

Proposal for the Conference on "Wesley, Holiness and Culture: Trans-Pacific Perspectives for the 21st Century" by Korea Evangelical Holiness Church and Wesleyan Theological Society

"The Historical Theological Importance of the Wesleyan Holiness Atonement"

Dr. Meesaeng Lee Choi

In this paper, I will argue that the Wesleyan Holiness doctrine of atonement is influential in formulating and spreading the gospel and scriptural holiness throughout the world, first Trans-Pacific (from America to Korea, Japan, and China) at the turn of the 20th century and then has impacted continuously to the world throughout the 20th century. It is much more constructive than the other prevailing theories of the atonement in the history of Christianity such as Gregorian ransom theory, Anselmian satisfaction theory, Abeladian moral theory, Luther's justification, and Calvinistic penal substitutionary theory, though the Wesleyan Holiness atonement shares some common aspects with the previous historical theories of the atonement.

The Wesleyan Holiness atonement is a very comprehensive and holistic view. Wesley's "universal atonement" explicates God's unlimited grace for all humanity (Christ died for all humanity: the prevenient grace) not as it is understood in Calvin's limited atonement (Christ died for those who are to be saved: the predestined grace). The Wesleyan Holiness interpretation of Christ's atonement gives an appropriate doctrine beyond Anselmian theory of satisfaction (which reflects the medieval legalistic and penitential system and thus eliminates the ethical/moral dimension of salvation). The Wesleyan Holiness atonement does not exclude the sacrificial dimension which is absent in the Abeladian moral theory. Abeladian theory emphasizes God's love for humanity and could fall into the category of universal salvation.

The emphasis of holiness and sanctification in the Wesleyan Holiness doctrine of atonement brings an ethical and moral dimension. It goes beyond Luther's forensic understanding of justification (declared righteousness) which could easily fall into the antinomian interpretation. As many Wesleys' hymns have promoted, the Wesleyan Holiness atonement has love-motivated, ethical moral dimension in response to the grace of God.

The themes of healing and *Christus Victor* in the Wesleyan Holiness atonement which is holistic has impacted throughout the twentieth century, as we look at the mission theology in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, in both evangelical world (Lausanne Covenant 1974, Manila Manifesto 1989, and Bangkok 2004) and ecumenical world (the Commission of Faith and Order). In this sense, it is far more appropriate and formative for the twenty first century global Christianity.