clear and identifiable interlocutor. In other words, he thinks the category of "the black community" is too nebulous an interlocutor for one to develop a

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[25] (Ullrich, 2021, p. 14)

searching theological reflection through. In justifying his decision to narrow down who his interlocutor is, he explains, "' It is necessary to say that this change of the identity of the acting subject did not imply disillusionment with or a rejection of the black community. It was a necessary deepening of the concept "black community" whereby this community is named in relation to the primary activity - economic activity that determines its oppression and also serves as a *trustworthy criterion* of national liberation." (Mofokeng, 1987b, p. 24) [my emphasis] I italicise the term "trustworthy criterion" to underscore that he began to recognise that black theology could only achieve methodological precision by knowing who exactly its interlocutors are. The decision of who the interlocutor is, in his accounting, must not be arbitrary but must be well reasoned and justified.

The second area where Mofokeng identified a lacuna in his category of the black community is on the matter of gender. He describes the stakes as follows: "The entire black community, especially men, were challenged to widen and deepen sanctificatory processes within itself and practice internal justice and distribute power to effect equality in order to enhance the external thrust of communal praxis and heology in combat against oppressive forms of white theology." (Mofokeng, 1987b, p. 25) At stake is three areas of concern. First, the stakes underscore the importance of justice not only for the black community, but also for women *within* the black community. This because, ignoring matters of injustice within the black community is tantamount to perpetuating injustice. Second, distribution of power goes to the heart of black liberative praxis. One of the key elements of dehumanisation is limiting the agency of the victim. In this case, black men would be doing exactly what they accuse white men do to them. Having said that, I must register my objection with the notion that it is the responsibility of the oppressor (the black man) to liberate the oppressed (black women).[26] Lastly, the efficacy of liberative praxis is contingent on the whole community having the ability to exercise agency by contributing to the praxis of liberation.

Where the first area was a problem of conceptual clarity, and the second was the problem of omission, the third area is Mofokeng outright correcting himself. When it comes to the matter of reconnecting with ancestors, he admits to having an elitist conception of them. He writes:

> As far as African history is concerned, I am of the opinion that while we accept the symbolic importance of certain African personalities of the past as bearers of the tradition of struggle against oppression in its many different manifestations we should dig deeper and unearth the real bearers of those struggles, the lowest men, women and children in our African societies of the past and be informed by them in our reading of scripture and subsequent formulation of black theology. (Mofokeng, 1987b, p. 31)

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[26] Paulo Freire argues that "Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. Any attempt to "soften" the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity…" (Freire, 2017, p. 18)

This is in sharp contrast to the earlier Mofokeng who asserted that:

> Anthropologically, this liberative undercurrent in our African history is represented by certain names of the "founding fathers" of African existence and resistance who are heroes because they were martyred in struggles for their humanity and land as well as for the survival and future of their posterity - you and I. This is where the names of Chaka, Moshoeshoe, Sekhukhuni and others of yesterday come in as the carriers of a liberation tradition in our Black history. (Mofokeng, 1987a, p. 8)

There are a few things to note about this shift in thought. First, this is not a repudiation of his position, instead it is an evolution of his opinion. In other words, Mofokeng remains consistent about the need for the black community to draw from their ancestors as a source of doing theology. Second, the shift in focus from the "founding fathers" to "the lowest men women and children in our African societies of the past" is an acknowledgement that formally dominant classes tend to co-opt the liberative discourse of the underclasses of their race when faced with external domination. Mofokeng intimates as much when he warns the black community not to "get stuck in valorization of African feudal kings especially in present day South Africa where most of their descendants are being co-opted into the apartheid system and are consequently a serious distortion of the history of their forebears." (Mofokeng, 1987b, p. 31) Third, and most importantly, the shift from "founding fathers" to "the lowest" indicates a consistent and deeper commitment to God's preferential option for the poor.[27]

In terms of the Christological question, Mofokeng turned to Barth and Sobrino. He drew insights from each theologian to develop his own answer to the question, "Who do you say I am?" Sobrino's historicising Christology provided a fertile entry point for the oppressed engaged in struggle for liberation to closely identify their praxis with the life and ministry of Jesus. On the other hand, Barth's Christology placed emphasis on the redeeming power of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the promise his resurrection represents for humanity generally. One thing is clear, the Word of God played a crucial role in the method of answering the Christological question, and by extension, coming to a transformed understanding of how the therapeutic element of the anthropological question should take shape. This takes us back to the detour we took in the previous section. Specifically, Mosala's contribution to the debate. I argue that Mosala's intervention changed Mofokeng's position on the category of the Word of God. He articulates his initial position on the role of the Word of God in the following terms: "The Word of God functions in this case to criticize and dynamize the praxis of liberation. During the process of this reflection the process of liberation also throws light on the Scriptures making the Word of God perceptible." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 21) Notice how the Word of God criticises, and praxis simply makes it more perceptible. There is a sense in which Mofokeng also treated the Word of God as an apolitical

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[27] See Gutiérrez *A Theology of Liberation* 1988, p.156 for an explanation of the expression "preferential option for the poor.

construct which can only be politicised by being applied for certain political ends. This then entraps him in the hegemonic codes that some parts of the bible are cast in. Consequently, this undermines the liberative intent of black theology. In direct response to Mosala's critique, which he cites, Mofokeng shifts from his initial opinion, holding that the "mystification of the text still stands in the way of its rationally and liberating reading and appropriation." (Mofokeng, 1987b, p. 28) Functionally, in this account, the category of the Word of God becomes a tool for misidentification of interests so that the oppressed end up identifying with the interests of the dominant classes of society. The net effect is that a category that was meant to facilitate the birth of new and liberated humanity simply reinscribes the oppressive logics that it seeks to overturn.

Conclusion:

This chapter has been an attempt to answer one question: how does Mofokeng use identity to articulate an empowering faith for black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation? We delineated his Christological framework which dialectically moves between two questions: "Who am I? How can I be my authentic liberated self? The anthropological question. And "Who do you say that I am?" The Christological question. We learned that the dialectical movement between the two poles is regulated by a critical consciousness which ensures that the oppressed do not overly identify their praxis with Christ, yet also ensures that the oppressed do not become complacent with the situation of oppression by identifying with Christ's liberative praxis.

All things considered, Mofokeng's framework, like any other framework, has room for improvement. In response to the development in scholarship around him, he identified several areas for improvement in his own Christology. With respect to the anthropological question, he realised that his concept of "black community" has three problems: it was a nebulous category, it did not address matters of gender, and it encouraged an elitist understanding of engaging ancestors. With respect to the Christological question, he realised that the category of the Word of God he was operating under treated Scriptures as if they were an apolitical construct which was politicised by its application to a given political situation. Drawing from Mofokeng's critical self-evaluation, we demonstrate the central claim of this chapter, that says that there are ways in which the motif of identity facilitates the empowerment of black people engaged in a struggle for liberation, and there are ways in which this motif of identity undercuts the liberative intent of his Christology. The fact that this claim is demonstrated using Mofokeng's own selfevaluation indicates that he has reflexivity and intellectual integrity of the highest order. That said, Mofokeng never wrote an extended treaties to then address the limitations that he identified in his own work. The next chapter is a proposal for an alternative orientation which can help to further develop Mofokeng's insights. The task of that chapter is to explore avenues for a possible future for Mofokeng's Christology.

Chapter 4: Caputo and the Hermeneutics of the Call

Introduction:

In the previous chapter, I sought to demonstrate that the motif of identity in Mofokeng's black Christology facilitates a liberative self-understanding for black Christians, but it also has elements that undermine its liberative intent. He identified three issues in his answer to the anthropological question and in response to Mosala, he acknowledged that his response to the Christological question had some problems. The following chapter seeks to introduce radical theology as a hermeneutical orientation that can help address the issues that Mofokeng identified in his Christology. The interlocutor who represents this hermeneutical orientation in this study is John D. Caputo. This chapter has a three-pronged task. First, to discursively locate Caputo within radical theology. Second, to situate Caputo with respect to Mofokeng's work. Third, to provide a systematic presentation of the hermeneutics of the call. The central argument of this chapter is that Caputo's radical theology has some phenomenological capacity that can help address problems related to the motif of identity in Mofokeng's Christology.

Situating Caputo:

The second chapter of this study made the case for a critical conversation between black theology and radical theology. The basis of the argument is that there is historical precedence for this discursive connection. Where Mofokeng is identified as the black theological voice of this study, Caputo is named as his radical theology counterpart. Ullrich suggests three areas for potential mutual enrichment between Mofokeng and Caputo. With all this in mind, let us explore Caputo's relationship to theologies of secularization/death of God theologies and what his big ideas are.

Caputo's Relationship to Radical Theology:

The purpose of this description is to clarify how his theology is related to this first wave of radical theology and at what point he parts company with them. To this end, this section will respond to two guiding questions: how is Caputo's theology related to radical theology? How and why does Caputo part ways with radical theologians?

Katherine Sarah Moody genealogically associates Caputo with the radical theology discourse. She identifies the intellectual genealogy that Caputo draws from as the type of radical theology where Hegel is the grandfather and Paul Tillich is the father of the tradition. (Moody, 2018, p. 108) Hegel is first explicitly engaged in *The Insistence of God.* Caputo later engages Tillich in *The Folly of God.* Calvin Ullrich, on the other hand, discursively locates Caputo's theology with the death of God theologies of the 1960's. However, even though Caputo draws from the death of God theologies, he does so in a qualified sense. (Ullrich, 2021, p. 4) In an interview with Jeffery Robbins, Caputo qualifies his association with death of God theology in three ways. (Robbins, 2007) First, death of God theology makes a valuable contribution to the extent that it implies the death of an all-powerful God. Second, the

death of the omnipotent God creates room for what Caputo calls "the birth of God."[28] Specifically, the birth of the suffering God. Third, death of God theology remains valuable to the extent that it is understood to be the never-ending task of deconstructing the God that anchors sovereignty. That said, there are places where Caputo parts ways with this theological tradition.

In the same interview with Robbins, Caputo expressed his key objection to death of God theologies being that they end up falling into the same trap of classical theology by producing a grand narrative. This happens because they tell a linear story of religious progression from Judaism to Christianity to modernity or postmodernity, which comes at the expense of Judaism. He sees this to be a problematic schema. He criticizes the way these theologies present the death of God as a completion of a metaphysical narrative, transferring being from the religion of the Father (Judaism) to the advantage of Christian incarnation. (Robbins, 2007, p. 149) He even criticizes Mark C. Taylor, who disregards the broader context of deconstruction and its skepticism towards such periodizing and incarnational frameworks. Caputo explains, "[d]espite the fact that Taylor is telling us deconstruction spells the end of the Book and of History, he does not resist this schema. Indeed, he completes or perfects it." (Robbins, 2007, p. 69) Briefly stated, Caputo identifies with the polemic thrust of death of God theologies against the metaphysical God. But he sees their critical gestures to be somewhat ham-fisted. Consequently, these theologies end up reproducing the very thing they seek to subvert. So where does this leave Caputo in relation to death of God theologies? Ullrich answers this question in the following terms, "[f]or Caputo, God "is" not (God is dead) but we can still speak of God, justice or faith, insofar as these names "name" an undeconstructible event." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 5) Ullrich differentiates Caputo from that cohort of radical theologians by noting a key limitation that they have that Caputo avoids. That is, these theologians "ended up in the process of killing the God of metaphysics, also killing the possibility of God altogether…" (Ullrich, 2021, p. 4) The unfortunate consequence of this limitation is that it reinscribes the very tendency they sought to subvert.

Moody on the other hand, differentiates Caputo's theology by contrasting his position to the views of two influential figures in radical theology, Thomas Altizer and Mark C Taylor. According to Moody, "[Caputo] objects that Altizer's metaphysics rejects "the central sense" that the death of God had in Nietzsche's parable of the madman, merely transposing the "full presence" of God as Absolute Center from transcendence to immanence." (Moody, 2018, p. 109) This is a significant objection when one considers that Caputo's theology is actively undermining the metaphysics of presence, like Derrida's project. His objection of Mark C. Taylor's radical theology is that it "prevents the event from below, letting the weak force of the event going on in the name "God" dissipate to the extent that we are left "unsolicited and unprovoked, as if nothing has happened to us, as if there were no events""

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[28] He fleshes out the implications of this expression in his book, *The Insistence of God*.

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(Moody, 2018, p. 110) In both cases, Caputo detects ontotheological dispositions towards the flux.[29] Where Altizer's theology reinscribes the metaphysical sensibilities that he seeks to overturn in ontotheology, Mark C. Taylor's theology seeks to *arrest the play* of the flux. Moody's most salient characterisation of Caputo's theology is the following: "Caputo differs only in understanding radical theology to be an insistence going on within the confessional theologies rather than a distinct body of beliefs that might be held as an alternative to the historical religions." (Moody, 2018, p. 108) So, what are some of the big ideas that come of this strain of radical theology?

Caputo's Big Ideas:

Moody's contribution to the *Palgrave Handbook on Radical Theology* is a treatment of Caputo's contribution to the radical theology movement. She does an overview of his life and work which pays special attention to Caputo's theological work. She starts out by drawing the reader's attention to the philosophical foundations of Caputo's radical theology, and like most commentators, she identifies Caputo's *Radical Hermeneutics* as a watershed moment in Caputo's thinking. Caputo's work begins to take on more overtly religious overtones in his *Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*. Commenting on this development in Caputo's work, Moody says "[Caputo's] philosophy has always attended to the limits of philosophy, specifically, religion and his theology is a theology without theology to accompany Derrida's "religion without religion"—a radical theology to accompany his own philosophical project of radical hermeneutics." (Moody, 2018, p. 96) Caputo began to do theology in earnest from *The Weakness of God* onwards, he produced what he retrospectively called a trilogy, *The Weakness of God* (2006), *The Insistence of God* (2013) and *The Folly of God* (2015). This is where he began to develop a theology that he initially called "weak theology" in *The Weakness of God,* and then began to identify as "radical theology" from *The Insistence of God* onwards.

Moody explores Caputo's conception of radical theology through different concepts that Caputo employs. She begins by exploring what Caputo means when he talks of "radical theology as theopoetics". She saliently describes radical theology as theopoetics in the following terms: "Caputo subjects theology to a reduction from the logos of a Supreme Being God to a poetics of a passion and a prayer for the event going on in the name "God."" (Moody, 2018, p. 102) Essentially, Moody was bringing to the reader's attention the methodological and epistemological innovations of Caputo's theopoetics. The second big idea in Caputo's theology that Moody deals with is the concept of "the weakness of God". In this regard, Moody draws a connection between Vatimmo's notion of *weak*

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[29] To say these theologians, have an ontotheological disposition to the flux is to claim they were attempting to escape the original difficulty of life by using metaphysical thinking to simplify an irreducibly complex reality. In the words of Silakhe Singata: "Naming this original difficulty 'flux' connotes that it is moving – this is not a stagnant metaphysics of presence. However, as flux, this is not a singular, organised, rational movement – it is not a linear progression, or a dialectic, nor is it a circular movement." (Singata, 2021, p. 24)

thought and Caputo's concept of weakness. She says, "One of the sources for Caputo's language of weakness is Gianni Vattimo, whose account of "weak thought" provides additional support for Caputo's weakening of theology from metaphysics to hermeneutics." (Moody, 2018, p. 103) Vattimo was certainly not the only thinker that influenced Caputo, Moody also identifies Derrida, Benjamin and St. Paul. Caputo's conception of weakness is tied to his philosophy and theology of *event.* The third big idea in Caputo's theology is "the insistence of God". In this regard, Moody posits that Caputo is developing his conception of "event" by following Johann Baptist Metz's notion of "the dangerous memory". The last big idea that Moody discusses is the matter of "the existence of God". She takes us through the gestures that Caputo makes as he develops his concept of the insistence of God. To explain it briefly, Caputo posits that on the one hand we have the *event*. The event calls and the call can be answered or ignored. This event comes under different names, justice, hospitality, the gift and more. On the other hand, we have the existents. Existents can be communities, institutions, or deeds. According to Caputo the event does not and will never exist, it insists, we exist, and it is up to us to make the call to exist. He calls this a chiastic structure. In short, one of Caputo's basic claims is that God does not exist, God insists. So, what do these ideas have to do with the black experience and how do they relate to black theology? To answer these questions, we must return to Ullrich's thought experiment of a critical, bi-directional supplementation between Mofokeng and Caputo.

A Confessional Statement:

In describing Mofokeng's theology, Ullrich takes recourse to Caputian categories. He uses terms like "determinate" and "first order discourse of theology". He elaborates his description in the following terms, "Mofokeng's black Christology is a necessarily context specific, confessional statement of the liberating gesture of Christianity that reaches its apex in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 13) Ullrich's characterisation of Mofokeng's theology as a "confessional statement" turns on Caputo's distinction between confessional theology and radical theology. This distinction is germane to our understanding of the relationship between Mofokeng's theology and Caputo's theology. It will also help us understand the concept of a hermeneutic of positive identification.

Let us consider one of Caputo's definitions of confessional theology to better understand Ullrich's characterisation. "Confessional theology is a local process, one that goes on in concrete historical existing community, where there is a body of received scriptures, and a "confession" or "profession" of inherited and specific beliefs… commonly shared by the community." (Caputo, 2013, p. 69) Caputo's description of confessional theology has three features that deserve our attention. First, confessional theology is local. What gives it its local character is its intimate relationship with a specific and identifiable community of believers. That said, it is not enough for the community of believers to be specific and identifiable, they need to have a history. In other words, one can only credibly theologise out of a community of believers that has a history. Second, a confessional community has specific, inherited beliefs. That is to say, confessional theology can only happen from a community of believers

that has specific beliefs that are transferred from one generation to another. This second feature helps us to understand why a community of believers needs to have a history. Lastly, these beliefs need to be commonly shared. This last element ensures that we are not talking about the personal beliefs of the members of the confessional community in question. Confessional beliefs get their confessional character from being able to bring a community together that share the beliefs in question. What does this tell us about Ullrich's characterisation of Mofokeng's Christology? Based on the above discussion, we can draw three conclusions. First, Mofokeng's theology is a local theology. second, he is theologising from within a community of believers that have specific inherited beliefs. Third, the inherited beliefs are the tie that binds black people who believe in Jesus and are also engaged in struggle for liberation. Mofokeng himself affirms the confessional character of his theology when he asserts that, "You may not and cannot… reflect on a practice in which you are not actively involved." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 37) Over and above demonstrating the confessional character of his theology, this assertion turns our attention to another important feature of confessional theology. That is, confessional theology reports back to the community of believers.

Let us use this feature to explore the relationship between confessional theology and radical theology. Caputo situates these two theologies by making two distinctions. First, the distinction between religious actors and theological reflection. "The actors belong to a first-order operation of religious beliefs and practices…" (Caputo, 2013, p. 68) The actors in question constitute the above-discussed community of believers. In the Christian context, beliefs such as the trinity, the incarnation, and original sin are examples of specific inherited beliefs that bring a Christian community together. And baptism, the eucharist, and the anointing of the sick are examples of Christian practices. That said, these beliefs being specific and inherited does not mean they are easily comprehensible to the community in question. Consequently, they need some clarification. "The vagueness of the popular belief," Caputo writes, "is the reason the community takes up theological reflection, which is a second-order operation where the community does its thinking." (Caputo, 2013, p. 68) Stated otherwise, a community of believers being brought together by shared beliefs and practices represents the first-order operation of religious activity. The attendant theological reflection of those beliefs and practices, on the other hand, is a critical reflection on the first-order operation, which makes it a second-order operation. One major theological voice that concurs with Caputo's prioritisation in this first distinction is Gustavo Gutiérrez. He contends that "[t]he pastoral activity of the Church does not flow as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not produce pastoral activity; rather it reflects upon it." (Caputo, 1987, p. 9) This, according to Gutiérrez, makes theology a second step.

Building on this first distinction, Caputo introduces us to a second distinction which brings the feature of "reporting back" into the discussion. In the first distinction, Caputo uses the term "theology" without any qualifications. This changes when he discusses the matter of reporting back. Briefly stated, the difference between confessional theologians and radical theologians is that the former reports back to a

confessional community while the latter reports back to anyone who is willing to listen. More on this int the next chapter. Caputo reasons that the confessional theologian reports back because he/she is beholden to the community of believers. In this instance, "[t]he criterion of *truth* is whether the theologian has tapped into something in the spirit of the community, and whether the community can truly recognize itself in the theology." (Caputo, 2020, p. 4) [emphasis original] Keep in mind, the task of the confessional theologian is to make explicit that which is implicit in the beliefs and practices of a community. At this point, it is appropriate for us to pause and ask again; what does the above discussion tell us about Ullrich's characterisation of Mofokeng's theology as a "confessional statement"? We learn two things. First, Mofokeng's Christology is a theological reflection that functions to make explicit that which is implicit in the black community's belief in Jesus and its attendant practices. Second, Mofokeng reports back to, and is beholden to this very community. To this effect, he maintains that "in Black Christology as in Black Theology the ones whose questions and concerns are given priority is the black community…" (Mofokeng, 1987a, p. 7) All this to say, Ullrich's characterisation of his Christology is consistent with Mofokeng's understanding of his own work.

What of radical theology? In exploring the question of reporting back, we have learnt that confessional theology *has* to report back. From this we learn that the confessional community circumscribes the loci of critical reflection. But the nature of theological reflection is that its critical impulses often cross the threshold of the boundaries that the confessional community sets. Caputo locates radical theology in this very tense moment of critical reflection. He argues that the moment of crossing the threshold is the moment confessional theology becomes radical theology. "Radical theology," Caputo explains, "emerges both as a demand of thought, which has the right to ask any question, and as a demand of praxis, which seeks to suspend any claims that privilege an inherited legacy, which is an accident of birth. (a historical community)" (Caputo, 2013, p. 69) From these two demands, we can make corollary assertions. First, radical theology does not report back to a confessional community because it asks questions that go beyond the discursive limits of a given confessional community. Second, radical theology comes out of the recognition of the constructedness and historical contingency of any community's institutions, beliefs, and practices. So, where the task of the confessional theologian is to make explicit that which is implicit in a given confessional tradition, the task of the radical theologian is to adumbrate the ongoing disturbances within the confessional tradition. In Caputo's words, "the task of radical theologians is to identify and incite the disturbance, not quell it; to disclose the disturbance, not to close it." (Caputo, 2020, p. 3) What does it mean to say a theologian is adumbrating the ongoing

disturbances in a confessional tradition? What are the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of this theology? These are the questions we will explore in the section below.[30]

Caputo and the Hermeneutics of the Call:

In this section, I will argue that the radical theologian adumbrates the ongoing disturbances in a given confessional tradition through the hermeneutics of the call. Caputo leverages Heidegger's insights on the call of conscience to articulate a key claim of his radical theology. That is, the name of God is the name of a call. To borrow from Caputo's own words, "A theology of the "event" is inevitably a thin thing, taking the name of God as the name of a call rather than of a causality, of a provocation rather than of a presence or a determinate entity." (Caputo, 2006, p. 8) Before unpacking what this means, it is fitting that we look at Heidegger's comments on the call of conscience, and Caputo's direct engagement with his insights on the topic.

A good place to start would be to ask, what is the call of conscience? Heidegger's concise answer to this question is, "the call of conscience has the character of an *appeal* to *Dasein* by calling it to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self." (Heidegger, 1962, p. 314) [emphasis original] Put differently, the call of conscience is an existential phenomenon that draws attention to the capacity we have to be more than what we are now. This appeal should be understood in the context of our state of thrownness. Heidegger puts it in this way, "*Dasein* exists as potentiality-for-Being which has in each case, already abandoned itself to definite possibilities. And it has abandoned itself to these possibilities because it is an entity which has been thrown…" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 315) That is, a position of abandoning our potentiality in favour of a specific configuration of concretised existential possibilities. Given that this is our default mode of being-in-the-world, it implies that we are not automatically attuned to the appeal of the call of conscience. He contends that under ordinary circumstances, "*Dasein* fails to hear itself and listens away to the 'they'." (Heidegger, 1962, p. 316) Most of the time, this is how we move in the world, our state of being thrown puts us in a state of lostness in the voice of the they. That said, there are moments when things are different, and we are attuned to hear the call, this is when we can respond by reaching out for our ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When this happens, "this listening away gets broken by the call if that call… causes another kind of hearing…" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 316) It is important to note the conditionality of this mode of being. Heidegger is subtly indicating here that, even when one is attuned

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[30] Caputo has written many books answering these questions, for the purposes of this study, I have elected to engage his hermeneutics of the call as an entry point. I have chosen this as my entry point because it most organically lends itself to engaging the motif of identity that I am concerned about in Mofokeng's Christology.

with the call of conscience there is still the option of rejecting the call of conscience. Our study seeks to investigate the theological implications of these insights in Caputo.

Caputo frames Heidegger's ruminations on the call of conscience around three key questions: "Who or what is being called upon? Who or what is being called for? Who or what is calling?" (Caputo, 2016, p. 87) Keep in mind, Caputo comes to Heidegger with specifically theological concerns. This means his interpretation of Heidegger is filtered through these theological concerns. To the first question, Caputo responds that, "What is being called for in and under the name of God is "on us" in the accusative." (Caputo, 2016, p. 87) It is important to note that his engagement with the call is for the purpose of clarifying what he means when he says that the name of God is the name of a call. So, his answer to this first question being "us" tells something important; "us" refers to those for whom the name of God is a matter of existential concern. In other words, those for whom the name of God forms a part of their meaning making structures and strategies in the world. To the second question, he replies by saying, "what is *being called for* is the realization of these promises that are being made in the traditions and institutions we have inherited…" (Caputo, 2016, p. 87) The promises are well encapsulated in the construct of the kingdom of God. Concerning this matter, Caputo likes to refer to Katherine Sarah Moody's framing of his theology as an answer to the question, will there have been God?

It is the third question that is most pertinent to Caputo's engagement with Heidegger's concept of the call of conscience. To this question, he replies in the following terms: "The various and variously religious traditions are so many different responses to which God is the call. But if we have learned anything so far it is that things are never straightforward with God- with the name (of) "God"." (Caputo, 2016, p. 87) Caputo shares in Heidegger's attitude to the identity of the caller. Heidegger states his position in the following terms: "If the caller is asked about its name, status, origin, or repute, it not only refuses to answer, but does not even leave the slightest possibility of one's making it into something with which one can be familiar…" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 319) Commenting on this very statement, Caputo notes that our inability to know the caller is not a lack, but a positive constitutive element of the call. In his own words, "the hiddenness of the source is actually *constitutive* of the call, part of its phenomenal makeup, a positive function of its weak force…" (Caputo, 2006, p. 114) Elsewhere, Caputo contends that the anonymity of the caller creates the condition of possibility for one to take responsibility of the response to the call. Otherwise, "we can always plead that we are just obeying orders, just doing our duty, and thereby avoid responsibility." (Caputo, 2013, p. 15) Let us pause and return to the task of the radical theologian.

What do the above insights tell us about the task of the radical theologian? Keep in mind, the radical theologian adumbrates the ongoing disturbances in a given confessional tradition through the hermeneutics of the call. First, the task of the radical theologian is to shift the understanding of God from ontological to phenomenological terms. This is to say, the most authentic engagement with God is

understanding how and why the name of God has existential significance. Second, in keeping with the recognition of the constructedness and historical contingency of a confessional tradition, the radical theologian has the task of unearthing the promises of this inherited tradition's beliefs and practices. Third, the radical theologian has the task of showing people how their given confessional tradition is a response to that which gets itself called in and under the name of God. But before even doing that, they need to demonstrate that this tradition is a response to the call in the first place. Now that we have established Caputo's attitude towards the call of conscience, it is time for us to see how this unfolds with respect to the name of God, and the Word of God.

The Reduction of the Name of God:

At this point, it is necessary to take a step back and to contextualise Caputo's hermeneutics of the call within his broader project. In his book *The Weakness of God: A Theology of Event,* he lays the groundwork for his theological project which he initially calls weak theology, but subsequently calls radical theology in the books that follow. He articulates the argument of his project in the following terms: "the modest proposal I make in this book is that the name of God is the name of an event, or rather it *harbours* an event, and that theology is the hermeneutics of the event…" (Caputo, 2006, p. 2) There are three points that deserve attention here. First, the framing of the relationship between the name of God and the event in this proposal steers us away from thinking about God in entitative terms (who/what); rather, we are invited to think of God in evental terms (how). Second, Caputo's conception of event draws on two thinkers: Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida. The Deleuzean sense of event refers to the virtuality that is simmering beneath the surface that can unexpectedly break out at any moment (what is going on in what is happening). The Derridean sense of event refers to the condition of radical openness to what is wholly other (that which is *to come*); it speaks to the absolute future that can break in and shatter the horizon of our expectations at any moment. Third, if theology is the hermeneutics of the event, it means it has a double-pronged hermeneutical task. On the one hand, it is supposed to de-sediment the name of God in order to create the conditions necessary for being attuned to what is going on in the name of God. Second, it has the task of exposing the points of instability in the settled meanings in and around the name of God. This helps to maintain an openness to the absolute future. In Caputo's own words, the task of theology is "to release what is happening in the name, to set it free…" (Caputo, 2006, p. 2) So what implications do the hermeneutics of the call have for the name of God? He articulates his hermeneutical posture in the following terms:

> From a strictly methodological point of view, by suspending the question of the name or status of the caller in its ontical or ontological identity, we are sticking strictly to the formal or phenomenological character of the call's being called and to what is being called for. As to the question of the "real" or entitative status of the caller, then, we practice a rigorous *epoche* or reduction. (Caputo, 2006, p. 115)

The *epoche* in this instance, issues from an understanding of the name of God being a how (event) and not a who or a what (entity). Remember, the name of God (in a theology of event) is the name of a call. If we return to Heidegger's definition of the call of conscience, we recall that he says, "The call of conscience has the character of an *appeal*…" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 314) This is to say that, the name of God is an invitation into what might break out at any moment and/or an openness to the wholly Other. And the only appropriate hermeneutical posture to assume is to "practice a rigorous *epoche*..." If the name of God is understood in this sense, then it has direct implications for our understanding of the Word of God.

The Reduction of the Word of God:

So, what does it mean to practice a rigorous *epoche* when engaging Scripture? For Caputo, this involves suspending both the natural and the supernatural attitude. This means it is neither seen as a record of scientific or historical facts nor is it seen as a record of supernatural facts. Instead, Scripture is seen as a series of invitations to what Caputo (2006, p. 117) calls "a style of existence" that entertains the possibility of the world being something other than what it is now. In this hermeneutical posture, "the Scriptures are treated as hermeneutically explicative or phenomenologically disclosive or revelatory about a mode of being-in-the-world, not real-representational. They disclose something about the structure of experience without pretending to represent the fact of the matter." (Caputo, 2006, p. 118) Such an engagement with the Scriptures requires an approach that is performatively congruent with the assumption that underpins the above-described hermeneutical posture. To this end, Caputo introduces a discursive modality that he calls poetics. In this discursive modality, "The Scriptures are true, but the truth is poetic not propositional… a poetics is true with the truth of the event; it wants to *become true*, to *make itself true*, to *make itself come true*, to be transformed into truth…" (Caputo, 2006, p. 118) Put differently, to describe truth as poetic is to say that truth, in this instance, is subjunctive. This subjunctive mood indexes a desire for the world to become a certain way. In Caputo's own words, "A poetics does not record the strong facts; it describes the weak force of a call for the kingdom, or for justice, which is true even if the real world is truly unjust." (Caputo, 2006, p. 118) Any of the interpretive or discursive strategies that are deployed in this hermeneutical situation are used to imagine an alternate reality that beckons to be realised. Up to this point, I have just given a methodological and epistemological description of radical theology. The key question that must be addressed is, what does it mean to practice a rigorous *epoche* on the Jesus story? Let us turn to Caputo's reading of Paul's logic of the cross to see how this unfolds.

The Reduction of Paul's Logic of the Cross:

On the question of crucifixion, Caputo structures his reflection around one key question; was Jesus holding back? His answer is a resounding no. In a direct response to this question, Caputo responds, "On my accounting, Jesus was being crucified, not holding back; he was nailed there and being executed

very much against his will and the will of God." (Caputo, 2006, p. 44) He argues that to say Jesus was holding back is to portray Jesus as a magician who could simply use the divine power available to him. Contrary to this line of reasoning, Caputo holds that:

> the divinity of the truly divine God is to be displayed neither in a display of magic by Jesus or his heavenly Father, nor in the secret hope that the Father is going to square the accounts for him in an afterlife and give these Roman soldiers their comeuppance in the world to come. *The divinity is rather that his very death and humiliation rise up in protest against the world, rise up above power*. (Caputo, 2006, p. 43) [my emphasis]

In other words, to see the cross as divine revelation is to see it as a protest against injustice without the expectation of an all-knowing and all-powerful God to underwrite the protest. It is to take seriously Bonhoeffer's words when he says "Man's religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world: God is the *deus ex machina*. The Bible directs man to God's powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help." (Bonhoeffer, 1972, p. 361) Caputo, like Bonhoeffer, is trying to impress on us that God is not the superintendent of the universe who directs the unfolding of events. Instead, the logic of the cross subverts this image of God. Why is this valuable? How is it empowering to point blacks that are engaged in a struggle for liberation to the weakness of God? Caputo avers that this image of God does not portray a powerful God but rather situates God within vulnerability, it vindicates those who are suffering. This is not to romanticise the suffering that the poor and vulnerable experience. Instead, it is meant to "attach the coefficient of divine resistance to unjust suffering" (Caputo, 2006, p. 45) For this reason, Caputo turns to the cross in order to develop his theology.

Caputo's theology is a theology of the cross. He notes that Paul's concept of the *logos* of the cross is "quite central to the idea of the weakness of God." (Caputo, 2006, p. 42) He further comments that, " the strong point about weak theology is that it is a theology of the cross." (Caputo, 2006, p. 42) In highlighting the centrality of the cross, Caputo seeks to contest the conception of divinity that is predicated on power and strength. He foregrounds the humiliation and vulnerability that Jesus (God incarnate) experienced. He subverts the commonly held conception of God who is all powerful. He writes, "the weak force of God is embodied in the broken body on the cross…the power of God is not pagan violence, brute power, or vulgar magic, it is the power of powerlessness, the power of protest that rises up from innocent suffering and calls out against it, the power to say *no* to unjust suffering, which is perhaps the central Christian symbol." (Caputo, 2006, p. 43) This, by my estimation, is the clearest moment of Caputo practicing a rigorous *epoche* on the passion narrative. Whereas strong theology presents the cross as a satisfaction of God's wrath against sinful man, a theology of event presents the cross as the ultimate expression of God. God is a suffering, sympathetic God. By his reading, the God who is revealed by the cross is the one we see when we "stop thinking of God ontotheo-logically as *prima causa*… and onto-theo-politically as the foundation of sovereignty." (Caputo, 2006, p. 34) This

is the God who subverts categories such as transcendence and prefers insistence (a concept that Caputo later develops). In fact, Caputo asserts that "the essence of God's transcendence lies in God's insistence." (Caputo, 2006, p. 45) What does he mean when he talks about God's insistence? He answers, "by this, I mean that God withdraws from the world's order of presence, prestige and sovereignty in order to settle into those pockets of protest and contradiction to the world…

God settles into the recesses formed in the world, what Paul in First Corinthians calls *ta me onta"* (Caputo, 2006, p. 45) Put differently, God's insistence can only be understandable when we take seriously the idea of God's preferential option for the poor.

Having made these preliminary remarks, Caputo then proceeds to do an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1. He provides a clear account of Pauls talk of the weakness and folly of God, and the logic of the cross. In this reading he is trying to impress upon us that "God chose the 'outsiders,' the people deprived of power, wealth, education, high birth, high culture." (Caputo, 2006, p. 46) But he does not simply chose them, he also wants to destroy the wisdom of the wise. Out of this point, Caputo draws up an intellectual genealogy that starts with Isiah and culminates with deconstruction. Paul's destruction of the wisdom of the wise draws from Isiah. Luther's *destructio* draws from Paul's *apollo*. Heidegger's *destruktion* draws from Luther's *destructio*. Derrida's deconstruction draws from Heidegger's *destruktion.* On the basis of this intellectual history, Caputo renders the Isiah text to say, "I will deconstruct the metaphysics of presence of the strong onto-theologians sayeth the Lord." (Caputo, 2006, p. 48) This leads us to the question, what does a deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence of onto-theologians look like?

Caputo does not give us a false impression about Paul's theology of God's weakness. He tells us up front that Paul's theology of weakness is situated within "a larger economy of power and wisdom." (Caputo, 2006, pp. 48-49) He gives us a full disclosure of his reading for two reasons. First, he wants to show the reader where he parts company with Paul in the clearest possible manner. Second, he seeks to bring his experiment to a head by "short-circuiting" Pauls larger economy of power. In Caputo's words, "it is necessary to read the stronger voice of Paul with the minor voice of *différance*, to keep crossing their wires." (Caputo, 2006, p. 49) He then turns to 1 Corinthians 2:6 to provide us with textual evidence that in the final analysis, Paul is a theologian of power. This is where Caputo parts company with him. In his opinion, Paul situating the weakness of God in a larger economy of power undermines the very essence of the argument he is advancing. This opinion is predicated on his position that Jesus was not holding back. In other words, Jesus on the cross is not situated in a larger economy of power.

He then unpacks the onto-theo-political dimensions of Paul's larger economy of power by turning to Romans 13. He prefaces this exposition with an important proviso; that is, even though we might find texts that have a liberative thrust in the bible, we also need to acknowledge that other texts support the

status quo. An opinion he shares with Mofokeng and several other black theologians. [31] Romans 13 demonstrates this very point. Concerning this text, he writes, "Paul here advocates a top-down hierarchical order that backs up the power that be with divine authority, one that has been used by supports of the status quo since Constantine put Christians in the driver's seat." (Caputo, 2006, p. 50) Some commentators have tried to work through the inconsistent messaging from Paul. There are two lines of interpretation that have emerged on this score. The first argues that Paul was advising the community of believers on how to adapt to the political situation given that the Jews were expelled from Rome. It was a survival strategy while waiting for the *parousia.* The second line of interpretation is one that maintains that Paul's argument starts out well but comes to the wrong conclusion. To the first line of reasoning, Caputo responds by saying that the New Testament writers may have a radical social vision, but it is undeniable that the same authors do not encourage a robust outward political response to the powers that be. Consequently, this radical social vision becomes an internal affair. This, for him, leads to a two-worlds theory which is a problem. In his opinion, "we need to push the authors of the New Testament beyond themselves and make them a little more true to their vision." (Caputo, 2006, p. 50)

After demonstrating where and how he parts company with Paul, Caputo then goes on to show us what pushing Paul beyond himself to be a little truer to his vision of a theology of the cross looks like. Caputo's theology of event represents an attempt at radicalizing Paul's notion of the weakness of God. This involves reading Paul, with Paul, against Paul. He explains, "a theology of event, would cling more tenaciously than does Paul to the power of powerlessness, and it would find in the name of God the event of an unconditional appeal. A word, a call that lays claim to us unconditionally without sovereign power." (Caputo, 2006, p. 53) Such a theology, Caputo contends, problematises the paradigm of sovereignty. This is where we see in clear terms how assuming this orientation is useful for those engaged in struggle for liberation. This theological orientation dislodges one out of a hermeneutical naivete that Mosala observed among black theologians. It disabuses us of the value of a hermeneutical disposition that leads into committing to the onto-theo-politics of 1 Corinthians 2:6 and Romans 13. A disposition that Caputo has demonstrated is in direct opposition to the vision the Paul claims to represent. In opposition to such an onto-theology, "[t]he radical conception of the rule of God and the

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[31] This is a shared sensibility between black and liberation theologians. The prime example of this point is Itumeleng Mosala. In his *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, he says, "I contend that the category of the Word of God does not help to bring out the real nature of the biblical liberation because it presumes that liberation exists everywhere and unproblematically in the Bible. I argue here that this category is oblivious, even within biblical communities themselves, to the history of ruling-class control and co-optation of the discourses and stories of liberation of the ancient Israelite people." (Mosala, 1989, p. 20) Mofokeng agrees with this critical stance towards the bible. He expresses his agreement in the following terms: "We want to argue that there are texts, stories and traditions in the Bible which lend themselves to only oppressive interpretations and oppressive uses because of their inherent oppressive nature. And that no amount of textual surgery or hermeneutic juggling and semantic gymnastics can change that." (Mofokeng, 1988)

power of God is to say that the power of God is embodied in the helpless body whose flesh is nailed to the cross." (Caputo, 2006, p. 54) In short, This is a classic example of what it looks like when a radical theologian adumbrates the ongoing disturbances not only in the thoughts of theologians, but even the thoughts of the bible writers themselves. If we return to the South African context, we will recall that there were several responses to the ontotheological regime of apartheid. Liberals called for the electorate to vote the National Party out, black theologians responded by questioning the sovereignty of the missionary presentation of the gospel, and secular theologians responded by saying that God is dead. Caputo's hermeneutics of the call represent an invitation to engage the depth dimension of our religious formation while maintaining the hermeneutics of suspicion that theologies of secularization called for.

Conclusion:

We entered this chapter with the understanding that Mofokeng's Christology has the potential to empower black people engaged in struggle for liberation, but this Christological framework has some limitations. In response to this problem, this chapter presented a value proposition. That is, Caputo's radical theology is an alternative hermeneutical orientation that can help to address the limits Mofokeng identified in his Christological framework. To this end, I discuss, in specific terms, what it is that this hermeneutical orientation has to offer. For conceptual clarity, I discursively locate Caputo's radical theology with respect to the more influential figures in this discursive measure. I show the points of resonance and I also identify points at which they part ways. After doing so, I then situated Caputo's theology with respect to Mofokeng's theology. After all, the point of engaging Caputo is to more penetratingly engage the limits that Mofokeng identifies in his theological framework. Lastly, I introduce the epistemological assumptions that underpin this strain of radical theology, and closely follow how its conceptual operations unfold. All this comes to a head in the next chapter where I articulate a confessional space for engaging the South African situation at the intersection of Christianity and Fallism, and I proffer a concomitant circumfessional disposition to this confessional space.

Chapter 5: Christian Fallism and the Circumfessional Orientation

Introduction:

At this point, it is important for me to state that I am theologising in the wake of the Fallist moment. This study is an attempt to come to terms with Fallism as a moment that represents an epistemological break which has "succeeded to redirect theological thinking [and] even radically alter theological agendas and priorities and introduced new ones to occupy positions of priority…" (Mofokeng, 1989, p. 38) This is not to say that my study is a study on Fallism. Rather, I situate myself in order to cogently point out the exigencies that drive my engagement with the theological questions that I address. Briefly stated, I am making a theological contribution to a problem space that Fallism has adumbrated.

Since its advent, the Fallist movement[32] has elicited a variety of responses. Indeed, a discernible body of literature is beginning to form around Fallism as a discursive object of investigation. This much can be said from the perspective of theology. There is a variety of theological responses that have been posited, some negative, others positive. These theological responses address a range of topics: human rights,[33] reconciliation,[34] anger,[35] voices of the students,[36] the role of the church,[37] apocalyptic praxis,[38] and the question of religiosity.[39] All these theological responses have focused on the practices of the movement. Specifically, the practices of the #FeesMustFall movement. None of them have engaged the #RhodesMustFall movement and the theoretical contribution it made (with the exception of Urbaniak). Kayum Ahmed notes that Wandile Kasibe asserted in one of their interviews that the "greatest contribution of #RMF is the introduction of the philosophy of Fallism" (Ahmed, 2019, p. 146) This chapter takes this assertion seriously. I seek to proffer a theological response that engages the theoretical contribution that Fallism made.

Considering that the primary interlocutor of my theological intervention is Mofokeng, it is important that we keep in mind the key observation made in the exploration of his Christology. That is, there are ways in which the motif of identity facilitates the empowerment of Black people engaged in a struggle for liberation, and there are ways in which this motif of identity undercuts the liberative intent of his

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[32] Adbul Ahmed notes the Fallism is an umbrella term that refers to movements such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall.

[33] (Grassow & Le Bruyns, 2017)

[34] (Headley & Kobe, 2017)

[35] (Urbaniak, 2017a; Urbaniak, 2017b)

[36] (Sutton, 2019)

[37] (Kgatle, 2018)

[38] (Buttelli & Le Bruyns, 2017)

[39] (Urbaniak, 2019)

Christology. That critical observation is the source of the central argument of this chapter. That is, a more productive hermeneutic of positive identification can emerge if we cultivate a circumfessional orientation to our confessional traditions.

Fallism as Positive Identification:

In this section, I will articulate Fallism as a hermeneutic of positive identification; one that answers the anthropological question in South Africa today. To start with, let us begin by defining what positive identification is.[40] Ullrich defines positive identification as a dialectical hermeneutic that obtains in the act of differentiating the self from the other in order for a self-image to cohere. (Ullrich, 2021, p. 13) In this instance, the hermeneutic of positive identification is constructed by a trifocal decolonial framework that consists of Black Consciousness, black radical feminism, and Pan-Africanism. At the centre of this framework is the concept of black pain.

The polemic thrust of this framework lies in its posture of epistemic disobedience. Ahmed argues that this posture is something of a double-edged sword. By his reading, the decision to centre Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanism is an act of external epistemic disobedience directed towards the Euro-North American epistemic regime. On the other hand, the decision to centre black radical feminism with a specific focus on the concept of intersectionality constituted an act of internal epistemic disobedience against the patriarchal, androcentric, and transphobic elements of the movement. Ahmed explains, "this second tier of epistemic disobedience was introduced by black radical feminists as a way of countering the dominant narrative of Black Consciousness (and later Pan-Africanism)." (Ahmed, 2019, p. 116) This description of Fallism indicates that it is not a transparent and self-evident hermeneutic. This calls for a careful analysis of the epistemic contours of this hermeneutic. To this end, we will look at the ways each of the pillars of the Fallist decolonial framework contributes to this posture of epistemic disobedience.

Black Consciousness:

As noted above, the concept of blackness is central to the decolonial framework of Fallism. In the founding document of the #RMF, blackness is deployed in two ways. First, blackness is construed as a political identity. This is a backward-looking gesture that draws on the Black Consciousness tradition, specifically from the writings of Steve Biko. They state that "[o]ur definition of black includes all racially oppressed people of colour." (RMF, 2015) What is important to note about this political identity is how inclusive it is. The movement explains that they purposely draw on the concept of blackness as a broad political identity because they see the value of unity and solidarity among the oppressed. That

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[40] I find it necessary to start the chapter with an anaemic definition of positive identification because it is the unfamiliar part of my argument. I have chosen to go with the rhetorical strategy that starts with the familiar then moves to the unfamiliar. In this case, the familiar is Fallism and black theology, and the unfamiliar is the concept of positive identification.

said, they also show sensitivity to the difference in positionality of the various groups represented in this political identity of blackness and how oppressive structures affect each group differently.

The second way the concept of blackness is deployed is in the movement's development of the concept of black pain. Ahmed reports that this concept was developed by the students in one of the early #RMF meetings. Describing its significance, he explains that the concept was "invoked during the movement 'as an important aspect of *identity formation.*'" (Ahmed, 2020, p. 346) [my emphasis] I italicise the expression "identity formation" to underscore the fact that black pain was understood to be a hermeneutic of positive identification by the Fallists themselves. Its dialectical character is revealed by the manner in which the Fallists posit their identity by means of differentiating themselves from who they are not. On the one hand they affirm their identity of blackness, on the other hand they negate the project of white liberalism. By Ahmed's reading, the #RMF movement deployed blackness in these two ways as a means of forming a collective identity and also underscoring their experience of marginalisation at UCT.

Black Radical Feminism:

That said, the black radical feminist contingent of the movement quickly realised that the category of blackness was insufficient to cogently articulate the institutional racism they were contending against. Consequently, they made sure to stake their claim in the exercise of theory building that was taking place in the formative stages of the Fallist movement. Mbali Matandela asserts, "we were not going to let only men lead the movement." (Matandela cited in Ahmed, 2020, p. 347) The specific theoretical contribution that black radical feminists made was including intersectionality in the decolonial framework of Fallism. This is because history and experience had taught them that single-issue analytical frameworks such as anti-racist discourse or feminism were not only insufficient for understanding intersectional oppression; they also erased those lived experiences since they did not neatly fall into their categories of analysis.

They cite Kimberlé Crenshaw as an influence, who argues that "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated." (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) This is why the founding document explicitly acknowledges the social and theoretical significance of intersectionality in the movement. Thulile Gamedze further explains that "[t]he intersectional agenda of Azania house is in direct response to the *history of patriarchy* in Black Consciousness movements. The popular imagination of Black Consciousness rides in *black heterosexual maleness*." (Gamedze cited in Ahmed, 2020, p. 348) [My emphasis] I italicise the expressions "history of patriarchy" and "black heterosexual maleness" to stress the significance of the contribution that black radical feminists made. To explain what I mean, I will turn to Magaziner's historical account of the debates around feminism in the Black Consciousness movement.

Magaziner's account does three things. First, it points out the ways in which masculinity was deployed problematically by the predecessors of the Black Consciousness movement. His case in point is Bloke Modisane, who used sexual conquest as a means of affirming his negated manhood in the face of antiblackness. Second, it gives documentary evidence of SASO leaders falling into the same misogynistic tendencies as their predecessors. Magaziner examines a satire titled *Chemical Analysis* that appeared in a SASO publication. Concerning this satire, he remarks that it indicates that, "despite their determination not to replicate the intellectual failings of their predecessors, SASO leaders too had lapsed into tired tropes." (Magaziner, 2010, p. 33)

Third, and most importantly, it contests the assertion that Black Consciousness and SASO leaders were simply men of their time. Magaziner shows that the patriarchal and androcentric posture of Black Consciousness was a result of conscious choices made during debates around the intellectual character of the movement. To drive the point home, he cites the experience of Deborah Matshoba whose account shows that "the stakes of the choice had been *discussed and explicit.*" (Magaziner, 2010, p. 33) Matshoba recounts an experience where she and her fellow women SASO members approached the predominantly male leadership of the organisation and proposed to organise a woman's affiliate organisation. This proposal was rejected, "'If you are WSO, you are not SASO,' Biko contended, 'and both organisations would be weaker for the split.'" (Magaziner, 2010, p. 33) This recalcitrance was not only expressed on matters of organisational structure, the rejection of feminism was also on philosophical grounds. Feminist theory is too universal and Eurocentric, they contended. Black Consciousness on the other hand, centred the black experience and it focuses on specific and concrete issues. It is this historical context that informed the attitude and assertive intervention of the Black radical feminist contingent. They knew that Fallism would repeat the very problems of black Consciousness if the corrective of intersectionality was not introduced into the movement.

Pan-Africanism

The third pillar of Fallism is Pan-Africanism. This pillar represents an ideological and epistemological commitment to centre Africa and the African experience. This is seen in the demands that the movement made and the goals they set for themselves in the mission statement. They wanted buildings to be renamed and for the curriculum to begin to centre Africanity in its content and method. As an act of epistemic disobedience, the Pan-Africanist element of Fallism seeks to point out the North-bound gaze of the academy in South Africa. It seeks to challenge this orientation, its relevance, and its positionality.

That said, the inclusion of Pan-Africanism in the Fallist decolonial framework is not without its challenges. Firstly, there is a perceived tension between Pan-Africanism and intersectionality. The Fallists articulate this tension in the form of a question: "How do we resolve the tensions between Pan-Africanism and intersectionality, moreover how does that implicate our own movement?" (RMF,

2015b) Second, there is a lack of consensus about what Pan-Africanism is and what its significance is for Fallism. This, according to Ahmed, is caused by two main factors. The textured and nuanced history of Pan-Africanist movements is reduced to a single narrative. Relatedly, there was a generally shallow understanding of what Pan-Africanism is in the movement. Third, Pan-Africanism among Fallists suffers from South African exceptionalism. Masixole Mlandu and Brian Kamazi have made this argument. Kamanzi asks, "if decolonisation and Pan-Africanism are so important to the present struggle, then why have we collectively not made efforts to include the rapidly growing communities of Africans, from outside South Africa into the debates about and conceptualisation of what inclusive education could look like?" (Kamanzi cited in Ahmed, 2019, p. 349) All things being equal, the Fallists identified these challenges not because they rejected Pan-Africanism as a pillar of Fallism. Instead, they wanted to honestly evaluate each pillar and give it credibility by correcting the weaknsses they presented. Their practices and writings show a commitment to Pan-Africanism. In essence, PanAfricanism represents a commitment to centre place. It also argues for the conceptual and methodological value of using Africa as a point of departure.

Is Fallism a Hermeneutic of Positive Identification?

The short answer is, yes. Fallism represents a commitment to developing a language that names phenomena, people, and relationships. It is not simply a descriptive language, it is also a language that has a transformative intent. It is a language that seeks to eradicate situations and relations of oppression. As a hermeneutic of positive identification, it shows its dialectical character by not only asserting the identity and interests of those it represents, this gesture of assertion is also accompanied by a concomitant gesture of negation. It enacts its differentiation of the self from the other by naming and exposing figures and traditions that foster colonial conditions of epistemic violence and practices of erasure. With all this in mind, what shape does this hermeneutic of positive identification take?

Briefly stated, Fallism enacts this dialectical hermeneutic in three salient ways. Through Black Consciousness, Fallism asserts the identity of the community it is concerned with as the black community. This is the positive gesture of the hermeneutic. This is accompanied by a gesture of negation where the assertion of blackness is also understood to be the rejection of white liberal involvement. Black radical feminisim on the other hand builds on the hermeneutical gesture of Black Consciousness but takes it further by asserting an irreducibly intesectional identity. While this positive gesture is a clear negation of the anti-blackness that Black Consciousness is also negating, it is more importantly a negation of the androcentric character of Black Consciousness. Third, Fallism asserts an Africanist identity. This affirmative gesture is a contestation of conquest and coloniality writ large. It is a social, political, and epistemological centering of Africa, and decentering of Euro-American modernity as such.

Having articulated the Fallist hermeneutic of positive identification, it is fitting that we take note of two complications in this hermeneutic. The first lies in the tension that the Fallists note between

PanAfricanism (and I would add Black Consciousness) and intersectionality. On the one hand, intersectionality reveals the multiplicity of the logics that frame our interactions with ideas and the world generally. On the other hand, the logics of Pan-Africanism push in the opposite direction where it de-emphasises the significance of differences among continental Africans and those in diaspora. This unifying logic is also seen in the construction of the political identity of blackness as it is articulated by Biko. This tension is one that is difficult to navigate since Fallists respect the element of difference represented by intersectionality but also value the unifying power of the logics of Pan-Africanism (and Black Consciousness). The second complication has to do with the conception of blackness. Even though the founding document of Fallism indicates that the category of blackness is deployed as an inclusive political identity that seeks to foster solidarity among the oppressed, there was also a subterranean counter current to this position. Ahmed reports that "in several conversations with student activists, many indicated that when a coloured or Indian person self-identified as black, they were referred to as

'Biko black', whereas those who were black Africans were referred to as 'black black'." (Ahmed, 2020, p. 346) There are three things to note about this distinction. First, the contestation around blackness being an inclusive political identity is not new to the Fallist movement, it was also contentious in the Black Consciousness movement. Where we see a departure from Biko's conception of blackness in favour of a conception that excludes people who are not of African descent, it used to be that this very group rejected inclusion. Speaking of Strini Moodley and Saths Cooper who were members of the Natal Indian Congress that joined SASO, Leslie Hadfield notes that "SASO members struggled to convert congress members to the Black Consciousness–defined black identity." (Hadfield, 2016, p. 43) This teaches us that the manner in which ideas are articulated and received is significantly influence by the historical context these ideas arise from. Second, if black pain is at the centre of Fallism, not everyone can make an equal claim to an experience of it. Third, this qualification opens the door to the reification of race as an attempt of reaching articulate pure black pain. There are two key take aways from these complications that I will note and discuss in detail later. First, the simultaneous external and internal critique that Fallism enacts shows us that the terrain of struggle cannot be mapped by a logic of inside/outside. Second, the centre of the Fallist hermeneutic of positive identification has the seeds of its own undoing.

Black Theology After Fallism:

In this chapter, I seek to engage a group of people within the Fallist movement, those who identify with the decolonial framework of Fallism; Christian Fallists. This label, "Christian Fallist", refers to people for whom Fallism and Christianity make a non-trivial existential claim. I argue that the identity markers of "Christian" on the one hand, and "Fallist" on the other, have the potential to create an intractable conflict for those that identify with both. Several thinkers have noted this antagonism; that is, there are people who experience a hermeneutical impasse when it comes to reconciling their African identity to

their Christian identity.[41] The ambivalence I note here comes from the intimate relationship between the missionary enterprise and the colonial project. On this score, Mofokeng shares in Biko's concern that many black radicals are of the opinion that "if Christianity in its *introduction* was corrupted by the inclusion of aspects 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, 2004, p. 59) [emphasis original] This is why many in the Black Consciousness movement wondered if "the decolonization process should not be accompanied by a de-christianization process." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 15) I direct our attention to this group of people because the work of thinking Christianity and Fallism together has not yet begun in earnest. Urbaniak observes that there is a gap in Fallist discourse; that is, not much about religiosity is discussed in the context of the Fallist movement and Fallism itself. He writes, "Lack of explicit and comprehensive references to religion is, in fact, a characteristic feature of most recent publications dedicated to fallism." (Urbaniak, 2019, p. 228)

Mofokeng is an interlocutor that can help to begin the work of filling this lacuna. His theology can help Christian Fallists to develop a coherent and empowering identity which takes both their Christian and Fallist commitments seriously. This is not to say that there has been no theological reflection on the movement. Instead, it is to say that not much religious reflection has come out of the movement itself.[42] This study is a black theology that is conceptually situated in the Fallist tradition and is therefore, an attempt to think Christianity and Fallism together. Where Black Consciousness functions as the conceptual backdrop for Mofokeng's theological intervention, Fallism has the same contextual function in this study. This is why I took the time to sketch out the conceptual contours of the philosophy of Fallism. Where Black Consciousness functions as the systematic answer to the anthropological question in Mofokeng's Christology, Fallism will serve the same function in my theological contribution.

The Case for Mofokeng as an Interlocutor for Fallism:

One may wonder, why is it necessary to develop a theological framework coming out of Fallism? Especially when the philosophy of Fallism does not show any interest in religious matters? There are two ways to respond to this query. One response addresses the practical motivations, the other response speaks to the conceptual elements of Fallism. At a practical level, there is both an internal motivation and an external motivation. Internally, I have already indicated that there is a group among the Fallists

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[41] Among those scholars, Urbaniak is the one who most directly speculated on this antagonism in the Fallist movement. He writes: "One may only wonder about the religious awareness of those who have been at the forefront of #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #OpenStellenbosch, and similar campaigns. Empirical studies are still to fill this gap. My intuition would be that many of them experience some sort of "double consciousness," to use Du Bois' phrase." (Ullrich, 2021, p. 232)

[42] Inasmuch as Urbaniak is the best theological respondent to Fallism to date, he does not see himself as being part of the movement. Reflecting on his own positionality with respect to the movement, he has this to say: "Far from claiming to be part of the #MustFall movement, and even farther from making any pretence to authority regarding the decolonial turn which is at stake, I simply attempt to make sense of the rationale behind fallism as well as the revolutionary call by its protagonists." (Urbaniak, 2019, p. 225)

for whom Christianity has a non-trivial existential hold. For these people, there is a risk that their commitments to Christianity and their commitments to Fallism can cause an intractable existential conflict. This conflict can either lead to the Fallists in question developing an inconsistent or incoherent identity on the one hand, or a "schizophrenic split between their Christian and their African identities" on the other hand. (Urbaniak, 2019, p. 232) The problem with dismissing this existential conflict as a personal issue that Christian Fallists must deal with alone is that some Christian Fallists may come to the table with unresolved issues around the colonial trappings of the missionary Christianity that they were formed in and this can lead to an unintended re-inscription of coloniality into the philosophy of Fallism.[43]

Externally, there is the demographic fact that majority of South Africans identify as Christian. A general household survey that was conducted by Statistics South Africa states that "an estimated 86% of South Africans were affiliated to the Christian religion" (Stats SA, 2016, p. 27) On this matter, Biko remarks, "too many people are involved in religion for blacks to ignore." (Biko, 2004, p. 34) If Fallism is to gain discursive purchase among ordinary South Africans, it is necessary that it meaningfully addresses people's religiosity. Especially because Fallism's ambitions are not simply political or psychological, they are also epistemological. As history has taught us, the missionary enterprise had an epistemic thrust, and this forces those who identify as Christians to contend with the firm grip of the colonial outlook of the religiosity of many in the country. In the words of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o "the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and 'the blackboard." (wa Thiong'o, 1986) At a conceptual level, I claim that Fallism can never attain its fullest philosophical expression until it rigorously engages questions around black theology. The moment Fallism identified Black Consciousness as one of its pillars, it implicated itself in all the elements of the project of Black Consciousness. Black theology being one of the key elements in the project. This is even more the case when one considers the fact that the Fallist movement specifically identifies Biko as the thinker they chiefly draw from in this intellectual tradition.

Biko's Invitation:

Let us examine two instances where he calls for the development of black theology. In the first instance, his essay titled *We Blacks*, Biko argues for a more nuanced understanding of apartheid. By his assessment, it is not just a mechanism for socio-political oppression, it also has a psychological element. He names the impact that apartheid machinations have on the psychological level "spiritual poverty".[45] In response to this problem, he suggests a program that will address both the socio-political and psychological oppression, i.e., Black Consciousness. This program has multiple vehicles to execute its

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[43] This, according to Rekgotsofetse Chikane, was a risk that was Fallists were keenly aware of. He notes that Fallists, accepted religions but they understood that religiosity also had it the tendency of actively working against the cause. Be that as it may, "Chikane does not elaborate on the subversive role of religions *vis-à-vis* the #MustFall movement." (Urbaniak, 2019, p. 228) [45] Steve Biko, I Write what I Like, 30.

goals. One of these is black theology.[44] Principally, black theology needs to make religious concerns to speak to the lived experience of oppressed blacks. To achieve this, Biko proposes that black theology must have four objectives: 1) to address the problem of spiritual poverty, 2) to contest the assumption that Christianity is superior to African traditional religion, 3) to demonstrate how contextualizable the Christian faith is, and 4) to portray Jesus as one who fights against oppression. (Biko, 2004, p. 34)

Another occasion where Biko called for the development of black theology is in his essay, *Black Consciousness and the Quest for True Humanity.* In this essay, his central contention is that whites subjugate black people and yet they also want to dictate how blacks must respond to this subjugation. Part of the way whites attempt to control black response to subjugation is by dictating to them how to appropriately analyse this problem. To this, Biko's response was, "We believe we know what the problem is, and we will stick to our findings." (Biko, 2004, p. 99) By this, he meant that white dialectical analysis was inadequate to deal with their situation, and blacks had developed their own dialectical analysis which they were happy with. Part of this dialectical analysis included a theological element. This is where black theology came in. (Biko, 2004, p. 104) Like the previous occasion, he identifies four key objectives: 1) to reconcile God and Jesus to the black experience, 2) to portray Jesus as a God who has a preferential option for the poor, 3) to be a theology that addresses the existential problems that come out of the black experience, and 4) to re-introduce the divine element to the black person's lived experience.

When looking at these two instances, several things stand out. First, the objectives articulated in each instance are unique. This indicates that Biko's invitation has theoretical milage that has not yet been exhausted and calls for further engagement. Put differently, there is a theological research program in Biko and not enough has been done to fully engage it. Second, in as much as his programmatic invitations suggest a variety of loci of reflection, there is also thematic coherence. This means that theologians who take up this research program would be contributing to a variety of theological disciplines, but their contributions would amount to a coherent conversation. Third, much of what he raised as concerns that black theologians should take up still applies to the lived experience of many blacks in South Africa today. That said, we cannot simply take Biko's invitation to develop black theology and repeat it without alteration. This is where we return to the case for black theology generally and Mofokeng specifically being suitable interlocutors for Christian Fallists to work out a coherent selfunderstanding that properly integrates the identity markers of "Christian" on the one hand, and "Fallist" on the other. Clearly the engagement I am proposing does not only serve Christian Fallists, it also serves black theology since there is a discursive malaise that black theology is experiencing post-

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[44] As discussed in chapter 3, Mofokeng frames the relationship between Black Consciousness and black theology in these very terms. See (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 16-19)

1994. All things being equal, if Fallism faithfully engages the sources that it draws from, it means that they also need to engage Biko's invitation to the development of a black theology. Understand, a faithful engagement does not even mean unquestioning obedience to the source. Instead, it refers to a rigorous engagement with the sources in question, which ends in a well-considered decision on what to accept and integrate, and what to set aside. This means that the engagement with Biko could either end in a rejection or an acceptance of the invitation. On my part, I have elected to respond to this invitation in the affirmative, and I have chosen Mofokeng as my primary interlocutor to help me respond.

A Fallist Response:

At this point, it is fitting for us to recap on what the motif of identity in Mofokeng's Christology looks like. The purpose of this exercise is to situate my own intervention with respect to his work and the hermeneutic of positive identification in Fallism. The central question of Mofokeng's Christology is "how can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation?" (Mofokeng, 1983, p. x) To answer this question, Mofokeng develops a double-grounded hermeneutic of praxis. This hermeneutic moves dialectically between two questions: who do you say that I am? (the Christological question), and Who am I? How can I be liberated to my authentic self? (the anthropological question) (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 241-242) His answer to the Christological question is a historical Christology. He explains his attraction to this Christological approach in the following terms: "The basic significance of the application of history as a key to the truth of the Chalcedon formulation lies in de-ontologization. Ontological perception and description are replaced by dynamic ones with the concept of becoming as the key, and this becoming filled out by a particular history that is concrete and conflictual." (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 72-73) In other words, the most suitable form of engagement with the Christological question is through a framework that uses historical categories as opposed to metaphysical categories since such a method addresses itself to the conflictual situation that drove him to his Christological reflection in the first place. What is also important to note is that working through the identity of Jesus in historical terms also helped him to respond to the exigencies of selfidentification for black people during apartheid. Additionally, this approach lent itself to an organic identification of Jesus with the oppressed blacks.

Concerning the anthropological question, Mofokeng turns to the insights of Black Consciousness. By his reading, the philosophy of Black Consciousness gave black people diagnostic tools to address their situation of oppression. Black Consciousness represents three things to Mofokeng. First, it represents the birth of the new subject. Second, it represents a critique of conformist action. Third, it represents a critique of theological language. (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 12-16) Of interest here is what he means when he says Black Consciousness represents a critique of theological language. On this matter, he writes:

"Missionary Christianity is accused of having brought the prevailing alienation of the black man and his activity from God and also alienation between God the creator of man and the black man and his society." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 14) This alienation, according to Mofokeng's reading, plays itself out on three fronts. Alienation from history, alienation from culture, and alienation from land. (Mofokeng, 1983, pp. 21-23) This description of the situation of alienation is a response to the "who am I?" aspect of the anthropological question. This response constitutes the diagnostic gesture of the anthropological question. The second aspect, "How can I be liberated to my authentic self?" leads us to the therapeutic gesture of the question. This is where Mofokeng articulates the self-understanding of the black community. A community whose diagnosis involves alienation on all these levels, by Mofokeng's account, "necessitates the inclusion of Black History, Black Culture, and land in Christological reflection as elements that inform the self-understanding of the black community continuously and rapidly transforms its quest as well as enlighten its reading of scripture." (Mofokeng, 1987a, p. 7) The self-understanding that he is proffering here is therapeutic to the extent that it seeks to ameliorate the alienation that was caused by the colonial encounter on all three levels.

Taken all together, Mofokeng's Christology is a theological response to a student movement that was responding to the times, i.e., the Black Consciousness movement. His intervention came from the belief that the faith of the students at the time played a part in the liberative activity they were undertaking. The central question of his Christology indicates this fact. It indicates that he believed that faith in Jesus has the potential to empower those who are engaged in struggle for liberation. Turning to the post-1994 moment, I am also responding to a movement of my time. Like Mofokeng, my response comes out of my firm belief that faith in Jesus has the potential to empower those who are engaged in struggle for liberation. So, I use Mofokeng's Christological framework to articulate a Christian Fallist confessional position. That said, I draw from Fallism to articulate my answer to the anthropological question.

Towards a Christian Fallist Confessional Statement:

What does a Christian Fallist confessional statement look like? First, this confessional statement is a particularising gesture that is meant to work through the above-described antagonism between the identity marker of "Christian" on the one hand, and the marker of "Fallist" on the other. The confessional position is enacted through the dialectical movement between the Christological question and the anthropological question. The Christological side of this hermeneutic of praxis aims to confront and combat the colonial trappings in one's Christian formation. The anthropological side aims to first enact the diagnostic gesture by systematically describing black pain. As a follow up, it then also aims to perform the therapeutic gesture by developing an ameliorative self-understanding from a Fallist perspective. In this situation, it is not so much that we completely drop Mofokeng's framework, but we discuss alienation from history, culture, and land through the concerns of the three pillars of the Fallist framework.

The Christological Question:

In principle, the key motivation for adopting the historical Christological approach is the liberative potential of its underpinning epistemology. Mofokeng describes historical Christology in the following terms: "The historical Jesus referred to is the history of Jesus as depicted in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels and entails the praxis of Jesus of Nazareth. The entire praxis that includes "the person, proclamation, activity, attitudes and death by crucifixion" constitutes the historical Jesus and will be followed as it unfolds "chronologically"." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 70) There are a few things to consider from this description. First, the source material for this approach is the Bible, particularly the New Testament. This is to say, Christian Fallists who want to have a more liberated attachment to their Christian identity need to start by simply reading and acquainting themselves with the Jesus story as it is told in the New Testament. Second, the hermeneutical concern one has in their reading of the Jesus story is the praxis of Jesus. Keep in mind, paying attention to the praxis of Jesus frees the reader from thinking of the life and work of Jesus in metaphysical terms. This is important because metaphysical terms can be alienating due to their use of limit concepts. The issue with limit concepts is that they "are not immediately nor directly perceptible by themselves and are constantly in need of a key that facilitates perception of their meaning because they deal with limit realities." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 69) As such, a reading that focuses on the praxis of Jesus makes it easy to make salient connections between one's lived experience and that of Jesus as narrated by the gospels. Such a reading, by Martin Forrest's assessment, yields an image of "a Gospel which is not only more material but also more political and more explicitly partisan than that of classical Western theologies." (Forrest, 1987, p. 3) The point here is that paying attention to the praxis of Jesus makes explicit the political stakes of his being, ministry and death. Third, one follows the praxis of Jesus chronologically. This is important because it is clear that this is not a hermeneutical task that is only accessible to specialists. As Mofokeng puts it, "There is no attempt here to penetrate behind the gospel accounts of the story about Jesus of Nazareth with the intention of constructing a biography of Jesus that is verifiable by means of tools of historical criticism." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 69) That said, the chronological nature of the reading is a methodological function, and not primarily a feature of hermeneutic accessibility. Following the praxis of Jesus chronologically, draws the reader's attention to the moments of crisis that Jesus experienced, and how these moments caused him to change his praxis in response to the crisis he was faced with. Mofokeng holds that it is important for the reader of this Jesus story to have a clear picture of the contemporary confessional community that they are invested in as they interpret the praxis of Jesus. He reasons that:

> Such a picture is necessary and useful in locating the point and the elements of the epistemological break in the life and praxis of this community. As it shall become clear as we go on, this point of break is connected to a corresponding epistemological crisis in the history of Jesus as a point of entry in its description and intended search for a liberative epistemology.

> In other words, the crisis in the communal life provides an indication of a point of entry into the Christological reflection that has to happen. (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 73)

This is to say, this approach is most enlivening when the reader is embedded within a community that is engaged in liberative praxis and they have a clear understanding of the contradiction that they are faced with in their praxis. That contradiction serves as an entry point into their engagement with the praxis of Jesus. In other words, faith in Jesus can be empowering in struggle if one is able to relate their own praxis to the praxis of Jesus. The answer to the Christological question becomes dynamic since the praxis that is presented in the gospels is evolving in response to the circumstances that Jesus faces. In the case of the Fallists, they can use both the internal and/or external conflicts to enter into and engage the story of Jesus. The dynamic of the conflicts being both internal and external means that the nature of the engagement might be shared by those in the movement, but they can never be identical. For further clarification, let us turn to my articulation of the Fallist answer to the anthropological question.

The Anthropological Question:

As noted above, the anthropological question has two elements: the diagnostic gesture, and the therapeutic gesture. I will describe each of these in turn. The diagnostic gesture is a response to the question, "who am I?". Mofokeng answers this question by describing the situation of alienation of history, culture, and land. A Fallist response to this question repeats this description, but it repeats it with a difference. Black Consciousness brings to our attention the fact that black people are alienated from their own history, and consequently do not know their heroes who are the African kings of the past. Fallism on the other hand, particularly the black radical feminist aspect of Fallism, notes that practices of erasure were not only enacted by colonial forces, they were also enacted by heterosexual men among the oppressed. This is why you find scholars such as Athambile Masola asserting that "I choose a feminist perspective because the nature of resisting erasure is feminist work." (Masola, 2020, p. 44) Black Consciousness highlights the alienation from culture that colonial forces enact by devaluing African culture and marginalising anyone who sticks to their culture. Fallism pushes this description further through Pan-Africanism by drawing attention to the exceptionalism[45] and Afrophobia[46] of black South Africans, and through black radical feminism, by drawing attention to the institutionalisation of patriarchy in African culture.[47] We see how an infusion of the Fallist hermeneutic addresses the limitations that Mofokeng identified in his own Christological framework. Black Consciousness points to the land dispossession of black people and the devastating effects. A womanist critique adds the coefficient of the complicity of black men in the way they perpetuate black woman's further alienated

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[45] (Ahmed, 2020, p. 350)

[46] (Ullrich, 2021, p. 2)

[47] Fundiswa Kobo notes that this patriarchal tendency "undermines the bonds of unity between *egoqweni* and *ebuhlanti*, between *ulwaluko* and *intonjane*, the binary, bifurcated spaces." (Kobo, 2016, p. 5)

relationship to land. It draws attention to the "pervasive attitudes arising from a complex interplay of cultural practices, which have succeeded in dislocating black women from what is perceived to be black men's sites, *ebuhlanti* (kraal), *esuthwini* (initiation school); locating them in culturally designated womanised sites *eziko/egoqweni* (kitchen and household*), ekuzaleni nasekukhuliseni abantwana* (child birth and rearing) in a patriarchal society." (Kobo, 2016, p. 1) Fallism not only resists coloniality, it also resists the androcentric, patriarchal, and transphobic tendencies of the black radical tradition. What shape does a concomitant therapeutic gesture take on?

Keep in mind, the therapeutic element of the anthropological question is "how can I be liberated to my authentic self?" Mofokeng answers this question by articulating a therapeutic self-understanding of the black community. However, in chapter 3, I noted that he opted to further specify which part of the black community he was articulating a therapeutic self-understanding of. Mofokeng explained that "It was a necessary deepening of the concept "black community" whereby this community is named in relation to the primary activity - economic activity that determines its oppression and also serves as a trustworthy criterion of national liberation." (Mofokeng, 1987b, p. 24) It is also important to reiterate that making use of well-reasoned criteria to specify one's interlocutors improves methodological precision. It is on this basis that I identified Christian Fallists as my primary audience. These are interlocutors who are not simply identifiable through their primary activity, being university students, they are also a specific cohort of university students that lived and acted in a specific space and historical period. Their intervention represents an epistemological break in South African sociopolitical discourse. This especially comes to relief when one considers how they broke the spell of the rainbow nation myth.[48] On a personal note, I was in that cohort of university students. So, my lived experience and the development of my political sensibilities are shaped in that very milieu.

What is the resultant therapeutic response to the anthropological question? This response articulates out of the Fallist hermeneutic of positive identification. That is to say, the imagination around being liberated to one's authentic self is predicated on the trifocal decolonial lens of Fallism. It is a three-fold dialectical gesture of the affirmation of blackness, intersectionality, and Pan-Africanism, on the one hand; and a negation of antiblackness, androcentrism/patriarchy/transphobia, and Afrophobia, on the other. This three-fold dialectical gesture engages the questions of history, culture, and land.

Is a Christian Fallist Confessional Statement Possible?

To answer this question, we need to return to the definition of confessional theology that is provided in the previous chapter. "Confessional theology is a local process, one that goes on in concrete historical existing community, where there is a body of received scriptures, and a "confession" or "profession" of

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[48] See the work of (Ahmed, 2019), (Mbongwa & Graham, 2022), and (Naidoo, 2020) for a detailed historical account of this.

inherited and specific beliefs… commonly shared by the community." (Caputo, 2013, p. 69) As noted in the previous chapter, this definition has three salient features. First, confessional theology is a local process. Second, this community has specific inherited beliefs. Third, these beliefs are commonly shared by the community in question. These features can also function as criteria that can help us to answer the question this subsection is concerned with. Let us deal with each criterion in turn.

For reasons that will be evident as the argument unfolds, it is necessary for me to start with the second and third features before discussing the first feature. Does Christian Fallism have specific inherited beliefs? The answer is yes, but in a qualified sense. The clear yes is that politically, all Fallists draw from the same intellectual political traditions: Black Consciousness, black radical feminism, and PanAfricanism. Even if this may be to varying degrees of commitment to each tradition, the nature of Fallism is that it draws from each tradition to make up its three pillars. Keep in mind, the purpose of this confessional space is to facilitate the process of working out religious views with respect to the decolonial project. Considering that Black Consciousness is one of the three pillars of Fallism, it is to be expected that participants in this confessional space will have a sense that developing a liberated religious orientation is part and parcel of the liberatory project. This is, as I have argued above, one of the central tenets of Black Consciousness, a pillar in the Fallist identity and praxis. Second, do Christian Fallists have shared community beliefs? To the extent that all Christian Fallists identify as Fallists, yes, they do have communally shared beliefs. But this is qualified by the fact that Fallists do not come from the same religious tradition, most come from the variety of Christian denominations we find in South Africa, others are Hindu, others Muslim, and yet others (mostly Africans) observe the religious/cultural rites of their ancestors. So really, there are two levels at which Christian Fallists need to work out a religious orientation, there is the process of developing a coherent identity that speaks to their Christian and Fallist identity, which is the intrareligious discourse, then there is the task of working out a cohesive religious discourse with other Fallists that come from different religious backgrounds, which is the interreligious dialogue.

Is a Christian Fallist confessional position local? Of the three criteria, this is the one that proves to be the more complicated one. That said, there are a few things to consider when answering this question. First, what counts as a "concrete historical existing community"?[49] In this instance, what makes the community to be local is the fact that Fallists are a cohort of university students in South Africa who formed concrete existing communities. That is to say, Fallism is local to the extent that there is a specific group of people who formed a concrete community in a specific, but not isolated, historical period.

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[49] (Caputo, 2013, p. 69)

Within these communities, there were people for whom the identity markers of "Christian" on the one hand, and "Fallist" on the other, had an existential hold. That said, the concreteness of this community can still be called into question since there is no Fallist community that concretely exists today in the same way that confessional communities exist. There is no group of people that are actively working to maintain the beliefs, practices, and institutions that would be required to maintain the presence of the Fallist community in the same way that church communities exist. This is where I would suggest that we stretch our understanding of concreteness. Let us consider Khanyisile Mbongwa and Lucy V. Graham's contention that: "Fallism is a radical decolonial movement, an epistemological rupture, that took the form of a series of student protests at universities in South Africa in the years 2015–2017, *but that it cannot be confined to these years or even to this geographical and historical context in its reach and origins*." (Mbongwa & Graham, 2022, p. 180) This contention elaborates on my qualification that Fallism formed within a specific, but not isolated historical period. Mbongwa and Graham explain that their understanding of the origins, morphology, and reach of the Fallist movement cannot be understood in isolated terms. For one thing, before there was the Fallist movement, there were collectives that came before. These collectives are the ones that were thinking about the questions that would later preoccupy the Fallist movement, they also gave precedence to the organisational ethos that the movement had, in terms of them moving in and out of having a leader. They explain that "as soon as a Fallist leader emerged, their position was contested and deconstructed by the movement from within." (Mbongwa & Graham, 2022, p. 180) This permutation of leadership structure leaves us with an important clue about how we can understand what "concreteness" means in the context of the Fallist movement. Mbongwa and Graham make the following suggestion:

> perhaps the strength of collectives, of progressive movements that denounce authoritarian and patriarchal models of leadership, is precisely that they do deconstruct themselves and dissolve, without becoming dictatorships of any kind–but that this is not to say that they disappear.

Rather, in an alternative way of seeing time, they become the forerunners or "ancestors" who pass on the baton of the emancipatory project to future collectives and generations, and who signify in the present those who have struggled in the past, those who have come before, as well as those who will struggle for freedom in the future. (Mbongwa & Graham, 2022, p. 187) Following Mbongwa and Graham's suggestion, I submit that the concretion of a confessional community, in this instance, obtains not as a result of the physical presence of a collective that identifies as Christian Fallists, but from the collective recognition that the material and discursive conditions that necessitated the formation of Fallism still beckon for a continuation of the Fallist praxis. This is to say, my description of a Christian Fallist confessional statement, is not so much a statement of fact, but a prayer for an alternative reality to obtain. So really, what I have been calling Christian Fallist this whole time might come under a different name for a different reason, but it will be characterised by its honouring of the dangerous memory of suffering.

Theopoetics of Fallism: A Circumfession of a Quasi-Community?

So, it seems we have a difficult task set up here. How can one develop a circumfessional orientation to a quasi-confessional statement? What, in this instance, would a radical theologian be radicalising? Keep in mind that, Caputo states that "The historical confessional traditions are where theology is found in *actu exercitu*, in action, in the flesh, and as such they supply the subject matter of radical theology. Without these communities, there would be nothing to *radicalize*, nothing to reflect on and inflect, in short, nothing for radical theologians to *do*." [emphasis original] (Caputo, 2020, p. 6) The short answer is, the gap between the confessional orientation of Christian Fallism and its circumfessional inflection is closer than that of ordinary confessional traditions and their corresponding radicalised modalities.

For this to make sense, we need to keep Caputo's assertion in mind that, radical theology can more accurately be understood as the becoming radical of confessional theology. This section is an attempt to work out a radicalised modality of Christian Fallism. This is to say, I seek to articulate a circumfessional expression of the quasi-confessional statement I have just proffered. To this end, I will start by qualifying the distinction between confessional theology and radical theology. Second, I will name and describe the complications in Fallism and Mofokeng's Christological framework as a way of demonstrating the necessity of the circumfessional expression I will proffer. Lastly, using the hermeneutics of the call, I will apply a rigorous *epoché* to the confessional statement as a means of coming to the circumfessional expression.

Three Qualifications:

Caputo provides a word of caution which indicates his motivation for troubling the distinction between confessional theology and radical theology. He writes: "The first rule in radical thinking is, when you see a distinction, deconstruct it, lest it become a monster." (Caputo, 2020, p. 6) On the face of it, Caputo is speaking against himself here. Why does he make a distinction and then warn us against the very distinction he has made? This is the question we will consider in this subsection. In the introduction of his book *In Search of Radical Theology*, Caputo provides three qualifications that help us to answer the question above.

First, it is necessary to nuance the relationship between confessional theology and radical theology because, "the distinction misleads us into thinking that, since the confessional bodies are concrete, determinate, and historical, radical theology must be abstract, indeterminate, and ahistorical, as if confessional traditions are the existence of which radical theology distils the essence." (Caputo, 2020, p. 6) To the contrary, situatedness is a precondition that allows for the hermeneutical gestures of radical theology to be enacted. Radical theology is shot through with the traces of the confessional tradition it is radicalising. Caputo explains that the hermeneutical task of the radical theologian "demands the most meticulous knowledge of a given tradition, finding tiny crevices and openings in the tradition through which tangled roots can be detected." (Caputo, 2020, p. 7) Put differently, it is not possible to radicalise

a confessional tradition that you have no investment in. The tradition itself provides you with the resources to enact the radicalising gestures of radical theology. One can only know this by being deeply immersed within the tradition.

Second, an understanding of the relationship between confessional theology and radical theology that flows out of the first qualification is that they are distinct but inseparable. In Caputo's words, "the relationship between radical theology and confessional theology is not clear-cut but interactive; it is not binary but circular. Their *re*lation is a *circu*lation, and if we cut of this circulation, they would both turn blue." (Caputo, 2020, p. 7) [original emphasis] On the one hand, radical theology cannot exist on its own, it needs for confessional theology to exist so that it has something to radicalise. On the other hand, in the absence of radical theology, confessional theology would calcify due to the inherent risk of the reification of the dogmatic propositions. So even though Caputo likes to say radical theology has a parasitic relationship to confessional theology, it is actually a symbiotic relationship since the relationship is mutually beneficial to both modalities of doing theology.

Third, Caputo explains that the circulatory relationship between radical theology and confessional theology actually goes beyond the discourse of theology. He writes, "radical theology can be found where the word "theology" is not found at all, in the depth of the so-called "secular" culture. Radical theology is found wherever matters of "ultimate concern" are raised- in art and science, in ethics, politics, and everyday life." (Caputo, 2020, p. 8) In other words, the depth dimension that radical theology is in search of can be found in places that are neither religious nor theological. This is why Caputo goes on to say that another name for radical theology is "secular theology." (Caputo, 2020, p. 8) This study is related to radical theology to the extent that it is in search of a depth dimension in the black experience, particularly the experience of Fallists. Like students in the 1960's and 1970's, my attempt at articulating the Christian Fallist confessional space is an attempt at collapsing the secular/sacred distinction.[50] What better way to do that than through Mofokeng's black Christology, and Caputo's radical theology?

The Case for a Circumfessional Expression:

Now that we have considered the relationship between radical theology and confessional theology, it is fitting that we return to the constitutive elements of the quasi-confessional position that I proffered above. Specifically, I want us to pay attention to the complications in the Fallist hermeneutic and how they relate to the economy of othering in Mofokeng's Christology. The basic intention of this exercise is to demonstrate the need, in specific terms, for articulating a circumfessional expression of the quasiconfessional position I have just proffered.

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[50] For a detailed account of student activities in relation to the secular/sacred distinction, see (Magaziner, 2010, pp. 58-73)

As noted above, the Fallist hermeneutic of identification has two opposing logics that are at play. On the one hand, there is a unifying logic. On the other hand, you have the logic of difference. There are two examples where this tension plays out. First, it is the tension between Black Consciousness /PanAfricanism on the one hand, and black radical feminism on the other. Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness are predicated on the injunction to recognise the importance of a shared identity along the lines of oppression. Black radical feminism, on the other hand, is predicated on the injunction to recognise the specificity of the intersectional experience of the various segments of oppressed communities. Second, there is the example of the distinction between "Biko black" and "black black". This distinction indexes a tension between the pluralist logic that Biko's conception of blackness advances and the particularistic conception of blackness the latter term points to. This tension could be interpreted as simply a theoretical expression of the group tensions that existed in the Fallist movement. There is a case to be made for this, since there is well documented evidence of conflicts arising between groups that represented each of the three pillars of Fallism.[51] However, it is my contention that while indeed there were group tensions, something deeper was going on.

With respect to Mofokeng's Christology, one matter that goes to the heart of the tension in his hermeneutic of identification is the issue of the practical wisdom of knowing when to identify the praxis of liberation with the praxis of Jesus. He identifies two events; one is the event of God's activity in the world. On the other, there is the event of the liberation praxis. Following from the claims and assumptions of his Christology, he argues that there are times where liberation praxis converges with God's activity and other times where they diverge. "This means that there are times and situations when we should speak of an identification and others when we should speak of a separation of God's action of salvation and the oppressed man's fight for liberation." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 199) This assertion indicates that there is a risk that identification will not happen when it is needed and a separation will not occur even when it is needed. This is why he notes that there is a need to exercise caution about how this hermeneutic of identification is deployed. He names this cautious attitude "hermeneutical consciousness." (Mofokeng, 1983, p. 199) What is interesting is that other black theologians show concern around the same issue. The two examples I discuss in chapter 3 being, Boesak's critique of black Christian nationalism and white Christian nationalism, and Mosala's critique of the category of the Word of God among black theologians. The anxieties expressed by these black theologians, and the contestations within the Fallist movement all point to the same problematic. The problem of community.

Considering that the purpose of a confessional statement is to develop a self-understanding of the community of believers, it is fitting that we use this term as an entry point into our exploration of the depth dimension of this problematic. At a roundtable discussion held at Villanova university between

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[51] See (Ahmed, 2019) and (Mbongwa & Graham, 2022) for some accounts of the group tensions I make reference to.

Derrida and a group of scholars, Derrida expressed suspicion to the term "community" and what the term refers to. He noted that community is as dangerous as it is promising. In his commentary on Derrida's sentiments, Caputo points out that something is going on in the term community, he writes: "After all, communio is a word for a military formation and a kissing cousin of the word "munitions"; to have a communio is to be fortified on all sides, to build a "common" (*com*) "defense" (*munis*), as when a wall is put up around the city to keep the stranger or the foreigner out." (Caputo, 1997, pp. 107108) Considering that deconstruction is a radical openness to the wholly other, Derrida cannot be on board with the closedness of the formation that the term community implies. Derrida would probably ask those who advocate for community, what makes you so sure that you building the walls at the right place? What makes you so sure that the foreigner that you keep out is the right one to keep out? If we return to the tensions in the Fallist movement, we note that the competing logics I pointed out tell us something about how a community should be organised. On the one hand, the unifying logic places emphasis on the communitarian ethos, while the logic of difference emphasises individuality. The problem with the logic of unity is that it runs the risk of turning into justification for conservative behaviour. On the other hand, the logic of individuality runs the risk of becoming subjectivistic. Both these run afoul of being essentialist in different ways. This much can be said also about the black Christian nationalism and the white Christian nationalism that Boesak was critical of.

Derrida prefers the word "hospitality" rather than "community", it represents an ethic that shows an openness to the other. Caputo explains:

> Derrida's interest is drawn to the fact that, by virtue of its etymology, the word "hospitality" carries its opposite within itself (that's a surprise!). The word "hospitality" derives from the Latin *hospes*, which is formed from *hostis*, which originally meant a "stranger" and came to take on the meaning of the enemy or "hostile" stranger (*hostilis*), + pets *(potis, pores, potentia)*, to have power. (Caputo, 1997, p. 110)

The etymology of the word points us to the aporetic structure of hospitality. On the one hand, to be the host, to welcome the stranger, is to exercise power. On the other, to be a good host is to make the stranger to feel welcome into your home. In other words, built into this term is a necessarily unbridgeable chasm between the host and the stranger, the host has to retain power to actually be the host, while the stranger has to remain a stranger in order for the situation of hospitality to remain as such. "So, there is always a little hostility in all hosting and hospitality, constituting a certain

"hostil/pitality."" (Caputo, 1997, p. 110) Having considered Derrida's position on the concepts of community and hospitality, what does this tell us about the group dynamic of the Fallist movement? Let us turn our attention to the founding document of the Fallist movement. Our reading of this document will be informed by our concern around the relationship that Fallists had with two groups, white people, and foreign nationals. When discussing the role of white people in the movement, the

Fallists assert, "We support the White Privilege Project and encourage white students to engage with that. They can contribute through conscientising their own community on campus. We also welcome their participation in radical action as a sign of solidarity, so long as that participation takes place on our terms." (RMF, 2015) There are a few things to note about this position. First, they have a clear and strong stance on this matter. Just before articulating this position, they quote Biko at length on the matter of white involvement in black struggle. In a sense, they lean more toward the logic of community. The act of quoting Biko at length just before articulating their stance is tantamount to building a common defense that the term implies. This logic of community is further asserted by the recommendation that white people participate in "their *own community* on campus."[52] Second, even though there is an assertion of the logic of community, the movement also assumes a posture of hospitality when they welcome white involvement on condition that their "participation take place on *our terms*." (RMF, 2015) There is a clear assertion that the black students are the hosts and the white students are the guests. This welcome gesture should be understood as a self-limiting gesture. Caputo explains:

> A host is a host only if he owns the place, and only if he holds on to his ownership, if one limits the gift. When the host says to the guest, "Make yourself at home," this is a self-limiting invitation. "Make yourself at home" means: please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that is not true, this is not your home but mine, and you are expected to respect my property. (Caputo, 1997, p. 111)

What is interesting about the Fallists gesture of hospitality is that they say the quite part out loud. Their invitation to white involvement explicitly states a proviso in the following terms: "so long as that participation takes place on our terms."[53] Where this gesture of hospitality falls apart is in the fact that there is no interest on the part of the students to push past the self-limiting quality of hospitality. Caputo insightfully points out that: "Hospitality really starts to happen when I push against this limit, this threshold, this paralysis, inviting hospitality to cross its own threshold and limit, its own self-limitation, to become a gift beyond hospitality. Thus, for hospitality to occur, it is necessary for hospitality to go beyond hospitality." (Caputo, 1997, p. 111) Throughout the founding document, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the logic of community in relation to white people. And this is for good reason, whiteness is the embodiment of that which oppresses the students. It is the cause of black pain that the Fallists name and describe.[54] That said, there are two voices that contest this logic of community: the black radical feminist voice, and more importantly, the African foreign national's voice. We have already discussed above how the black radical feminist voice contests the androcentric, patriarchal, and

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[52] (RMF, 2015)
[53] (RMF, 2015)
[54] Students assert: "At the root of this struggle is the dehumanisation of black people at UCT. This dehumanisation is a violence exacted only against black people by a system that privileges whiteness" (RMF, 2015)

transphobic aspects of this logic of community. With respect to this critique, I argue that it instructively sheds light on the dangers of the self-gathering logic of identity. Even though the walls are built to keep the enemy/stranger out, the ultimate victims of these walls are not the whites they are meant to keep out, but the women and queer members of the community.

Furthermore, the dangers of the logic of community are seen in what happens when there is a vulnerable group that is kept out. This is where the voice of the African foreign national needs to be centred. First, the conspicuous absence of the voice of the African foreign national in Fallist discourse is noteworthy. This calls back to Brian Kamanzi's concerns around the South African exceptionalism of the Fallists discussed above. Kamanzi asks, "if decolonisation and Pan-Africanism are so important to the present struggle, then *why have we collectively not made efforts to include the rapidly growing communities of Africans, from outside South Africa into the debates* about and conceptualisation of what inclusive education could look like?" (Kamanzi cited in Ahmed, 2019, p. 349) Serah Namulisa Kasembeli provides one of the most cogent responses to this question. Drawing from her own lived experience as an African foreign national who lived through the Fallist moment, she parses through the contradiction of the Fallists claiming Pan-Africanism as one of their central pillars and yet non-South African blacks not having a space in this discourse. Kasembeli points out that Fallists draw inspiration from the antiaparthied resistance tradition and Pan-African solidarity. On the face of it, one would assume that this would lead to Fallists making connections between the experience of black pain due to white supremacy that they experience and the Afrophobic attacks that African foreign nationals experienced. She observed that, "The Fallist movements' location and focus was the nation state, despite the students' deployment of Pan-Africanist thought and scholars to draw the energy for their activism." (Kasembeli, 2020, p. 326) This adds weight to Masixole Mlandu's concern that the Pan-Africanist outlook of Fallism is beset with the problem of South African exceptionalism. That said, this is the benign side of the problem. If that is all there was to it, one could simply look at this and conclude that it as either an oversight or an antinomy that requires some discussion to be resolved. The issue is that this is not the end of the story; Kasembeli further points out the dark side of this problem. She recounts that the period when Fallism came into vogue, the country also saw a spike in xenophobic attacks, and she recalls how some segments of the Fallist resistance to white supremacy was somehow entangled with the xenophobic imagination. (Kasembeli, 2020, p. 326) She noted how for instance the students borrowed talking points from the xenophobic discourse in order to make their points about their experience of oppression. She makes an example of how some factions deployed this rhetoric in the #EndOutsourcing debates. Talk of foreign nationals coming to take South Africans' jobs formed part of the discussion. The most damning part is that xenophobia was actually revealed to be Afrophobia. She observed that:

> *the outsourcing debate would not touch foreign white nationals* and workers, but only black
> Africans from the rest of the continent. In this way, xenophobia among the South African public

made evident the layers of racism aimed at the black African Other that existed in the wake of and *within these Fallist movements*. (Kasembeli, 2020, pp. 326-327)

Kasembeli's story reveals the thorniest fact that Fallists need to confront; that is, the logic of community they set up as a way of keeping whites out and blacks within is taking place within an invisible and unstated boundary that excludes the African foreign nationals. So, in a self-defeating slight of hand, the logic of interiority and exteriority that the Fallists set up by placing black people within and white people outside falls apart. Except it falls apart in the worst way possible. The black foreign nationals become the biggest victims of the logic of community that they deploy. And embarrassingly, the white foreign nationals (a group that is ostensibly the enemy/stranger in this dynamic) benefit from this logic of community.

The above discussion demonstrates why the logic of community is problematic in the context of the Fallist movement. It is my contention that without delving too deeply into Mofokeng's Christological framework, one can safely argue that his concept of "black community" breaks down at the same points that the Fallist logic of community does. The only thing I will do to gesture toward my point is to direct our attention to a comment he makes about who his primary interlocutor is. He writes: "[t]he interlocutor of classic theology is an individual modern man (bourgeois) or a collective of modern men who have come of age. In Black Christology as in Black Theology the one whose questions and concerns are given priority is the black community which is struggling to remove all the obstacles which prevent it from coming of age in its own way." (Mofokeng, 1987a, p. 7) Where the Fallists use clear and stark terms, Mofokeng uses subtle terms to create a similar logic of interiority and exteriority. This is evinced by the need he feels to address the issues that he runs into around who his interlocutor is. His reflections in a subsequent article in the same year show that he sees the leaks in his thinking. Specifically, he identifies problems with his notion of the black community's relationship with ancestors, class, and gender. [55] To circle back to Derrida's conversation, "a "community" is subject to the same "selflimitation" as "hospitality," and, like the word "hospitality," carries within its etymology its own opposite. For the harmony and peace of community depends upon having adequate "munitions" (*munio*, *munitio*) and a readiness for war." (Caputo, 1997, p. 113) Just like the situation of the Fallists, the problem with the concept of community is not so much that it excludes or includes the wrong people. Rather, it is the very fact that it depends upon the logic of community in the first place. In the cases of both the Fallists and Mofokeng, there is an unguarded acceptance of the logics of community that make otherwise liberative constructs to become oppressive in their own right.

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[55] I discuss these issues at length in chapter 3.

Towards a Circumfessional Christian Fallism:

So, where to from here? How can one draw on their Fallist commitments and their Christian commitments without running afoul of the logics of community? To answer the question, we need to return to the matter of reporting back which we introduced in chapter 4. Our engagement with reporting back has to take into account the part where Caputo troubles the distinction between confessional theology and radical theology. If radical theology is the becoming radical of confessional theology, then it means the question of reporting back also requires the same nuance. Caputo's initial gesture is that he describes the task of reporting back in the following terms:

> the premise that theology always "reports back" to the religious community is repeated with a difference in radical theology. This time the religious community is a "community without community," that is, one that is completely open-ended, since what the radical theologian has to say is addressed *in principle* to anyone willing to listen, with or without a confessional affiliation, anyone at least who is not stampeded by the word "theology," as most philosophers are. (Caputo, 2013, p. 70) [my emphasis]

But this is not the end of the story, if the initial gesture is meant to introduce a distinction between the reporting back of confessional theology and radical theology, he then immediately troubles this distinction. For one thing, a "completely open-ended" community is a contradiction in terms, it needs qualification. I italicized the phrase "in principle" to signal that Caputo adding this subtle qualification reminds the reader that one cannot, in theory or in practice, theologize purely in a radicalised modality. We must keep the circulatory relationship between confessional and radical theology in mind here. In the words of Caputo, radical theologians "are always already in the middle of some confessional community and *a complex of other communities*… we too have a community or meta-community to report back to, from which we are seeking "authentication," and we submit to a vast and complex system of protocols and censorship, just like everybody else." (Caputo, 2013, p. 71) This explains why it was necessary to start by articulating the confessional position of Christian Fallism. A confessional position which I immediately turned around and problematised and am now articulating a circumfessional orientation towards.

First, it is because any theological activity, radical or confessional, is happening in response to some confessional community, acknowledged or not. In this instance, I locate the confessional community I am interested in engaging within the Fallist movement. This brings us to the second point. I italicized the phrase "a complex of other communities" because it helps explain why I did not choose a specific denomination as my primary interlocutors. I chose Christian Fallists because that is a community that lies at the intersection of several communities in the meta-community called South Africa that I am embedded within. In a sense, South Africa is the community that I am seeking authentication from; not

because I seek to essentialise the colonial borders that we were bequeathed with, but because it is a construction which has material effects on many people, and I seek to participate in the liberative activity that Fallism bookmarks. Third, I engage with the Fallist community because South Africa, as a meta-community, is too much of an abstraction for the circumfessional orientation I am proposing to inhabit. Relatedly, within this meta-community, there are other communities that have formed which I outright disagree with. A prime example of this is Operation Dudula and their online #PutSouthAfricaFirst campaign. They take the most problematic aspects of the logic of community and lean into that. The logic of community they articulate magnifies the "Heideggerian *Heim-lichkeit*"[56] which leads to the most gruesome violence post-1994 South Africa has seen.[57] I therefore have to specify which community within this meta-community I choose to speak from so that I can then articulate the circumfessional orientation towards that community as a way of being faithful to that which the community stands for. Put differently, I am choosing a confessional container so that I can push against the limits of that very confessional container. I am attempting to "*cultivate* (*colere*) a culture of self-differentiation, of differing with itself, where "identity" is an effect of difference, rather than cultivating "colonies" (also from colere) of the same in a culture of identity which gathers itself to itself in common defense against the other."[58] So what does this look like? The circumfessional orientation that I am proposing here "produces something of a double effect on confessional theology…"[59] that is, displacement and affirmation.

When one assumes a circumfessional disposition towards a given confessional tradition, displacement takes place to the extent that one points to the constructedness and historical contingency of the beliefs, practices, and institutions of a given confessional community. It is to insist upon the "radical contingency of any historical tradition as an effect of the play of traces… [to take] beliefs and practices to be relatively stable and hence relatively unstable, and provisional unities of meaning inscribed in *différance*…" (Caputo, 2013, p. 73) This is to acknowledge that the meaning making structures that one inhabits do not give them privileged access to ultimate truth. It is to understand that if my tradition is an effect of the play of traces, then my tradition is liable to change, to reconfigure, to reconstitute as a result of the play of traces over time. Hermeneutically, it means that a circumfessional engagement with a confessional tradition takes place in the act of de-sedimenting the cluster of meanings and significations that accumulate over time in the beliefs, practices, and institutions of a given tradition. The purpose of this displacement is to demystify the tradition and to create an opening to the depth

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[56] (Caputo, 1997, p. 115)

[57] Bastien Dratwa explains that this movement predicates it identity on a two-fold narrative: the narrative of the harmfulness of Pan-Africanism, and the narrative of the future enslavement of the children of South Africans by African immigrants. (Dratwa, 2023)

[58] Here I am borrowing from (Caputo, 1997, p. 115)

[59] (Caputo, 2013, pp. 75-76)

dimension of that which the tradition was responding to. In other words, a circumfessional engagement with belief is a situation where "one inhabits the belief *as if not…*" (Caputo, 2013, p. 79) It is to engage with belief under erasure. This is what it means to practice a rigorous *epoche* on belief. In the words of Caputo, "We suspend the comforts of the community of inherited beliefs (*croyances*)—we have them as if we have them not—in order to release the event of faith (*foi*)." (Caputo, 2013, p. 80) This is to say, a circumfessional engagement with the two identity markers; "Christian" and "Fallist" would firstly recognise the constructedness and historical contingency of these identities. Out of recognition of this fact, one would relate to the community without essentialising the beliefs and practices of the community nor essentialising their membership in the community. The point of such a disposition is not antagonism but rather to be receptive to the event that is harboured in that which the community constructs their meaning-making structures and strategies around. This is where affirmation takes effect.

Affirmation in this instance comes in the form of cultivating a disposition of openness to the event. This means cultivating openness to what is going on in what is happening (the Deluzean sense of event), and openness to that which is completely outside the horizon of our expectations (the Derridean sense of event). Methodologically, this openness to the event is cultivated through the hermeneutics of the call. To understand what this means, let us turn to Caputo for explanation:

> We might say, using an expression of Husserl's, that both the first-order creedal beliefs and practices as well as the second-order theological reflection that goes on within the confessions together belong to a common theological "natural attitude" or naive belief in the confessional body, to a straightforward "doxic" attitude toward its founding sources. (Caputo, 2013, p. 83)

So, if the first order religious operations (creedal beliefs and practices), and the second order religious operation (confessional theological reflection) belong to the natural attitude, where does that put the circumfessional orientation proposed above? Caputo concisely answers this question by saying, "the work of radical theology is to "think" (used as a transitive verb) the event, to explicate the more radical faith (*foi*) in the event that is taking plaice in what is happening in the historically constituted and existing traditions of belief." (Caputo, 2013, p. 83) The clearest explanation of what it means to think the event is found in the introduction of his *In Search of Radical Theology*. In this book, Caputo introduces heuristic devices that are meant to explain, in specific terms, how one would go about cultivating an openness to the event. Even though he takes recourse to Husserlean phenomenology to explain this, he does caution the reader that the "theological reduction is not, as in Husserl, a purely methodological bracketing, an *epoché*. That temporarily and provisionally neutralizes the "natural attituded" … The reduction is a genuine setting aside of a misunderstanding, really suspending a distortion, … not to serve a temporary, provisional, and merely methodological purpose." (Caputo, 2020, p. 16) Keep in mind that the reason why we cultivate an openness to the event is because the name of God is the name of a call, and the identity of the source of this call is hidden. Furthermore, "the

hiddenness of the source is actually *constitutive* of the call, part of its phenomenal makeup, a positive function of its weak force…" (Caputo, 2006, p. 114) This is to say, each reduction we discuss here is a conceptual operation that helps to maintain a circumfessional disposition to a particular confessional tradition. So, what are these reductions?

The first reduction Caputo identifies is suspension of the supernatural signified. This reduction involves letting go of the belief that there is an agent that can suspend the laws of physics in order to perform magical acts. On the other hand, it is a firm rejection of crude naturalism. (Caputo, 2020, pp. 16-17) Rather it is to be admitted into the depth dimension of the stories that narrate supernatural events, it is to adopt a poetic understanding of the world. This reduction helps to prevent reification since one has to continuously cultivate an openness to the phenomenologically disclosive potential of these supernatural portrayals. Second, he describes the theopoetic reduction. If you suspend the supernatural signified, then the language used to discuss the phenomenon in question needs to undergo the same kind of phenomenological reduction. Since language to discuss the supernatural signified operates on logic, we turn away from logic to poetics. In Caputo's words: "[w]e cease making theological claims and enter the order of being claimed by something for which we lack the concepts, propositions, and proofs of logic, something that is neither logical nor illogical because it is pre-logical." (Caputo, 2020, p. 17) Third, he introduces the reduction of belief. The easiest way to understand this reduction is to see it as a type of suspension of disbelief. When reading or watching fiction, one needs to suspend their disbelief to what is happening on screen or on the page. That is the best way to be affected by the story. Similarly, one needs to suspend belief for one to be affected by that which is going on in the beliefs and practices of a given tradition. In Caputo's words "[t]he bracketing of belief is accompanied by a suspension of disbelief, in order to release or clear the way for a deeper faith in the event." (Caputo, 2020, p. 18)

Fourth, he names the reduction of religion. This reduction obtains the moment one understands that religion is the institutionalisation of the beliefs and practices people develop as they engage with matters of ultimate concern. To understand religion in these terms also reveals to us that religion is one of many mechanisms that one can use to engage matters of ultimate concern. A reduction of religion "releases a proto-religion of the call, an Ur-religion not confined to a particular sector of the culture called religion, a "religionless" religion." (Caputo, 2020, p. 18) This reduction is a collapsing of the distinction between the secular and the sacred. The fifth reduction he identifies is the theistic reduction. This is where one makes the turn from thinking about God in ontological terms to thinking about God in phenomenological terms. This is to say, when one thinks of God, they do not think of an entity, but they think of a call. When the theist and the atheist debate about the existence of God, the response of a person who has enacted the theistic reduction is to say, "that is beside the point." In this orientation, the name of God is an invitation to act out that which is called for by the name of God. "The result of this reduction is not a simple atheism, although a certain atheism about this Superbeing is sine qua non."

(Caputo, 2020, p. 19) The six reduction is the political reduction. This reduction is a disruption of the two-worlds theory. This reduction contests the Augustinian claim that there is a city of God and a city of man. A world of eternity and a world of time. This reduction cultivates openness to the event to the extent that it "implies a reduction of eternity to time, and a further reduction of nostalgic time, dreaming of the past to prophetic time, dreaming of the justice-to-come, the theopoetic time of new being, the year of the Jubilee." (Caputo, 2020, p. 19) This reduction requires justice now, freedom now, liberation now, salvation now. It reveals the political valences of the event.

Conclusion:

Like the apartheid era, post-1994 South Africa is in crisis, and this crisis has casualties. In Mofokeng's time, Black Consciousness and black theology articulated this crisis through the black experience. In post-1994 South Africa, there are some analytical parameters that have changed so that the black experience is not simply that of being the oppressed pure and simple. We live under a black-led regime, this means that we need to analyse the situation with a critical lens.

In this chapter, I have proffered a post-1994 answer to the central question of Takatso Mofokeng's Christology. That is, "how can faith in Jesus Christ empower black people who are involved in the struggle for their liberation?" (Mofokeng, 1983, p. x) To do this, I conceptually situated this study within the Fallist tradition and I charted the conceptual contours of Fallism. I then argued that Fallism can never reach its fullest philosophical expression unless it answers questions around religiosity. Based on that argument, I then framed my intervention as a response to Biko's call for the development of black theology. I identified Mofokeng as the primary interlocutor in my response. Using Fallist philosophy, I then articulated a confessional space which contextualised the answers to the Christological and anthropological questions so that they speak to the exigencies of the black experience(s) in post-1994 South Africa. That said, I problematised the confessional position that I just proffered to demonstrate the necessity of articulating a circumfessional orientation to that very confessional position. Having done so, I then articulate the circumfessional orientation which problematizes the notion of community.

So why does this circumfessional orientation to Christian Fallism matter? It matters for three reasons. First, in keeping with the black theologians and radical theologians before me, I thought it important to collapse the secular sacred distinction. Where black theology did this by invoking African culture and showing that the category of religion breaks down when applied to African life, radical theology argues that the depth dimension that religious and theological discourse is search of can be found in other discourses that are neither religious nor theological. In some sense this study is a critique to the selfsecularising tendency found in the Fallist movement, and the post-1994 black radical tradition generally. In short, religiosity is a key aspect of any praxis of liberation. In my case, I follow Caputo's lead with his articulation of a religion without religion.

Second, Christian Fallism is a demonstrative case that the anxiety around the continued relevance of black theology is not necessary. One thing that we do need to do is to become clearer about the black experience that we are engaging when we theologise. If we are not precise, what happens is that we either come up with exclusionary conceptions of blackness or we use it as a catchall phrase for an illdefined group. That said, our pursuit of clarity should not lead us into the logics of community, because that tends to have potentially dangerous consequences. All this to say, a circumfessional orientation to this confessional engagement can help to lead to hermeneutically credible outcomes.

Third, there is a range of questions that our historical moment is raising, and the ability to recognise the problem space we are in and to speak to the pressing issues in this problem space is of utmost importance. A willingness to embrace the concrete conditions one is in and to engage with them through a specific tradition is indispensable, but this must be done with the required suspension of the natural attitude. To this end, I believe that Christian Fallism has the requisite particularising gesture and epoché.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study was my attempt at working through an identity crisis that I began to experience in my undergraduate training. I became aware of the historical contingency of the doctrines I was confessionally formed in. This shook my confidence in my self-understanding as a Christian. I also encountered people who were much more in touch with their cultural identities, and it led me to ask questions and make decisions that would help me to get the cultural formation that my family and community were not equipped to give me. The net result of this metamorphosis is that it deepened my identity crisis. I felt an intractable tension between my Christian identity (which was shaken) and my cultural identity (which was also shaken).

My engagement with Fallism and Mofokeng's work helped me to come to a more coherent self-understanding which speaks to my cultural identity and my Christian identity but also to my commitment to liberative praxis. My engagement with radical theology on the other hand, has helped me to come to appreciate the historical contingency of the constitutive elements of my identity. It also helped me to see relative stability, and by extension the relative instability of the configuration of this identity. This has led me to the point of seeing the importance of and adopting a circumfessional orientation to the identity markers I have and their related communities. Even though the motivations of this study are deeply personal, I believe that they are relevant to other young black South Africans like me. We still need to develop theological language that can help us address issues of gender-based violence, xenophobia, the complicity of the black petit bourgeois' complicity in the oppression of black in South Africa today. The global relevance of thinking through matters of identity are also evinced by the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people.

All things being equal, this study has some limitations. The most significant limitation comes from my choice to not develop the Mofokengean supplement that I discuss in chapter 2. Keep in mind, radical theology's supplement of black theology's hermeneutic of positive identification is complemented by the Mofokengean supplement. This supplement consists in the particularising gesture which pushes the nascent political implications of Caputo's theology to becoming a more worked out political theology; one that has contextual relevance to South Africa. Given the scope of my study and the concerns I approached Mofokeng's Christology with, I saw it fitting that I work out only one point of contact so that the study maintains focus. The other two areas of contact that Ullrich proposed call for further research. Much can be said about the problem of theodicy in Mofokeng's theology and black theology generally. There is

also something interesting that can be discussed around the value of the particularising gesture that black theology brings to the table.

Another limitation of this study is that it does not do much about Biko's programmatic invitation to the development of black theology. A more systematic engagement with the religious elements of Biko's thought are necessary. This remains a gap in the discourse that needs to be addressed. Third, Fallism is not the only discourse that caused an epistemological break in South African political discourse. Abahlali base Mjondolo had been doing the work of problematising the rainbow nation discourses a decade before the Fallists came to the scene. My choice to focus on Fallism is more biographical than anything else. The Fallist movement is the movement that brought me to political consciousness. This is because the movement came into vogue at the same time that I came of age, and I was completing my undergraduate studies. I note this limitation just to say that the insights of this study can be brought to bear on other movements of liberation in South Africa.

Given all these limitations, the study did have something to say. First, this study has made the case for a critical engagement between black theology and radical theology. I offer historical arguments and epistemological arguments. Second, this study sought to demonstrate the continued relevance of Mofokeng's theology specifically and black theology generally. The relevance is not so much argued for but demonstrated by theologising with black theology in post-1994 South Africa. Third, this study introduced a hermeneutical orientation that organically fits with black theology in the form of radical theology. The compatibility is most clearly seen in the mutual interest that these two theological traditions have on the matter of troubling the secular/sacred distinction. Fifth, my study places emphasis on the importance of being connected to a confessional community but making sure that that your connection to a confessional community recognises the historical contingency of the community, and its beliefs and practices. I discuss in specific terms how the hermeneutics of the call help one to enact the above discussed circumfessional orientation.

All in all, this study has made a theological contribution to the discourse of Fallism. It did so by showing that the invocation of Black Consciousness left a gap in the discourse of Fallism because no one took up Biko's call to develop a theological language that corresponds to the praxis of liberation you subscribe to. In this case Fallism did not have this theological language and my study is an initial contribution to this discursive measure. Second, my study took up the suggestion that Calvin Ullrich makes that there is a potentially fruitful discursive contact that can take place between Mofokeng and Caputo. My study works out the theoretical

implications of this suggestion. It also shows that there is still more work to be done. Third, my study was also an attempt to show that the best way to make the case for the continued relevance of black theology is not to defend it but to just do black theology in a way that speaks to contemporary issues.

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