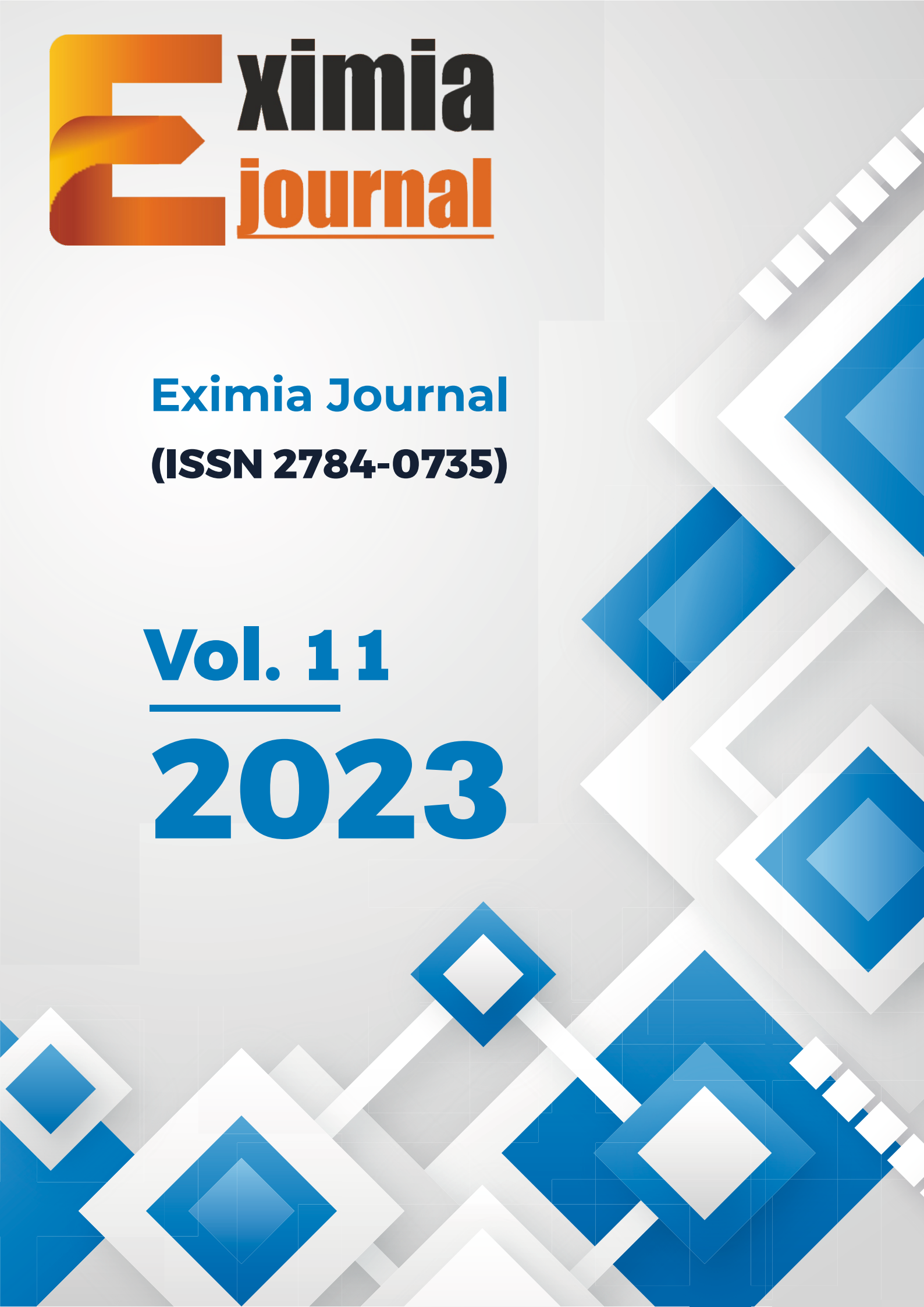




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Theological overview Choan-Seng Song about Jesus suffering

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Abstract. Choan-Seng Song is an Asian theologian who is quite determined to think about how to apply biblical values in an Asian context. Song tried to theologize not based on Western theology but instead he formulated Asian theology, which took the area not only in the church but more broadly in Asian society. Shoki Coe, a theologian from Taiwan - together with Song - who is also Director of the Theological Education Fund, wrote in the introduction to Song's book titled *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis*: First, Song's challenge to theologize in an Asian context is very heavy and Song with enthusiasm who overflowed trying to answer it. Second, Song reflects his theology well and consistently. Song corrected the mission of Western Christians who had lost the dynamics of the incarnation. His theological strength was to reject Western values and Song found God's incarnation in the lives of Asians. The author uses the approach of exegesis research methods and apologetics to examine the extent to which the concept of Jesus - which is central to Song's theology - as a figure of "suffering" is applied to the phenomena that occur in society. The essence of the contextual pressures is how Song used to break through the values of the suffering Jesus. The purpose of this writing is divided into three parts, namely: the first part contains the concept of Song about Jesus suffering, which is seen from the biblical aspect, the symbol of the cross, Jesus as the center of the mission of suffering in the world, theology of the people, the suffering messiah, and the politics of the cross. The second part, to look for the biblical basis of Jesus who suffered (for aesthetics), the author executes Mk 8:31; 9:31; and 10: 33-34 and to find the biblical basis Suffering is a characteristic of Christians, the writer executes 1Pet 4: 12-19. The third part is evaluating (apologetics) Song's thoughts with the author's exegesis from positive and negative aspects.

Keywords. Jesus, Suffering, Choan Seng Song

Introduction

The biblical basis for suffering for Song, is the Easter experience that occurred in the Bible which has produced a fundamental change.¹ Jeremias cites Song's analysis as saying that there are three predictions of suffering in Mk 8:31 (Mt 16:21; Luke 9:22); 9:31 (Mt 17:21; Lk 17:21; Lk 9:44) and 10: 33-34 (Mt 20: 18-19; Lk 18: 32-3) as stories compiled. The sequence of events related to the suffering of Jesus [as a human being whose life was insulted, berated, whipped, tortured, even crucified. This suffering is physical pain in the above passages, especially in the most detailed form in Mark 1: 33-34.² Jeremias said,

Corresponds so precisely with the course of the story of suffering and the story of Passover, even to the details, that there is no doubt that this prediction of suffering is a summary of the suffering that was formulated after the event.³

The suffering of Jesus' messianic office is related to the "Songs of the LORD" in Isaiah 53. In Peter's Pentecostal sermon, the crucified and risen Christ becomes the main theme; to Him the entire journey of Israel which he narrated took place (Acts 2: 14-36). Back in his conversation on Solomon's porch later on, Peter tells of "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors until the Messiahists whom he sent must suffer" (Acts 3: 13-26).⁴

For Song, in Mark 10:45 we get the most concise theology from the office of the suffering messiah, ⁵"The Son of Man came to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. The suffering suffered by the messiah is not for his own sake, but for the sake of "the people", that is for the sake of those who are not numbered.⁶

The suffering of Jesus, the Messiah has removed all human obstacles. This suffering made God available to humanity and enabled them to be part of the mystery of divine salvation. The depth of God's suffering must be a place where people, despite their different backgrounds⁷ and traditions, can recognize each other as fellow pilgrims who need God's saving power.⁸

1. The symbol of the cross⁹

The cross is the highest symbol of the suffering Jesus experienced. A cross means weak, broken, torn body. It means that in that cross contains the values of the suffering practices of Jesus' life for both 100 percent God and 100 percent human beings. Song wrote¹⁰:

As Christians, we must return to Jesus as witnessed by the Bible. The more I think about it, the deeper I feel amazed by the character of Jesus. ¹¹Here we don't need to question whether Jesus is the Son of God, or the Son of Mary. But we are so impressed, to be amazed by this figure named Jesus. How He gives His power, so that we have "insight", imagination to challenge and break traditional norms, even though in the end He must die. Yes, because His body has been divided, we are enabled to reconsider our attitudes toward our own culture.¹²

The cross is also the boundary area between the laws decided in the life of Jesus and the laws outside the life of Jesus. The cross is also the boundary between the laws of love and the laws outside of love.¹³

Meanwhile, Jesus means crucified people. This is also an Easter Day ritual that reminds God of saving the slaves of Israel from Egypt and making the slaves his children, heirs of his kingdom. So, Easter food is spiritual food. Jesus is the Passover lamb that was sacrificed on the cross to deliver sinful humans into life in the light. Being crucified means that Jesus not only suffered but other people [believers] also suffered in His name. ¹⁴ Song continues: "By people I mean those men, women, and children, in Jesus' day, today, and in the days to come, economically exploited, politically oppressed, culturally and religiously alienated, sexually, racially, or class-wise discriminated against. "¹⁵

2. Jesus as the Mission Center for Liberation in Suffering in the World¹⁶

According to Song Jesus is the answer to the crisis of life in the world that engulfs all aspects of life including the striking difference between the differences of the rich and the poor. Not Jesus but life in this world has many problems, and Jesus makes human existence come alive. That is, life as physical existence (bios) and life as spiritual (zoe) is a unity of life (nephes). ¹⁷ Here, theology starts from the heart of God caused by human suffering and pain. Suffering experienced by humans touches the heart of God. So, to overcome that suffering, God offered Jesus Christ to suffer so that Jesus could emulate human existence to escape the world crisis. Here Jesus was destined to assume the sin (existence) of that human so that Jesus Christ changed himself into a human being and lived in the world. ¹⁸

Here Jesus as the mission center gives a real experience that Jesus is the Church of God. This church became a social phenomenon and Jesus was the center of the mission that was preached in world history. More in Song said: ¹⁹

What is very important is that humans can be captured to be free from suffering in this world. In fact, humans are very stressed in their lives made to be saved. For this salvation, for Christians to be understood as a mistake of something that does not exist. ²⁰

3. People's Theology

Song promotes the term "People's Theology". This is because Song sees that the Christian faith can be a dynamic source of social and political life. It can break world values and strike a balance between world responsibilities and moral values. He can make statements and make regulations that are not only inspired by the problems of the rich, power, but also the problems of the poor, even the problems of those who feel their lives are not useful. ²¹

Song developed the understanding of the Christian faith that lives in social and political dynamics is people's theology. Theology which has a correction in social and political life. Folk theology is the theology of the cross. People's theology says experiencing life, including suffering experienced by humans - men, women, children who live in a tight economic, social and political situation. Folk theology does not seek peace, does not analyze the mistakes of others, but shares the thoughts of Jesus. ²²

Folk theology places human (people) as historical subjects, not objects. His job is to count history as "the socio-political biography" about the people.

4. The Suffering "Messiah"

Of the various problems of the world that are increasingly threatened by crises in everything including moral crises, according to Song looking for the answer what is most needed by the world, is none other than Jesus' example of a suffering messiah. The world looks for political messiahs and is ready to give them power and authority to govern them, but God looks for suffering messiahs. No, God not only sought them, but in Jesus Christ He became the suffering messiah, because only the suffering messiah could promise a new future and give a new life through His cross and resurrection. ²³

Only the messiah who suffers keeps the light of truth, love and justice shining in the darkness of a world that is full of lies, blackmail and hatred. Only the messiah who suffers bore the sufferings of the world and brought courage, strength and hope to them. Jesus lives in fear of the dark and the shadow of death. And this suffering messiah creates space and opportunity in the hearts of men, for God and for others. The gospel left by the disciples is the gospel of the suffering messiah, not about the political messiah. This suffering Messiah began and was modeled by Jesus Christ, then continued by Jesus' disciples, and now Christians are invited to become suffering messiahs.

5. The politics of the Cross

Song not only defines the cross as the point of misery, but it also has the term "Cross politics". For Song, in responding to the increasingly difficult and oppressive world, he not only offered himself as the "suffering Messiah", "the suffering cross", but also offered another alternative, the "Politics of the Cross". The politics of the Cross were the most appropriate politics for Jesus and his loyal followers. The politics of the Cross shifts to the politics of the people or begins with the politics of the people and eventually to the politics of the Cross. In the name of the Cross, Christians testify of a loving and compassionate God in a world of hatred and conflict. ²⁴

The cross has inspired so many people to believe that self-sacrifice is the most powerful weapon in a self-centered power politics. The politics of the cross has given them the courage not to resort to violence, not just as a tactic, but out of love, to bring suffering to the people.

The power shown by the politics of the cross is the effective power of the testimony of faith. This is a power that demands that people rule greedily and unjustly. This is the power that gives us new things and new hopes. And this is the power that preserves the vision of humanity to remain focused on all that is good, right, and beautiful. The cross, borrowing the words of the Apostle Paul, is "the power and wisdom of God". It is the foundation of Christian political ethics. And that is the essence of Christian ethical power. The cross has been and will always be the center of political theology.

Why is the political power of the cross so effective? Because the power that comes from this God is not limited to one motion and one space. This power moves with such limitations that God cannot be fixed because God moves, because He is not a "straight-line God", but "God moves in all directions: God moves forward, no doubt, but also sideways and even backwards. Perhaps God zigzags too" ²⁵

Exegetical

1. Exegesis, Mk 8:31; 9:31; and 10: 33-34: Jesus Suffers

Mark 8:31; 9:31; and 10: 33-34 is a clear indication that Jesus did indeed accept and do the work of a Messianic. He accepts work to suffer. Mark 8:31 reads:

Then Jesus began to teach them, that the Son of Man had to suffer a lot of suffering and was rejected by elders, chief priests and scribes, then killed and rose after three days.

The word "suffer" as Christ's sufferings refers to the life of Jesus' ministry. This is quite exclusive to His death. It also refers to suffering as a human when he is tempted. His suffering is not just an event, but His divinity (His divinity needs) plays a role in referring to human salvation. R. Alan Cole calls "a theological shorthand" [shorthand] for His death to the cross (Acts 3:18). Hebrews 5: 8 shows increasingly clearly that the cross was the peak and had the highest value of Jesus' suffering life. We can understand this when we know the person of Christ so we can appreciate His work. ²⁶

Mark 8:31 is the first notification of suffering (parallel with Matt. 16:21 He had to go to endure much suffering; also Luke 9:22), which was then followed by Mark 9:31 as the second notification of suffering (parallel with Matt. 17:21; Luke 17:21; and Luke 9:44) as follows:

Because he is teaching his students. He said to them: "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and three days after He is killed He will rise (Mk 9:31).

Mark 9: 31 does not bring up the word "suffer" but the whole verse shows the completeness of the suffering Jesus experienced. R. Alan Cole saw God present in Jesus doing His activities in the event. Even Mk 10: 33-34 is even clearer about God's activities. This was a blow to the Messiah who was rejected by the Israelites as his messiah, so there was a shift that the Messiah was accepted by nations outside Israel. This is the way of the cross (Acts 2:23). This condition is confirmed again in 10: 33-34 - the third notification of suffering (parallel to Matt. 20: 18-19; Luke 18: 32-3) as a series of Jesus' sufferings, namely:

He said: "Now we go to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will put him to death. And they will deliver Him to the nations that do not know God, and He will be mocked, spat upon, scourged and killed, and after three days He will rise.

In fact the sufferers experienced by Jesus are God's plans far back. Isaiah 53: 2-3 already says that Jesus was the root out of dry land (v. 2). Then, Jesus was insulted and avoided by someone, who was full of misery and who used to suffer pain; he was insulted so much that he covered his face for him and for us he did not count (v. 3).

2. Exegesis 1 Peter 4: 12-19: Suffering as a Characteristic of Christians

Suffering from the word basic suffering (pascho), which is used 42 times in the NT. Suffering is the pressure faced by someone who comes from outside himself to give a good influence to that person. But, suffering is also an attempt to confuse this creation. And, even deeper, that suffering (patemasi, sufferings) in this passage is a trial (purosei, trials) for the life of Christians, therefore the purosei in v. 12 says "do not be surprised at the flames of torment that come to you".²⁷

This suffering is the character of Christians. So, it is only natural. It is precisely because of suffering that Christians become happy and not bring trouble but joy. This suffering is an honor for everyone to fulfill the suffering of Jesus Christ. Here Christians must emulate the sufferings of Christ. This example is living and faithful in the sufferings of Christ. This must be done with a sense of joy and not depressed. Christians surrender completely in the preservation of the Holy Spirit and live doing good, don't be busy talking about other people, killing, stealing, or committing crimes. Because at the time of judgment comes, and all people including Christians do not escape from the judgment.

The result of apologetical theology overview

From the description of Song's theology on the part of Jesus' suffering and the part of the exegesis that the author did, the writer tries to understand the problems that Song faced in building his theology of suffering.

1. Philosophy Evaluation

Song put Jesus at the center of all his theology which was applied in the context of Asian philosophy. This reminds Karl Barth who also put Christ as his central theology. Only Barth applies to Western life while Song applies to Asian life.²⁸

Stephen T. Chan evaluates Song in two ways: First, the negative, Song avoids Western theology. The author agrees, but avoiding the West and concentrating on Asia is not a negative thing. Precisely this is an act that dares to look for Asian phenomena, so inevitably Song must be observant in paying attention to the problems faced by Asian people.²⁹

Secondly the positive, Song tried to find new territory, new sources to build Asian theology. For Chan, building a new theology cannot be released from the influence of Western theology, which has become so entrenched and developed throughout the theology of the world. The author agrees with what Chan said. But, it's not easy what Song does. In this condition Song tried to offer a "people's" philosophy of theology. Here Chan considers that the people's theology used by Song not only says in theology of someone who is a part of the people but also says how people can understand the theology offered. People's theology also not only says about religion but also says about life issues that develop in society. The contribution of people's theology is evident in social, political, economic and ethical issues.³⁰

The character of popular theology depends on two tasks: the methodology and the ingredients. This methodology comes from the reaction of the problems of human life, while the material is issues that develop to the large community. So, Song wants to be included in the basic issues of people's lives.³¹

2. Socio-Political Evaluation

Song's approach to the socio-political concept is not new. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's in "Letter From Prison" has also done what Song did. This approach for Song was possible because Jesus suffered and died on the cross. The suffering of Jesus enters social, political, ethical issues and all aspects of life.³²

The positive side, where Jesus became a social part of His church. Social is not only interpreted between church members or fellow Christians, but also between pluralist societies. So, indeed Jesus became the basis of social unity even through His Great Commission, Christians do the task of spreading the gospel to the ends of the world (Matt. 28: 9-20). That is, Jesus also wants the social community to know His Gospel.

On the negative side, Jesus, even though he suffered, did not teach his disciples to engage in religion with politics (government). It is precisely the presence of the suffering Jesus separating Himself as part of the Government - for example Jesus must be King - but His presence as a deliverer. In accordance with God's plan, Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life, and as a atonement for man's sin with His death on the cross. So, to those who accept Christ by faith, God grants the truth of Christ. So, for the writers of Song's attitude to use the term Jesus as "The Politics of the Cross" disagree. Although "the politics of the cross" has the emphasis that Christians bear witness to a loving and compassionate God to a world full of hatred and conflict, avoiding violence, the notion of "politics" is quite negative and not theological. While the emphasis on the "cross" is Jesus who suffered. So, you need to rethink using that term.

Theological Evaluation

Song's theology focuses on one side is the biblical method of exposition of the doctrine of creation, redemption, incarnation. Then, it is applied to mission incarnations in cultural, historical, social and political areas. The rationale for the suffering done by Song is based on strong biblics such as the exegesis of Mk 8:31; 9:31; and 10: 33-34, where Song found that Jesus had the primary task of suffering on the cross to atone for the sins of men. And the author also sees the suffering that is characteristic of Christians (exegesis 1Pet 4: 12-19) in the name of Jesus applied by Song in the concept of "people's theology".

On the positive side, the author agrees what Song conceptions that Jesus is the basis of suffering even for the writer what Jesus experienced was the highest suffering and cannot be equated with sufferers experienced by humans. Suffering is the way of the cross. And indeed this suffering is expressed in all phenomena of life that have, are, or will occur in every human life. So if we have mastered or understood the expression of the cross, then it is not difficult to appreciate let alone believe in Jesus as the Savior of mankind, especially oneself concerned.

The cross of Jesus is the way of reconciliation. Atonement is provided for everyone. Atonement applies (applies) to the elect when they believe. Atonement is related to eternal damnation.

The cross of Jesus includes deliverance from the curse of law and sin, reconciliation with God, so does peace between Jews and pagans, peace, and source of life. The cross has become the center of attention for Christ's thought and deliverance.

The negative side, the core message of the cross is Jesus as the savior or redeemer of human sins. The essence of the crucifixion of Jesus and the death of Jesus is the door to the redemption of human sins into eternal life. That is, Christ as a human being cannot bear to see a sinful man being condemned and punished for his sin. In Jesus Christ, God shows His love for us which cannot be delivered according to natural revelation. But, by Song the core of this news is applied to values that are far from safety, for example the political aspects so that this application can still be a prolonged debate.

So, even though theology has shifted to "good living" or "suffering in Christ" (1Pet 4: 12-19), the essence of the message of salvation remains the basis for the theological framework. The author feels that Song, moves on values outside of Jesus as savior. It is precisely when we look at 1 Peter 4: 12-19 that the sign that every Christian must imitate Jesus who suffers on the cross of penance, so that Christians live to suffer as witnesses and preachers of the gospel of Jesus himself.

Conclusion

Jesus suffered according to Song, indeed a very strong basic framework (biblical) in responding to phenomena that occur in all life in all centuries, including in the context of Asian society. It's just that the problem is, the point of the message of Jesus' suffering on the cross must not be moved out of the real meaning is to atone for the sins of men. So, as long as this essence is enforced, the contextualization by Song is worth thinking of, and even exemplary in extending the gospel message to the increasingly complex life of Indonesian people.

Song has contextualized the social and political community in Asia, but he has been trapped in the displacement of the essence of the cross and the use of terms such as the political term cross which has negative connotations even though the contents are very positive and Biblical.

The author sees that Song, moves on values outside of Jesus as savior and rejects special revelations - Jesus as the only way of human salvation. Song uses general revelations such as Barth to model the contextualization of Asian theology so that he transposes revelation not from Israel to Asia but from Asia directly to Asia. So, it is not surprising that Song used the Bible as a motive for his struggle to create Asian theology.

Experience the celebration of the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. The firstborn of the Egyptians were killed, but the doors of the Hebrews' house were "passed" (Hebrew Pesah means to pass). The event was commemorated by holding a Passover meal where the priests "ate the Passover" ie eating the "Passover offering" or the Passover lamb (Ex 12: 23-28, 43-51). In the New Testament Jesus Christ is called "the lamb of the Passover" (1 Cor 5: 7) or "the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 5: 6). For the Primitive Church the Easter day gets a new content, namely the message of God's resurrection.

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End-note

1. Read more in C.S. Song, *Jesus in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994) 70-71.
2. C.S. Song, *Jesus, the Crucified People* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1996) 212.
3. Ibid., 216.
3. C. S. Song, "Jesus Christ - The Life of the World - an Asian Meditation" *East Asia Journal of Theology*, Vol. 1 No. 1 1983, 117.
4. C. S. Song, *Third-Eye Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979) 119.
5. Ibid., 118.
6. Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977) 66.
7. Ibid., 69.
8. C. S. Song, "Building a Theological Culture of People" *AJT*, Vol. 1, No. October 2, 1987, 278-279.
9. Ibid., 279.
10. The faith in the risen Lord has led them to understand why Jesus refused to be crowned a national leader who would lead His people to political victory just as Jesus refused the temptation that offered the victorious king's office, which contained exhibits of miraculous powers and obedience to powers world devil. For Choan-Seng Song that the power of the king's office is a dangerous high-voltage power. It can damage. And the more damaging, the more dangerous it becomes. It is dangerous for people who are helpless. He enacted the Emergency Law; add prison inmates; creating widows and orphans. That power suppressed the whole nation, he tried to suppress God. Read more about Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis* (Maryknoll, 1977) 41-50.
11. Choan-Seng Song, *the God Who Suffered* 161.
12. C.S. Song, "The World of Imagery and Symbols" 14.
13. Choan-Seng Song, *Mention Our Names* (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 1989) 238.
14. C.S. Song, *Tell us our Names* (Newyork: Maryknoll, 1984) 16.
15. NIDNTT, 721; in the NT it refers to Christ's own suffering and the suffering of Christians for Christ's sake.
16. In Hebrews and 1 Peter, *pasko* is used in the relationship of Christ's misery, followed by the concept of Luke and Acts, which means: "to die". This application only occurs in Hebrew and 1 Peter in the NT. Where Christian suffering leads to: (1) suffering because of fellowship with Christ. This is the concept of *Koinonia* (fellowship), (2) refers to eschatology. Christian suffering will end with the coming of the Kingdom of God.
17. R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 205.
18. R. Alan Cole, *Mark* 219.

19. There are even some accounts that strongly support the suffering Jesus experienced as in Matt. 24: 8; Mr 13: 8: "He was suffering before the new age"; Mt 17:12: "The son of man will suffer"; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 17:25: "The son of man must suffer much"; Mar 9:12: "it is written that the sons of men will suffer and will be humiliated ..."; Luke 24:26, Acts 3:18; 26:23: "The Messiah (who was sent) must suffer these things, suffer"; Luke 24: 46; Acts 17: 3: "The Messiah must suffer and rise".

20. Everret F. Harrison, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988) 505.

21. JD Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary* (English: Inter-Varsity Press, t.th.) 182.

22. Exegesis 1Pet 4: 12-19 as follows: Verse 13: "tois tou Kristou patemasin"

23 See Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology I: Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1971) 276, 277-299.

24. Choan-Seng Song, *God Who Suffers* (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 1993) 164; also read C.S. Song, *Jesus and the Reign of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993) 161-167.

25. Kairos Interview with Choan Seng Song: "The History of Christianity in Indonesia Must Be Rewritten!" Kairos April 1996, 40.

26. *Ibid.*, 41; also read C. S. Song, "The World of Imagery and Symbols", *Persetia of Theological Education Series*, 1992, 3 it is said that imagination is the energy of human life. Without imagination, human life will be mainly controlled by animal instincts for sustaining life and by being busy fulfilling biological needs. Imagination is the power of human self-transcendence. He gives us freedom from the constraints of time and space. We live in the present tense, but we are not to move ourselves from the present to the past and into the future.

27. *Ibid.*, 118.

28. Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Analysis* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977) 66.

29. *Ibid.*, 69.

30. C. S. Song, "Building a Theological Culture of People" *AJT*, Vol. 1, No. October 2, 1987, 279.

31. *Ibid.*, 279.

32. Choan-Seng Song, *the God Who Suffered* 16