

## **Part 2: KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

### **2**

#### **Sanctification and the Christus Victor Motif in Wesleyan Theology**

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Gustaf Aulen's *Christus Victor*<sup>1</sup> ranks as one of the most influential works on the atonement to appear in our time. Aulen calls for a thorough revision of the traditional account of the history of the idea of the atonement to give fresh emphasis to a view of Christ's work which he describes as the "dramatic" motif. Its central theme is the idea of the atonement as a divine conflict and victory in which Christ--Christus Victor--enlists and vanquishes Satan, sin, and death.<sup>2</sup> He insists that this dramatic understanding of Christ's work is a true doctrine of atonement because in this act God reconciles the world to himself.<sup>3</sup> Although Christ's death is at the heart of redemption, the Cross presupposes the Incarnation, for it was the Son of God in the flesh who met and vanquished evil.<sup>4</sup> It also embraces the resurrection and ascension, for by raising his Son from the dead to his own right hand God fulfilled the conditions for the promised gift of the Spirit by which Christ's historic victory is mediated to believers.<sup>5</sup> The Cross also envisions the consummation of redemption when God will send his Son a second time to raise and glorify us with him.<sup>6</sup>

This view of Christ's work Aulen calls "the classic idea" of the atonement. He sees it as the dominant idea of the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> Thus it did not spring into being in the early church or arrive as an importation from some

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<sup>1</sup> Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), translated by A. G. Hebert.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21, 41-44.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 22, 31-32, 44

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-80.

outside source.

It was, in fact, the ruling idea of the atonement for the first thousand years of Christian history. In the Middle Ages it was gradually ousted from its place in the theological teaching of the church, but it survived still in her devotional language and in her art. It confronts us again, more vigorously and profoundly expressed than ever before, in Martin Luther, and it constituted an important part of his expression of the Christian faith. It has therefore every right to claim the title of the classic idea of the atonement.<sup>8</sup>

Aulen has done the church a service in rescuing the dramatic view of Christ's work and restoring it to its rightful place as a New Testament account of the atonement.

In the traditional understanding of the history of the idea of the atonement the Christus Victor teaching has been slighted, if not rejected outright, along with the ransom theory which grew out of it.<sup>9</sup> Aulen shows how the New Testament does indeed see Christ's work as a divine conquest of evil. Moreover, he seems to have successfully demonstrated that this is a view of atonement and not merely a doctrine of salvation. Furthermore, this representation of Christ's redemptive work preserves the biblical teaching that the atonement is from beginning to end the work of God.<sup>10</sup> It also dynamically fuses the objective and subjective features of this work. Such a viewpoint provides a sound basis for pointing up weaknesses in both the Anselmic and Abelardian theories.

It may be questioned, however, whether any one view of the atonement can be rightly titled "classic." The New Testament regards Christ's work in at least three ways: as propitiation, as redemption, and as reconciliation. As sinners we are guilty and exposed to the wrath of God; in Christ God propitiates his wrath and expiates our guilt. As sinners we are in bondage to Satan and sin; Christ's redemptive act delivers us from bondage and sets us at liberty. As sinners we are alienated and estranged from God; we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. The Christus Victor motif elucidates the second representation of the atonement. While Aulen

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>9</sup> It was Origen (185-254 A.D.) who converted the Christus Victor idea into a theory of a ransom paid to Satan.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18

maintains that the other two ideas may be fully subsumed under this one view,<sup>11</sup> it may be questioned that the dramatic motif adequately embraces the notions of propitiation and reconciliation. Strong biblical and experiential reasons seem to have given rise to the emphases of Anselm and Abelard. A truly classic doctrine of atonement includes both the ideas of satisfaction and of revelation as well as of that of redemption. Whatever weaknesses we may find in the Anselmic and Abelardian theories, we cannot deny that they voice two distinct scriptural perspectives. It is a question whether these viewpoints can be fully expressed in the Christus Victor doctrine.

In spite of these questions, Christus Victor is a view of Christ's work that highlights the atonement as the destruction of sin that makes possible true sanctification and perfection. While it may be too much to claim that it provides the entire framework for explaining Christ's work, it does give Wesleyan theology a significant biblical and historical basis for developing a thoroughgoing Christological doctrine of sanctification. The Christus Victor idea "directs attention not primarily to the punishment and the other consequences of sin, but to sin itself. It is sin itself which is overcome by Christ, and annihilated; it is from the power of sin itself that man is set free."<sup>12</sup> In Christ God has sanctified the race; this sanctification is accomplished within us as Christ comes to indwell us in the Spirit. "The classic idea of salvation is that the victory which Christ gained once for all is continued in the work of the Holy Spirit, and its fruits reaped."<sup>13</sup>

### CHRIST'S VICTORY FOR US

The atonement has several facets. Viewed from the standpoint of human guilt and our deep need for pardon and acceptance, Christ crucified is God's perfect oblation making possible our justification (Romans 3:21-26; 1 Corinthians 1:30b). Seen from the perspective of our enmity toward God and our profound yearning for restored fellowship, Christ provides reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 2:11-22). Again, perceived from the angle of humankind's bondage to evil, Christ crucified is the conqueror of Satan, sin, and death. It is this third point of view--Christus Victor--which Aulen sees as dominant until Anselm, and it is this

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<sup>11</sup> *Christus Victor*, 71-73.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote on 148; cf. pages 22-25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

understanding of Christ's work that furnishes the most solid basis for a dynamic biblical doctrine of sanctification.

This view presupposes that it was only by meeting the forces of evil on their own ground, only, that is, by getting into history where they were entrenched, that Christ could break their power.<sup>14</sup> He partook of flesh and blood that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:13-14). In his final effort to destroy the Prince of Life (Jesus Christ) the devil overextended and thus defeated himself (John 12:31; cf. 16:11; 1 Corinthians 2:6 and 1 John 2:8). God the Father "disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over him in him (Christ)" (Colossians 2:15 RSV).

Christus Victor, moreover, not only defeated Satan; he destroyed sin itself. "The reason the Son of God was manifested was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8 RSV). John means that Christ came to destroy the principle of lawlessness (*anomia*--1 John 3:4), which was the devil's chief work in humankind.

Paul gives the fullest treatment of sanctification within the context of Romans 5:12-8:39. Particularly critical to this idea are Romans 6:6 and 8:3. First, Romans 6:6--"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (KJV). Knowing what? This, that in and with the death of Jesus on Calvary we were provisionally crucified also, so that we might be delivered from sin for a life of love-service to God. Paul puts the same idea slightly differently in 2 Corinthians--"For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised" (5:14-15 RSV).

Two definitions are in order with reference to Romans 6:6: "our old man" (*ho palaios hemen anthropos*) and "the body of sin" (*to soma tes hamartias*). The first expression must be understood in the light of Romans 5:12-14; the second, of Romans 7:14-25. Both must be defined in terms of these two contexts. Here are two concepts that describe different aspects of human sinfulness. "Our old man" is therefore "Adam, and

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<sup>14</sup> James S. Stewart, *A Faith to Proclaim* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 94.

ourselves in Adam."<sup>15</sup>

"The body of sin" should be taken as the possessive genitive: "sin's body," or "the body of which sin has taken possession, 'the body that is so apt to be the instrument of its own carnal impulses.'"<sup>16</sup> Indwelt by sin (*he hamartia*)<sup>17</sup> I am hopelessly divided against myself and reduced to moral impotence (Romans 7:14-25). Paul's other term for this sin-dominated body is "flesh" (*sarx*--Romans 7:18; cf. 8:8).<sup>18</sup>

Now, Paul says, "Our old man was crucified with Christ, so that sin's body (i.e., *sarx*, the flesh) might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not be enslaved by sin." Karl Barth has vividly paraphrased Paul:

This is our knowledge of Jesus Christ on which our faith is founded--that the "old man," i.e. we ourselves as God's enemies, have been crucified and killed in and with the crucifixion of the man Jesus at Golgotha, so that the "body" (i.e., the subject, the person needed for the doing) of sin, the man who can sin and will sin and shall sin has been removed, destroyed, done away with, is simply no longer there (and has therefore not merely been "made powerless").<sup>19</sup>

Whatever Barth may allow by this, his words give true expression of Paul's declaration. As a new man in Christ I am to hear the gospel saying to me that my old self in Adam has been crucified with Christ in order that my total person may be liberated from sin, so that I may serve God in "righteousness for sanctification" (Romans 6:19 RSV). This is the whole meaning of Romans 6.

Romans 8:3 relates this to the incarnation. Christ's victory could be won only in the flesh. But there, where sin had established its rule, Christus Victor routed it decisively. "For God has done what the law, weakened by

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<sup>15</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 125.

<sup>16</sup> Sanday and Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1929), 158.

<sup>17</sup> The key term for sin in Romans 5:12--8:10, literally "the sin" principle, which occurs at least 28 times..

<sup>18</sup> As "body" (*soma*) is my total self concretely expressed, so "flesh" (*sarx*) is my whole person alienated from God and therefore subjected to my own creaturehood and sin.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1959), 69.

the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh ("sin's flesh" or "sin-dominated flesh"), and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh" (NRSV). "Condemned" means more than to register disapproval; the law does that. Christ "'pronounced the doom of sin.' Sin was henceforth deposed from its autocratic power."<sup>20</sup> "By his life of perfect obedience, and his victorious death and resurrection," C H Dodd comments, "the reign of sin over human nature has been broken."<sup>21</sup> The Son of God "'condemned' that 'sin' which was 'in' our 'flesh,'" Wesley asserts, "gave sentence that sin should be destroyed and the believer wholly delivered from it" (Romans 8:3, *Explanatory Notes*). On the very ground

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<sup>20</sup> C. Anderson Scott, "Romans," *The Abingdon Bible Commentary* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1929), 1153.

<sup>21</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 93. "As Origen noted, we human beings have 'the flesh of sin,' but the Son had the 'likeness of sinful flesh.' He came in a form like us in that he became a member of the sin-oriented human race; he experienced the effects of sin and suffered death, the result of sin, as one 'cursed' by the law (Gal. 3:12). Thus in his own person he coped with the power of sin. Paul's use of the phrase *sarx hamartias* denoted not the guilty human condition, but the proneness of humanity made of flesh that is oriented to sin" (Fitzmyer, "Romans" in *Anchor Bible*, 33:485). "Those who believe that it was fallen human nature which was assumed have even more cause than had the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism to see the whole of Christ's life on earth as having redemptive significance; for, in this view [which was espoused by the early church fathers], Christ's life before His actual ministry and death was not just a standing where unfallen Adam had stood without yielding to the temptation to which Adam succumbed, but a matter of starting from where we start, subjected to all the evil pressures which we inherit and using the altogether unpromising and unsuitable material of our corrupt nature to work out a perfect sinless obedience" (C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:383, footnote 2). Colin Gunton concurs: "To bear fallen flesh is necessary if Jesus is to complete the work to which he was called. What is important soteriologically was that Jesus was enabled to resist temptation, not by some immanent conditioning, but by virtue of his obedience to the guidance of the Spirit." (*Christ and Creation*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992], 54). For us, gaining mastery over fallen flesh requires that we be born again, Jesus needed no second birth--his conception and birth by the Spirit enabled him to live without sinning "[God] with the view to the destruction of sin," Gregory of Nyssa wrote, "was blended with human nature, like a sun as it were making his dwelling in a murky cave and by His presence dissipating the darkness by means of His light. For though He took our filth upon Himself, yet He is not Himself defiled by the pollution, but in His own self He purifies the filth" (*Antirrhetic adv. Apollinaris*, 26). Jesus' assumption of our fallen flesh was the *sine qua non* of our redemption, for "'He could heal only what he assumed" (Gregory of Nazianzus). *He became what we are that we might become what he is*. Such was the dominating theme of the Christology of the orthodox Fathers who fashioned the ecumenical creeds.

where sin had established itself--in human flesh--the Son of God has vanquished sin and potentially sanctified our human existence!

### CHRIST'S VICTORY IN US

Christ's victory for us becomes his victory in us by the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:1-11). Christ's victory is reproduced in us. In the Holy Spirit, Christ for us becomes Christ in us, recapitulating in our history his triumph over sin. This is the meaning of Christus Victor for sanctification.<sup>22</sup> Every demon we meet is foredoomed in Christ. Sin itself has lost its power for the believer in whom Christ dwells. "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world... and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith... We know that anyone born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him" (1 John 4:4; 5:4, 18 RSV).

This victory is given to us in three stages--in conversion, in entire sanctification, and in glorification.

Victory over sin begins in conversion. This is the clear teaching of Romans 6:1-11. This is our knowledge of the gospel--that we ourselves have been crucified in the person of Christ crucified. Paul insists that we grasp the truth that this has already happened to us "in principle" in our justification and regeneration. "For he who has died is freed from sin" (6:6). But in order to reap the full benefits of God's provision we must furnish what Godet calls "moral cooperation." "The believer understands that the final object which God has in view in crucifying the old man (v. 6) is to realize the life of the Risen One (vv. 8, 9), and he enters actively into the divine thought."<sup>23</sup>

To "enter actively into the divine thought" and thereby realize true sanctification involves:

1. A faith-knowledge that God has actually accomplished the

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<sup>22</sup> The first Adam disobeyed God and died; the last Adam died rather than disobey him, becoming "obedient unto death--even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him" (Philippians 2:8-9 NRSV). And "being ... exalted at the right hand of the God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out" the Spirit upon yielded believers, *reproducing in us the very holiness of Christ!* (Acts 2:33). Thus the glorified Christ, through the gift of the Pentecostal Spirit, fulfils the New Covenant promise of entire sanctification (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-27).

<sup>23</sup> F. Godet, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883), 244.

destruction of sin in Christ crucified and resurrected, and that in my conversion I have embraced his death to sin and with him have been raised to "newness of life" in which I am no longer sin's slave, and

2. A complete break with sin (Romans 6:12-13a) and a putting of myself absolutely at God's disposal in a critical act of consecration (6:13a, 19) so that I may begin to realize the full life of the Risen Lord in me.

We have already provisionally died with Christ through our participation in his crucifixion; now we must permit that death to reach to the very depths of our being as we cease from self and begin to live wholly to God. The death of the "old man" is thus a process initiated by conversion and realized in entire sanctification. "In principle" we die with Christ in justification; in full reality we die with him when we yield up ourselves to God as Jesus gave up his spirit to the Father on the cross. Here Wesley has a guiding word:

A man may be dying for some time; yet he does not, properly speaking, die, till the soul is separated from the body; and in that instant, he lives the life of eternity. In like manner, he may be dying to sin for some time; yet he is not dead to sin till it is separated from his soul; and in that instant, he lives the full life of love. So the change wrought when the soul died to sin is of a different kind and infinitely greater than any before, and than he can conceive, till he experiences it. Yet he still grows in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God; and will do so, not only till death, but to all eternity.<sup>24</sup>

Christ's victory thus becomes blessed reality in entire sanctification, in the perfecting of our love. This separation of the soul from sin to God is "the final object God has in mind in crucifying the old man" (Romans 6). Viewed positively, this act of God is life in the Spirit (Romans 8). Christ re-enacts in us the sanctification he accomplished in the atonement. By his perfect obedience and victorious death and resurrection he provisionally expelled sin from human experience; now he comes in the Spirit to dwell and reign in us and thereby work in us the loving obedience which fulfils the "just requirement" of the law (Romans 8:4--Gr. *dikaioma*). Thus Christ himself becomes our sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30c). "For in him the

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<sup>24</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, reprint), 62.



whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him" (Colossians 2:9-10 RSV). This fulness, however, is not a private, mystical, quietistic union with Christ. It is social; it is life in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 2:21-2:7; 4:4-16; Colossians 3:1-4, 11-17; cf. Hebrews 2:10-13). In the Body of Christ--the *koinonia* of the Spirit--we discover the full meaning of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:21-29).

To put the matter in fullest perspective we must add one further word. Christ's victory is complete but not final. We have been "saved in hope"--the hope of resurrection and glorification with Christ (Romans 8:17-15; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28; Philippians 3:12-21). Meanwhile our sanctification has the character of spiritual warfare in which our victory over sin is assured as we permit Christ to live moment-by-moment in us (John 15:1-6; Ephesians 6:10-15; Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:18-23; Romans 8:12-13, 26-39; Romans 13:11-14; Hebrews 7:25). This is the practical meaning of Christus Victor for a theology of holiness. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"--over the dominion of sin in conversion, over sin itself in sanctification, over the racial consequences of sin in glorification.

### WESLEY AND CHRISTUS VICTOR

John Deschner has pointed out the relevance of Christus Victor for Wesley's doctrine of sanctification:

The grand theme of Wesleyan Atonement is Christ's bearing our guilt and punishment on the cross. This atonement is Wesley's ground for man's entire salvation, his sanctification, as well as his justification. But alongside this judicial scheme of thought there is also in Wesley a pervasive tendency to view Christ's work on Good Friday and Easter, but also today and in the future, in terms of a military victory for us over sin and evil. Much attention has been given to the power of the Holy Spirit in Wesley's doctrine of sanctification. It needs to be more clearly recognized that the sanctifying spirit is the spirit of the victorious as well as the suffering Christ.<sup>25</sup>

Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* make it abundantly

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<sup>25</sup> John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), 116.

clear that he both knew and appreciated the Christus Victor idea, and three of his Standard Sermons deal with this theme.<sup>26</sup> However, Wesley does not take full advantage of the implications of this view for his doctrine of holiness. "It may well be that this is a weakness in his doctrine of sanctification," Colin Williams observes. "There is a stress on a conscious individual relationship with Christ, and little emphasis is given to the need for the repetition of Christ's victory in us."<sup>27</sup> Such a view of sanctification, however, is present in Wesley, although it is not consistently pressed. Other elements of Wesley's thought rival this idea and thereby rob Wesley's doctrine of the Christocentricity that marks the New Testament teaching of sanctification. A clarification of Wesleyan theology at this point should give new power and relevance to its holiness teaching.

In his *Notes* Wesley affirms, as we have seen, that God has given sentence "that sin should be destroyed, and the believer wholly delivered from it" (on Romans 8:3).<sup>28</sup> "The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil--all sin. And will he not perform this in all who trust in him?"

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<sup>26</sup> He speaks of the devil as "the first sinner of the universe" (*Notes*, 1 John 3:18), who "transfused" his own self-will and pride into our first parents (Sermon CXXIII, I, 2; Sermon LXX, I, 9-10, thus becoming the "origin of evil" in the world (*Notes*, Matthew 13:28; John 8:44; Sermon LXX, I, 8). By sin and death Satan gained possession of the world, so that it was "Satan's house" (*Notes*, Matthew 12:29; John 12:31). Man's guilt gave him over to Satan's power, and man's corruption takes Satan's side in temptation. Satan thus enjoyed a right, a claim, and a power over man (*Notes*, John 13:39; Romans 6:14). Christ's ministry was an assault upon Satan (*Notes*, Matthew 12:29), but his decisive encounter with Satan, sin, and death was in the cross and resurrection (*Notes*, Matthew 27:52-53; Luke 12:50; 1 Corinthians 15:26; Ephesians 4:8; Hebrews 2:14). The resurrection, which is victory over death, is the inauguration of Christ's kingdom (*Notes*, Luke 22:16; Acts 2:31; 1 Corinthians 15:26), and its power will raise men to new life in regeneration and eternal life in the general resurrection (*Notes*, Romans 6:5; Ephesians 1:19; 1 Corinthians 15:20). The ascension signifies Christ's exaltation to the Father's right hand (Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:21-22) until he returns to judge the world (*Notes*, Revelation 1:7; Hebrews 9:28). After the judgment Christ will return the mediatorial kingdom to the Father, but will continue to reign eternally with him (*Notes*, 1 Corinthians 15:24). Here, indeed, are the essential elements of a full Christus Victor doctrine. See Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, Chapter 5, "The Kingly Work of Christ," and William M Greathouse, "John Wesley's View of the Last Things," *The Second Coming: a Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of the Last Things* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995), 142-148.

<sup>27</sup> Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1960), 88.

<sup>28</sup> Scripture references hereafter are all to Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*.

(1 John 3:8). In his sermon on this latter text, however, he limits the manifestation of Christ to the "inward manifestation of himself."<sup>29</sup> Not once in this entire sermon does he refer to Christ's objective victory on the cross, although he makes passing reference to Christ's final victory in the last day. By ignoring the objective victory of Christ, Wesley opens the door to a subjective, individualistic type of holiness. The message of sanctification would have been more vigorously positive and biblical if he had sounded with clarity the note of Christ's historic conquest of sin.

Moreover, because Wesley does not seem to see clearly that sanctification is the repetition of Christ's victory in us, Deschner thinks, it is "not primarily a participation in Christ who, as Paul says, is also our sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30), but rather such a relation to Christ as allows His Spirit to establish in us a 'temper,' a more abstract stylised kind of holiness." In the light of recent studies of Wesley's psychology, with the attendant emphasis on the importance of the means of grace in the development of holy character, Deschner's criticism of Wesley may be too strong.<sup>30</sup> What it appears he is pointing out is that holiness is only *secondarily* a "habitus"--a psychological habit-pattern; it is *primarily* the indwelling of Christ within, a position Wesley would endorse. "And what is 'righteousness,'" Wesley asks, "but the life of God in the soul; the mind that was in Christ Jesus; the image of God stamped upon the heart, now renewed after the image of him that created it?"<sup>31</sup> The latter pages of his *Plain Account* suggest that Wesley had indeed come to see the sanctifying Spirit as the Spirit of the victorious as well as the suffering Christ, in Christ's role as Prophet, Priest, and King. Listen to the mature Wesley:

The holiest of man still need Christ, as their Prophet, as 'the light of the world.' For he does not give them light, but from moment to moment; the instant he withdraws, all is darkness. They still need Christ as their King; for God does not give them a stock of holiness. But unless they receive a supply every moment, nothing but unholiness would remain. They still need Christ as their Priest, to make atonement for their holy

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<sup>29</sup> Sermon LXX, "The End of Christ's Coming" (II. 7; III. 1, 1).

<sup>30</sup> Randy L. Maddox, "Reconnecting the Means to the End: a Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Volume 33 (Fall, 1988): 29-66; Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, N.J. & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> Sermon XXI, Discourse I, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount" (I. 11).

things. Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ... The best of men may therefore say, "Thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven. Through my union with Thee, I am full of light, of holiness, and happiness. But if I were left to myself I should be nothing but sin, darkness, hell."<sup>32</sup>

This is Wesley at his best. Here he means by perfection, not simply any "temper," "intention," or "affection" inherent in man himself, but a participation in the being of Christ's love. Christ is both the content and source of this perfection. On the ground of Christ's priestly work, the prophetic and kingly offices can also be understood as grace.

We can only regret that Wesley, having suggested such an exalted view of Christ's intercession, did not fully articulate this in his doctrine of sanctification. We are not "holy in Christ" (as Wesley abhorred), but "in Christ" we are actually made holy. Here he could have found his sound defence against antinomianism (Hebrews 7:25). And it can be argued that this was, in the band societies, Wesley's pastoral answer to antinomianism. There his Methodists found their place in the Body of Christ with its worship, exhortation, admonition, encouragement, and service. There they experienced the presence and power of Christ who had won for them the victory. Though Wesley may not have done so, must we not develop this doctrine's implication that we participate in Christ's active righteousness, through the Holy Spirit, in the church which is his Body? Perhaps we are being called upon to restore Wesley's insistence upon the means of grace *as an essential ingredient of the doctrine of sanctification*.

For believers awaiting God's promise of "entire renewal in the image of God," it is necessary that they wait for this fulfilment, says Wesley,

Not in careless indifference, or indolent inactivity; but in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily; as well as in earnest prayer and fasting, and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God. And if any man dream of attaining it any other way (yea, or of keeping it when it is attained, when he has received it even in the largest measure,) he deceiveth his own soul. It is true, we receive it by simple faith: But God does not, will not,

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<sup>32</sup> *A Plain Account*, 81, 83.

give that faith, unless we seek it with all diligence, in the way which he hath ordained.<sup>33</sup>

Fallen creatures, lifted up by God's grace, can remain in that grace, Wesley was convinced, only when they appropriate it in obedience to his commandments. And we can grow in that grace, he insisted, only by constant attendance upon the means of grace, which if we neglect leads to that falling away which is the occasion of sin. "By 'means of grace,'" he explained, "I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby He might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."<sup>34</sup> Whatever deficiency we may find in John Wesley's appropriation of the Christus Victor idea in his theological formulation of the doctrine of sanctification, we still have much to learn from his practical theology if we are to keep the message of holiness pertinent and alive in these times. In the final analysis, Christian perfection is the *worship* of God in the beauty of holiness. The challenge we face is the development of a full-orbed formulation of Wesley's theology that does justice to the Christus Victor idea, as at the same time we reconnect the means of grace to the end for which we were created--to be holy, even as God is holy.

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<sup>33</sup>*A Plain Account*, 62.

<sup>34</sup><sup>34</sup> Sermon, "The Means of Grace," *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 1:238. By the instituted means of grace Wesley understood (1) Prayer, (2) Searching the Scriptures, (3) Fasting, (4) Christian Conference (Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*, 132-136). The private means of grace he subdivided as (1) works of piety and (2) works of mercy (Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998], 106-107).