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Jesus Is a Black Woman: The Implications of Intersectionality on Christology

Introduction: The Problem

Jesus: Particular and Universal

Jesus Christ existed in a particular context, but is said to be the universal savior of humanity. This paradoxical conception of Jesus quickly complicates the ways that people interpret his life, teachings, death, and resurrection and what that means both for themselves and their in-group as well as others and other groups. Jesus was a Middle Eastern Jewish man who lived in the early first century AD. He was born in Bethlehem and was raised in Nazareth. He lived during the Roman Empire's occupation of his home and interacted regularly both with the political systems of the Jewish people as well as the Roman government. Jesus was immersed in very specific social contexts, and this is evident in the portrayal of Jesus in the four canonical gospel accounts. Jesus was a specific man in a specific context.

In contrast, Jesus is proclaimed to be the true human and the savior of all humanity. In fact, Jesus is said to be the human embodiment of Yahweh God, who was born and died as a human in order to atone for the sins of humanity. As humanity is made in God's image, so too is Jesus; as Jesus claimed to be God, so too is humanity made in the image of Jesus. This presents a problem: if Jesus was a Jewish man who lived in the Middle East in the first century, how is he to represent all of humanity? How can his particularity in the form of his human body, bound by time and space, be made universal?

This paper will explore the dynamics of this particular and universal Christ through the framework of race and sex. It will contrast dominant Christologies with Christologies articulated by Black women within the tradition known as Womanist theology and explore the concept of intersectionality. It highlights the ways that the dominant Christologies have historically facilitated and maintained the oppression of Black women by erasing their experiences. It then discusses the main claims of Womanist Christology and the way that it centers Black women's experiences in order to conceptualize Jesus in a way that remains true to their unique identity. This essay discusses the work of Jacquelyn Grant in her book *Black Women's Christ and White Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* in conversation with the works of other Womanist theologians and scholars Mitzi J. Smith, A. Elaine Crawford, and Katie Cannon as well as Kimberlé Crenshaw's development of the concept of intersectionality. Finally, it concludes by broadening its focus to apply this concept to Jesus in a way that explores the interplay between his particularity and his universality.

Jesus as Male

For most of Church history, the person and theology of Jesus Christ has been defined by the dominant group; namely, White Catholic and Protestant men. Therefore, the prevailing Christology was biased toward men and their experiences. As Grant puts it, white men have "defined" Jesus "within the narrow parameters of the male consciousness" (Grant 64). Not only is Christ defined within this male point of view, but it also asserts "the Euro-American religious experience as the norm," committing a "substantial omission of African American sacred rhetoric from theological discourse" (Cannon 175–176). These frameworks are extremely limited as they disregard "the pluralistic nature of New Testament Christologies" in favor of one singular (oppressive) Christology (Crawford 216). Karen Trimble Alliaume, Lewis University Professor

of Theology and Women's Studies, discusses this oppressive Christology through the idea of "citations' of Jesus," asserting that this idea is only one iteration of who humanity sees Jesus to be, but it has taken on such a "repetitive nature" so as to "build up over time to present the appearance of solidity, of 'truth'" (Alliaume 203). Through this mechanism, White men have dominated the narrative of who Jesus Christ is and have eliminated the possibility of a viable other option.

This way of approaching Christology allows White men to pick and choose the aspects of Christ that are essential to his humanity in order to benefit them. For example, the Catholic tradition has historically maintained that the priest must be a man because Jesus was a man "because he in fact represents Christ" (Grant 25). Grant explains that in this view, "Women do not represent that image" and that this is "non-negotiable" (78). However, the priest does not have to be ethnically Jewish as Jesus was, nor must the priest be between the ages of thirty and thirty-three, as Jesus was during his ministry. The facets of Jesus' humanity related to his ethnicity and his age are not relevant to the ability of a human to represent him, but the fact of Jesus' physical appearance as a male human *is* relevant to this representation.

As such, proponents of Jesus' masculinity as essential to his humanity systematically exclude women from exercising authority and leadership in a role that represents Jesus to others. Many traditions other than Catholicism have historically excluded women from these positions. For example, women have largely been barred from participating in Clergy (Grant 30) and in seminary contexts and discourse (Grant 36–37). This Christology of Jesus as an essentially male savior to all of humanity is used to justify a view of women as lesser humans. This assertion is powerful because it bears "historical, biblical, and theological justifications" to make sure that "women are systematically excluded from positions of leadership" (Grant 75). If the male Jesus

is the true human and the human embodiment of God, then God is also essentially male. Genesis does assert that God created male and female both in His image, but when God came to earth as a human, he came as a male. Because of Jesus' maleness, men are the truer images of God, while women are less able to represent God. Jesus came to save all of humanity, but only men are able to receive the authority that Jesus has given to his followers.

Feminist Christologies

In response to this oppressive Christology emerged new feminist Christologies. These frameworks sought to answer the question posed by Grant, "If it is primarily the male Jesus which has been used as the criterion for oppressing women, can women look to this same male Jesus as the source of their salvation?" (Grant 78). A wide range of frameworks answer this question in different ways. Jacquelyn Grant outlines three different feminist approaches to Christology. One says that the male Jesus was a proponent of women's rights and dignity, and that through his life and ministry, Jesus elevated the status of women. This biblical feminism verifies the Bible as the central source of Christology; everything the gospels say about Jesus is the truth, and those gospels say that Jesus is a feminist (Grant 91–114). Another framework says that Jesus did elevate women, but we do not have to only look to Jesus in order to see the role that women have in being the image of God. In fact, feminists "must look to the experiences of women to find other possible paradigmatic figures in order that women and men are liberated" (Grant 145). This liberationist feminism asserts that "Jesus... functions to free us from the bondage of oppression and the sins of inequality leading to a life in freedom" (Grant 126). Finally, there are some that say that the male Jesus is irredeemable. Since Jesus was male, and since he has been a vessel for the oppression of women, "this functionally impotent Christ"

cannot be a savior for women, and “must be discarded” (Grant 164). Feminist Christologies focus on women’s experiences and the various ways in which they can interact with Jesus Christ.

These frameworks fall short in representing Jesus to women because they are all undeniably White. The feminist movement as a whole and feminist Christologies in particular have been led by White women and centered “almost exclusively to White women’s experience,” assuming that their experiences will apply universally to all women (Grant 195). From the biblical to the rejectionist, White feminist Christology posits that the main source of oppression in society is that of women, and all other forms of oppression “emerge from” patriarchy and are therefore secondary (Grant 41). This contributes to the subordination of “issues of race and class to white women’s gender concerns,” elevating the cause of White women at the expense of poor Black women (Smith 9). These frameworks demand that Black women set aside their identity as Black or poor in order to fight primarily against sexism.

In erasing the experiences of Black women, White feminists generalize their experience and offer incomplete and inadequate Christologies for Black women. While white feminist theologians advocate for an empowering definition of Christlike “womanhood,” this definition often ends up only applying to White women’s causes and completely disregarding those of Black women. For example, many of these Christologies emphasize “partnership” among women and between women and men, but from Grant’s point of view, this “language of partnership is merely a rewording of the language of ‘reconciliation,’ which proves to be empty rhetoric unless it is preceded by liberation” (Grant 191). Until these partnerships embrace the Black woman’s fight for liberation, they will remain inaccessible to Black women. As a result, these Christologies remain oppressive to Black women as they “inadvertently reinscribe the very

patterns of domination they seek to dislodge” (Alliaume 203). Black women’s experiences are erased, their liberation is disregarded, and they remain in a subjugated position to White women.

Intersectionality

Black women were not only forced to choose between their race and their sex by the feminist movement, but they were also forced to choose the same by the Black liberation movement. While Black women are essential to the Black church and have found community in it, the Black church has historically and contemporarily maintained the subjugation of Black women as lesser because of their sex. Smith articulates this paradoxical relationship by describing the church as both “a place and source of survival, strength, health, community, culture and privilege as well as oppression for black women” (Smith 10). Even at its best, Black liberation theology deemphasizes Black women’s experiences. Marvin E. Wickware Jr., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Assistant Professor of Church and Society and Ethics, conceptualizes a tendency of Black liberation theologians—namely James Cone—to place a disproportionate burden of “the labour of love” into Black women. Black women continue to be abused in the Black church, but they are also expected to shoulder “the complex, exhausting work of nurturing individuals, forming relationships, and sustaining community... that love demands” by Cone (Wickware 4). The Black church and the feminist movement are therefore similar in the ways that they erase the experience of Black women and force them to assimilate their cause into the agendas of the dominant groups.

Black women’s experience is rooted in the ways that they have been historically abused through racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression. This is evidenced in the history and implications of slavery; in fact, Smith claims that the “gender oppression that black women experienced was *because* of their status as slaves” (Smith 9). Black women’s bodies were

subjected to the same abuse as Black men as they were subjugated under the system of slavery. In addition, they were forced into surrogacy, their bodies used against their will for sexual gratification of white men, bearing children to replenish the slave population, and nursing children of White slave owners, all of which “has been justified through sexualized stereotypes and mythologies that denies that they were created in the image of God” (Crawford 218). This abuse and violence was perpetrated against them not only by White men and the patriarchy, but also by White women, and it has been justified using the Bible. For example, Crawford outlines the story of Harriet Jacobs, who “was taught by her mistress, ‘thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself,’ but, “reflecting on the brutalities she had endured during slavery,” she observed that, “‘I was her slave, and I supposed she did not recognize me as her neighbor’” (Crawford 217). This justification for Black women’s abuse continues to be perpetrated against them as they are battered and abused on a regular basis.

This concept that there are several different facets that make up one’s life and identity and can contribute to compounded oppression is called intersectionality. Developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality sought to give a frame of reference to the phenomenon that the social problem of violence and oppression toward Black women is largely ignored in the Black movement and the women’s movement, but for Black women, “social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping creating multiple levels of social injustice” (Crenshaw). These “interlocking forms of oppression” contribute to a “significantly greater negative impact” on Black women’s lives (Crenshaw). Crenshaw asserts that because this type of oppression has not been named, it has fallen through the cracks of these social justice issues. She illustrates the incorrect assumption that “an issue that affects black people and an issue that affects women” would “necessarily include black people who are women and women who are black people” and

states that this assumption creates “a trickle-down approach to social justice” which proves largely ineffectual (Crenshaw). In the feminist movement, the cause for women’s rights is more accurately the cause for *White* women’s rights, and the cause for Black rights is more accurately the cause for Black *men’s* rights, as the experiences and oppression of Black women specifically are largely ignored.

Sojourner Truth

While many Black women abandoned the feminist movement in favor of fighting for Black liberation, Sojourner Truth is an example of one who remained within the intersection of her dual and unique identity as a Black woman throughout her life and advocacy. Truth functioned as a prophet called by God to speak “truth” into *both* the Black and the women’s movements as she advocated for the rights to vote, own property, and for equal rights in general. She saw that she did not totally fit comfortably into either movement; she was perceived as too Black for the women’s movement and too female for the Black movement. One individual commenting on her oration articulated that “Truth combined in herself, as an individual, the two most hated elements of humanity,” namely, that “she was black, and she was a woman, and all the insults that could be cast upon color and sex were together hurled at her...” (Truth 7). Nevertheless, she boldly spoke and advocated for both the Black and women populations.

Truth herself perceived her alienation from the Black and women’s movements. She describes it as a “hissing and tickling” feeling “to see a colored woman get up and tell you about... Women’s Rights” and that Black women “have all been thrown down so low” within their society (Truth 8). Indeed, the most well-known iteration of Truth’s most famous speech was doctored by a White woman, Frances Gage, who changed Truth’s speech patterns and dialect to portray her as Southern when she was from New York and had a Dutch background, and she

changed Truth's words to better promote the feminist agenda (The Sojourner Truth Project). For example, Gage recorded Truth to have said, "I have borne thirteen children..." when in reality, Truth only had five children (Truth 4). In fabricating these mythological children, Gage missed out on Truth's real lived experience as a Black woman in that she "had five children and never could say, 'my child' or 'my children', unless it was when no one could see me" (Truth 13). Truth did not have dominion over her own children as White women had, but Gage instead chose to create a reality that would support her agenda.

Truth was also cast out by the Black movement, specifically the Black Church. According to Truth's experience, "the Church wrongs woman as much as the state" in its command, "'Wives, obey your husbands'" (Truth 36). She stated that in the Black movement, there was "not a word about the colored women" such that "if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before" (Truth 23). In this way, these movements just reinforce the existing systems of domination and put another singular group on top. The feminist movement then does *not* help women who are Black people, and the Black movement does *not* help Black people who are women.

Despite the attempted erasure of parts of her identity and the uses of Jesus to oppress her, Truth saw Jesus Christ as her primary ally and her way to liberation. Her call to speak came from God as God gave her her name: "Sojourner, because I was to travel up and down the land, showing the people their sins, and being a sign unto them," and "Truth, because I was to declare the truth to the people" (Truth 16). Truth also felt that she had "a call to go to work for the poor and outcast, for they are as poor as any one on God's footstool" (Truth 54). Though she could not read, she heard the stories of the gospel and learned about Jesus. As she experienced slavery,

she saw immense suffering leading up to Jesus' liberating power, when "God would recompense [black people] for all their sufferings in this world" (Truth 12). She grew in the love of Jesus and saw him, through the frame of her experiences, as the greatest master, saying, "When God gave me that master he healed all the wounds up" (Truth 45). It is through Jesus that Truth and many Black women throughout history have found their empowerment and freedom.

Womanist Christology: The Solution

When Black women read the Bible and interpret Jesus through their own experiences, they develop a Womanist Christology. The gospels have historically been read out of the framework of tradition and have relied on widely accepted theological and Christological claims. In other words, one must read the Bible through the framework of traditional theology and then interpret their experiences from that. In reality, this "tradition" is simply the experiential realities of influential White men that have been taken as absolute truth. Womanist Christologies go in the opposite direction; they read and interpret the Bible and Jesus out of their own experiences. Grant articulates the definition of "a Womanist," based on the original definition by Alice Walker, as "one who has developed survival strategies in spite of the oppression of her race and sex in order to save her family and her people" as well as "*being and acting out who you are*" (Grant 205). Womanists read the Bible through this experience and interpret Jesus as such.

This reading challenges the status quo of Christology as mentioned earlier; they challenge the institutional Christology that emerged out of White men's experience and instead center Black women's experience. As Grant puts it, "...there is a direct relationship between our perceptions of Jesus Christ and our perception of ourselves" (Grant 63). When interpreted out of White men's experience, Black women are oppressed by Christology. However, there is biblical justification for this personal and experiential interpretation of Jesus given by Crawford in the

story of Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Messiah in Matthew 16:15: "Is not the pivotal question of Christology found in Jesus' own question to Peter, '*Who do you say that I am?*' (italics mine). The question is relational and contextual. It is out of Peter's existential reality that Jesus asks for Peter's understanding of his relationship with, and to, Jesus" (Crawford 217). This way of doing Christology allows for Christ to apply to everyone, not just the dominant elite. For Black women, reading the Bible from Black women's experiences "is the only way that it can make sense to people who are oppressed" because it cannot then be used to reinforce oppression (Grant 215). Womanist Christology "employs the vocabulary, experiences, and ideology" of Black women (Crawford 215).

Jesus is a Black Woman

When Black women read the Bible in the context of their own experiences, they find a Jesus much different than the one used to justify their oppression. Rather they "find testimony of a liberator God who hears the cries of the oppressed, acts to free the oppressed, and continues to call God's people to love of neighbors and foreigners" (Smith 11). Grant describes this God "as creator, sustainer, comforter, and liberator" who "agonized over [Black women's] pain, and celebrated the hope that... they would be delivered..." (Grant 211). In this way, God both mourns over Black women's pain and frees them from it. Black women find a Jesus who lived his life and ministry advocating for the oppressed and the marginalized in society. Jesus dined with sinners and prostitutes and associated himself with people whom the governing bodies despised and cast out. They find "the presence of Jesus in the lives of the abused and oppressed" (Crawford 217), and therefore, they identify themselves as the most oppressed and marginalized in contemporary society. This type of Christology empowers Black women to "critically engage, expose, and/or dismantle the interconnected oppressions found in biblical texts, contexts, or

interpretations” (Smith 8). Just as Jesus worked to dismantle the oppressive forces of his time, so too does a Womanist interpretation empower Black women to dismantle the contemporary oppressions that they face.

Black women have suffered abuse and violence throughout the entirety of the history of the United States; they have been “hung from trees, beaten, humiliated, stripped, and killed” (Crawford 219). When they read the Bible through their experiences, they find a Christ who suffered much in the same ways they have. The oppressive state “beat him, and humiliated him, killed him on the cross (on a tree), then stripped him of his clothes, and exposed his body” (Crawford 219). Black women see that this Christ is one who can relate to them, who have shared their experiences “as the divine co-sufferer, who empowers [Black women] in situations of oppression” as “they identified with Jesus because they believed Jesus identified with them” (Grant 212). They can see this aspect of Christ in themselves and can therefore see themselves in Christ. Jesus, through his life and ministry advocated for the liberation of the oppressed, and Christ, through his death on the cross, took on the identity of the oppressed by subjecting himself to the oppressive forces of his day. Crawford articulates this mutual identification when she writes, “Jesus lived and identified with the ‘least of them’ and continues to live and identify with the marginalized of today.... Jesus can be seen in the faces of black women and identifies so readily with their objectification and abuse that he can be called a black woman” (Crawford 376–377). This is why it can be said that Jesus is a Black woman; in this way, Jesus identifies with “the least of them” in society, which in contemporary society, can be argued to be Black women, especially when considering their oppressed, intersectional identity.

Salvation Through Jesus' Life

Especially when read in light of Black women's experiences, the idea of Jesus' crucifixion as the singular act of redemption for humanity is incomplete and limited for Black women. Crawford articulates this question in the context of "the increasing awareness of domestic violence and child abuse in American society" and asks, "how does one interpret Jesus' death of the cross?" in light of this (Crawford 214–215). They have been expected and forced to sacrifice their bodies and submit to state-sanctioned violence. Historically, the cross has been used to justify this violence and compel Black women to graciously submit to this abuse. The idea is that Jesus' willingness to be crucified is a call for Black women to do the same. As Wickware puts it in context with traditional Black theology, "...in finding redemption in Jesus' death on the cross, Black theology encourages Black women's acceptance of surrogacy" (Wickware 7). This is a significant piece of theology promoted by the dominant groups that is harmful to and inadequate for the experiences of Black women. Smith eloquently argues against this Christology, that it expects "black women and other people of color to absorb the violence of oppressive systems," to which she asserts, "Our silence in the presence of violence is violence, as implied by Jesus' words on the cross, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34)" (Smith 10). In using the cross as justification to be silent and allow Black women to bear the brunt of violence, this Christology goes against the very words of Jesus on the cross.

A more productive way to view the cross—that is truer to Black women's experiences—is that it is a demonstration of Jesus' response to evil. Crawford suggests that "Jesus *became* abuse, violence, dehumanization and oppression," not as "a shrine to violence that calls for torn flesh and bleeding bodies," but as "an eternal statement that humans should not be abused,"—rather, that they "might experience wholeness, safety, full humanity and agency" (Crawford

219). In this way, the cross furthers the liberative work that Black women see Jesus accomplishing as he frees humanity from evil. Katie Cannon conceptualizes Jesus' relationship to evil through a discussion of the work of Zora Neale Hurston, namely the sermon "The Wounds of Jesus" from her novel *Joseph's Gourd Vine*. Cannon interprets "The Wounds of Jesus" to say that human evil "not only inflicts wounds of Jesus but also causes suffering to all creation" (Cannon 183). However, this evil is not something that God never anticipated or passively accepts; rather, it asserts that "God is greater than all instances of evil" (Cannon 182) and that God's "redemption story begins with creation and ends with consummation at Calvary" (Cannon 183). In other words, God knew of evil and accounted for it from the beginning, with this plan culminating in Jesus' death on the cross. Hurston herself, through Rev. John Buddy Pearson, conceptualizes evil as a "damnation train," as he discusses Jesus' death:

Jesus stood out on the track like a rough-backed mountain
 And she threw her cow-catcher in His side and His blood ditched de train
 He died for our sins.
 Wounded in the house of His friends.
 That's where I got off de damnation train
 And dat's where you must get off, ha! (Hurston 180–181)

Hurston urges humanity to get off the train, to cease participating in evil, not to continue to be subjected or subject others to evil. Cannon concludes by applying this concept specifically to Black women's spirituality, stating that "womanist protagonists contend that *God's sustaining presence is known in the resistance to evil*" (Cannon 187). Thus, for Black women, Jesus' subjection to violence is not a condemnation for them to do the same, but a way to open the door to their liberation from suffering.

Through a Womanist perspective, it is not the death of Jesus, but the life and resurrection of Jesus that functions as the mode of salvation for Black women. Jesus' death provides a way for them to see themselves in Jesus and for Jesus to identify with Black women, but it is not the part of Jesus that is liberating. Rather, it is through the *life* of Jesus that Black women find liberation from their struggles. Grant contrasts the two by saying that "the condition of Black people today reflects the cross of Jesus," but "the resurrection brings the hope that liberation from oppression is imminent" (Grant 216). Grant states that each aspect of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection can be interpreted through the experiences of Black women; Jesus' death provides a "context in which a particular people struggle" for him to "identify with the 'little people,'" in his life "he affirms the basic humanity of these, 'the least,'" and in his resurrection "he inspires active hope in the struggle for resurrected, liberated existence" (Grant 217). This Womanist Christ, through his resurrection, "is the salvific healing agent embodied in the hearts of black women that aids them to... become agents of transformation" (Crawford 378). This is how Black women reclaim Jesus as a liberating, rather than oppressive figure toward them, so that they can live a fuller life through him.

The Particular and Universal Jesus: The Application

Liberation for All of the Oppressed

Jesus is interpreted differently based on different experiences, and Black women's "triple oppressive reality" uniquely paints Jesus as the one who is "wholly rather than partially liberating" (Grant 3). Through this particular lens can come a universal application. Though he is the liberator of the lowliest and the most oppressed, Jesus is not a vessel to be used as "a contest as to who's oppression is the worst," but he becomes a liberator for all marginalized peoples by Black women's intersectional "connection to the oppressed of all categories" (Alliaume 212).

Crawford also views Womanist Christology as applicable to all, as it “challenges structures, symbols, and socio-political realities that foster oppression/domination of black women in particular, as well as black men, humanity in general, and nature” (Crawford 367). In this way, *all* the oppressed are liberated in Jesus’ identification with the *most* oppressed.

This universal application also extends to those who are members of the traditionally oppressive groups; White men, White women, Black men, the upper and middle class, and other privileged groups who want to live like Jesus are called to fight for the liberation of Black women just as Jesus did. Grant suggests that “perhaps the whole will be radically altered when liberation of the oppressed is considered an integral part of the whole” (Grant 11). It is only when *all* are liberated that the Church will have an accurate view of Jesus. A Womanist and intersectional Christology broadens our view of God, allowing him to become “concrete not only in the man Jesus, for he was crucified, but in the lives of those who will accept the challenges of the risen Saviour the Christ” (Grant 220). In order to live out these challenges, one must look to and model one’s life after the life of Christ.

Specifically, White women and Black men have made significant strides toward their own freedom and their own representation in Jesus Christ. Taking another step forward into embracing the findings of Womanist Christology involves committing to a deeper understanding and application of the work of Jesus. In the context of Black men, Wickware urges Black men to embody the affective labor of “nurturing, connective” love and community in the Black church that they have expected Black women to shoulder alone (Wickware 15). White women can do the same; we must recognize and release the ways in which we have expected Black women to erase their experiences and submit to our agendas. All of humanity must open up our hearts to “preach and teach against violence and offer safe space, liberative words, support groups, and

community resources to the broken and abused” (Crawford 380). If Jesus’ life brings salvation, then we must look to the way he lived his life.

Salvation through Jesus’ life—rather than his death—shifts our responsibility from a single, sacrificial act to a continued, fundamentally radical way of living. A Womanist Christology asserts that if we are to live as disciples of Jesus and to model our lives after his, we must be willing to take up *our* cross by identifying with the oppressed. Smith asserts that “if we love God, we love what God loves; we develop a passion for what God is passionate about,” and “God is passionate about justice” and God “sides with the oppressed and minoritized” (Smith 11). We must see their suffering and take up the cause of their liberation as our own. The Womanist message of the cross is one “that empowers one to seize one’s personal agency to act against... victimization and oppression” (Crawford 219). In doing so, we follow the example of Jesus, who identified himself with the lowliest, lived a life of advocacy for liberation from their oppression, and acted to eliminate evil.

Conclusion

Womanist Christologies are essentially particular, yet it is their particularity that makes them universal. Jesus Christ was a historical figure, a Jewish male living in the early first century AD in the Middle East under Roman occupation. Jesus is also the physical embodiment of the Creator God bound by human constraints of time and space. In order for both of those things to be true, we must look at them through a Womanist lens, a lens that emphasizes the particular and contextual dynamics that come with interacting with this figure. Intersectionality primarily began as a discussion of Black women’s experiences but has since expanded to include various intersections of all types of identities creating unique experiences. Therefore, the concept of intersectionality expands our view of Jesus *by* particularizing it. Jesus and his relationship to

each individual person is significant because it is individual. We cannot ascribe one definitive identity onto Jesus, not even that of his brief life on earth; as humans are all made in the image of God, and Jesus represents God as a human, Jesus encapsulates all of humanity in each particular situation. In this way, Jesus is also communal; Jesus represents all of us, so we are all bound together through Christ, especially in his life and his commission to his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

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