

Jesus Christ asks his disciples the question, “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15). It might be tempting to rush towards an answer without honoring the very asking of the question in the first place. This question is an invitation to all people confessing to a faith in Jesus to answer for ourselves. This question is posed by Jesus himself, beckoning us to construct an answer that is contextual to our lives. Thus, to believe in Jesus is to believe in a Redeemer who is curious enough to ask big questions and capacious enough to celebrate many responses. That is what we have been doing all semester, after all, examining the ways that theologians from all over the world respond to Jesus’ question in their own context. And now it is time to do this ourselves.

I believe that Jesus Christ is a liberative Redeemer on the move. In my own context, as a white woman from the Southern United States, I am steeped in a culture and history defined by white supremacy.¹ This ideology, which has supported the enslavement of Black people and then perpetuated state-sanctioned violence against Black people as well as people of color, is a deep-rooted sinfulness, one that cannot be ignored or even escaped as it continues to permeate the United States to this day. Yet, Jesus Christ meets me here. Ignacio Ellacuría writes that “we should acknowledge a trans-historic dimension in Jesus’ activity, as we should acknowledge it in his personal biography, but this trans-historic dimension will only be real if it is indeed trans-history, that is, if it goes through history.”² Jesus moves across time and through history to meet me where I am, within the painful systems that oppress in my context. Christ meets me

¹ I would like to lean on Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes definition of white supremacy. She says, “But racism is not about our feelings. Nor is it about the attitudes, intentions, or behavior of individuals. Racism is an interlocking system of oppression that is designed to promote and maintain White supremacy, the notion that White people—including their bodies, aesthetics, beliefs, values, customs, and culture—are inherently superior to all other races and therefore should wield dominion over the rest of creation, including other people groups, the animal kingdom, and the earth itself.” Dr. Walker-Barnes reminds us that white supremacy is much more than individual behaviors or attitudes but is systemic and perpetuated at both individual and collective levels. This quote is from Dr. Walker-Barnes’ book *I Bring the Voices of My People: A Womanist Vision for Racial Reconciliation*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 43.

² Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Crucified People,” *Mysterium Liberationis*, 590.

both within the systems that I participate in, however unwillingly, that benefit me as well as systems that are oppressive to me based on my gender.

Yet, Jesus Christ creates liberative possibilities through redemption for all people because what is ultimately true is that when the oppressed are freed, the oppressors are freed and redeemed from their sinfulness as well. In order for the redemptive work of Jesus to be liberative to all, “the thread of discourse is not ‘sin - offense - victim - expiation - forgiveness’” because this leaves the work of Christ at a confiningly individual level. This understanding as the only way that Jesus redeems “may turn into an evasion of what must be done in history in order to eliminate the sin of the world.”³ For Jesus Christ to be the liberative Redeemer on the move, his work must be understood as able to meet us in our time and place as well as seeing sin as something that exists on a collective level as well as individual.

However, to forget the individual dimension of sin would “leave the field open to the forces of oppression, which are overwhelmingly dominant in our world, and it would also neglect the area of personal conversion.”⁴ This personal conversion, or willingness to change in the midst of oppressive structures in order to challenge those structures, is crucial in my understanding of my context. In Peter Phan’s reading of Jung Young Lee in his article “Jesus the Christ with an Asian Face,” he describes Lee’s use of the *I Ching* to construct a portrait of “Jesus-Christ as the Perfect Realization of Change.”⁵ In this theology, incorporating philosophical principles from the *I Ching*, “Christ as the Savior is understood in relation to the notion of sin. For Lee, sin consists in the desire to be rather than to become, that is, unwillingness to change... To be saved or to accept Christ as the Savior, then, means that we

³ Ellacuría, 588.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Peter C. Phan, “Jesus the Christ with an Asian Face,” 411.

must accept change.”⁶ Thus, Christ’s redemptive work comes in freeing me from being stuck in the quicksand of white supremacy and makes it possible to *become* a new creation through change. While white supremacy remains woven into the fabric of the culture of the United States, I am able to change my thoughts and actions to be counter to this oppressive and sinful force.

This acceptance of change and willingness to become a new creation means that in honoring the redemptive work of Jesus, we need to also honor our interconnectedness to all of creation. Kwok Pui-lan’s feminist ecological model for Christology reimagines how sin and redemption meet “for sin is more than the disobedience or egotism of human beings, but has a cosmological dimension as well.”⁷ This gives further ground to build on when constructing Jesus’ power of redemption to work at all levels of Creation. Jesus Christ the liberative Redeemer on the move, is concerned with the individual, the communal, the systemic, and the cosmological. Much like Ellacuría’s understanding of the trans-historic dimension of Jesus’ redemptive work, this cosmological dimension continues to deepen the picture of a Christ that is risen, a Jesus on the loose in every time and place, concerned with every creature, person, and blade of grass.

In this cosmological understanding of Christ Jesus, “salvation entails right relationship with one another, caring for the planet, compassion for the weaker links in the chain of life, while constantly remembering that human beings are part of nature and the natural process.”⁸ This is a reordered world, and we are redeemed in order to become aware of our interconnectedness with one another and all of Creation. Christ is risen, doing this liberatory work across and throughout history. Systems built on the power of few and oppression of many,

⁶ Phan, 413.

⁷ Kwok Pui-lan, “Christology,” *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*, 91.

⁸ Pui-lan, 93.

and the ideologies that support them, such as white supremacy, cannot stand in the face of this kind of redemption. Jesus, in the life he lived, gives us examples of how to embrace and be instruments of his redemptive grace in the here and now. Jesus Christ, in his death, exposes these oppressive systems for the human-created horrors that they are. Christ Jesus, in his resurrection, frees us from our own isolating behaviors and our collective participation in death-dealing structures.

Who do I say that Jesus Christ is? Jesus Christ is my liberative Redeemer on the move. He meets me where I am, calling me into a new way of being in the context that I live in. Through him, I am changed in thought and action, ready to repent, and called to challenge oppressive structures and dangerous ideologies. Through him, I know that other people's minds, hearts, and actions can be changed as well. Through him, I am made new in my connection to every nook and cranny of Creation. This liberative and redeeming grace is a gift and a call to continue to change, grow, and extend that grace in every direction that I turn.