

THE RESURRECTED BODY OF CHRIST

JOHN 20:27 and HEBREWS 2:10

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Chapter VIII.4 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF)* includes the following statement in regards to Christ's office of priestly mediator: "On the third day He arose from the dead, *with the same body in which He suffered...*" (italics added) It is the italicized part of this statement that will be the subject of this paper. While this statement necessarily impacts on the perennial debate of the nature of Jesus' resurrection (whether it was physical or spiritual),¹ that will not be the main focus of this paper, though it will be touched on indirectly. Instead, our thrust here will be on what this statement says about Jesus himself, his work on behalf of sinners, and how this should shape our theology of glorification.

In support of the above italicized statement, the *WCF* cites the Doubting Thomas story of John 20, and in particular John 20:27 in which the resurrected Jesus invites Thomas to touch his resurrected body which bears the wounds of his vicarious suffering.² Bultmann is correct in noting, "Thomas has now seen Jesus in the way that Jesus wills to be seen and ought to be

¹ In her article, "Is Jesus Risen? Literal View Gains Ground," *The Washington Post*, April 16, 2006, C01, Michelle Boorstein says the traditional view of the physical resurrection of Christ is enjoying something of a renaissance in the United States despite the sustained efforts of Ehrman, the Jesus Seminar, and others to cast doubt on the veridicality of this doctrine. Nonetheless, Boorstein quotes Steve Huber, an Episcopal minister in Washington DC, who says, "The truth of the Resurrection shouldn't be the real battleground. I think what we want to do is try and rise above that and ask, 'What is the metaphoric truth of Easter?'" Such sentiments are typical in mainline denominations that tend to be far more hesitant in forcefully articulating the traditional view of the historicity and physicality of the resurrection of Christ, per the *WCF*.

² It should be noted that when Thomas expresses faith in response to this invitation, the text does not say that Thomas actually took up Jesus' invitation and touched him. It is better to interpret Thomas' confession as being based on sight (as v29 seems to indicate) rather than tactile confirmation, contra many, including Ignatius, *Letter to the Smyrneans*, 3.2 and even Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.25.3.

seen."³ But what is to prevent us from speculating that the nature and features of the glorified body of Jesus are changeable, rather than fixed and permanent? Bultmann's statement does not preclude us from suggesting that the glorified Jesus might appear to us in our glorified state differently than he did to Thomas in John 20:27, and that perhaps a more spiritual understanding of his resurrection is not out of bounds. In contrast, *WCF* 8.4 certainly implies, if not declares outright, that the nature of Jesus' glorified body is fixed in all its physicality, and that we will see him as Thomas did. But can this be supported historically and biblically? What follows will be a section devoted to surveying the historical milieu in which the Fourth Gospel was written. This will then be followed by an appraisal of the possible relationship between John 20:27 and Hebrews 2:10. It will be our view that when these two sections are taken together, the evidential preponderance will favor the above interpretation of *WCF* 8.4.

The Historical Situation of the Fourth Gospel (FG):

According to Raymond Brown, the FG is not particularly concerned with refuting any false or heretical teaching. In relation to this, he suggests, "The Gospel does not seem to support the thesis that this motive was particularly strong in the evangelist's mind."⁴ This, of course, stands in opposition to Irenaeus, who specifically states that the FG was written in part to combat the teachings of Cerinthus. But the apparently conflicting reports about Cerinthus that exist in early Christian writings have made it extremely difficult to attribute a consistent system of thought to him. This in turn has made it difficult to definitively identify Cerinthus and his theology as the principle target of John's writings.⁵

In his *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus recounts the now famous bath-house story of Polycarp in which "John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus

³ R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 695. Let me be clear that in quoting Bultmann approvingly, I am not endorsing his hyper-exaggerated Christology-from-above that was most rigorously advanced in his *Jesus and the Word*. I favor a Christology-from-above approach, but not the Bultmannian version that virtually separated the kerygmatic Christ from the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth.

⁴ R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB (NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. 1.LXXVII. Judith Lieu goes even further by suggesting that even the Johannine epistles were not principally concerned with combating heresy or the schismatic elements within the Johannine community. See her *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, NTT (Cambridge, 1997).

⁵ In her *A Separate God* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1984, pp. 298-314), Simone Petrement is radically skeptical concerning our knowledge of Cerinthus. Petrement goes so far as to question whether Cerinthus ever existed as a historical figure (pg. 309), and then concludes, "Thus, we can say nothing on the subject of Cerinthus that achieves a reasonable degree of probability." (pg. 314) Similar to many others, Petrement greatly disregards the accuracy of the early church witness in making such claims.

within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, 'Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.'"⁶ Importantly, Irenaeus states that John wrote the Fourth Gospel, and particularly the Prologue, to combat Cerinthus.⁷

In addition to setting the historical scene concerning the relationship between John and Cerinthus, Irenaeus goes on to devote a section of Book 1 of *Against Heresies* to articulating the heretical views of Cerinthus. According to Irenaeus,⁸

Cerinthus, again, a man who was educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians, taught that the world was not made by the primary God, but by a certain Power far separated from him, and at a distance from that Principality who is supreme over the universe, and ignorant of him who is above all. He represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being. (AH 1.26.1)

In this description, Cerinthus is said to have held a number of views. First, the primary God (the "unknown Father") is not the creator God. The creator is actually "a certain Power" that is separate and distinct from the highest God, and is far below and ignorant of the highest God. The makings of a somewhat elaborate ditheism can be detected here. Second, Jesus was a normal (though unusually righteous) human being, having been conceived in the normal and natural way by Joseph and Mary. Third, at the baptism of Jesus, the spiritual Christ descended upon him and remained with him during most of his earthly ministry. This can be characterized as an "adoptionistic" Christology, where God (the "unknown Father") saw the unusual righteousness of Jesus the man and adopted him through the spiritual Christ at his baptism, which then enhanced the wisdom and power of the man Jesus. However, this adoption was only temporary, for prior to the crucifixion, the spiritual Christ departed from the man Jesus, so as to preserve the impassible God from suffering. This last point is critical to our study of John 20.

⁶ AH 3.3.4

⁷ AH 3.11.1

⁸ Chuck Hill has proposed that the "heresy index" in Book 1 of Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* may have been supplied by Polycarp. If that is the case, we would view this as strong validation of the accuracy and reliability of Irenaeus' descriptions in this section, including that of Cerinthus. See his *From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

In addition to Irenaeus, data concerning Cerinthus has been preserved through Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica (HE)*. In section III.28, Eusebius, relying on the views of Gaius and Dionysius, considers Cerinthus a materialistic and even carnal chiliast:

Then there is Cerinthus, who by revelations purporting to have been written by a great apostle presents us with tales of wonder falsely alleged to have been shown to him by angels. He declares that after the Resurrection the Kingdom of Christ will be on earth, and that carnal humanity will dwell in Jerusalem, once more enslaved to lusts and pleasures. And in his enmity towards the Scriptures of God, and his anxiety to lead men astray, he foretells a period of a thousand years given up to wedding festivities. (*HE* III.28.2, quoting Gaius)

Cerinthus: the founder of a sect called Cerinthian after him, who wished to attach a name commanding respect to his own creation. This, they say, was the doctrine he taught – that Christ's Kingdom would be on earth: and the things he lusted after himself, being the slave of his body and sensual through and through, filled the heaven of his dreams – unlimited indulgence in gluttony and lechery at banquets, drinking-bouts, and wedding-feasts, or (to call these by what he thought more respectable names) festivals, sacrifices, and immolation of victims. (*HE* III.28.4, quoting Dionysius)

Eusebius offers a picture that, upon initial examination, might appear to conflict with the description offered by Irenaeus. Whereas the Cerinthus described by Irenaeus appears to hold "gnostic" views concerning God,⁹ the Cerinthus described by Eusebius (relying on others) appears to hold somewhat Jewish views¹⁰ regarding eschatology and the Βασιλεία. Such seeming difficulties have made many scholars question the historical reliability of both Irenaeus and Eusebius, but such conclusions are unwarranted.¹¹

From this patristic data, five main pillars of Cerinthus and his theology can be articulated. Those views are:

- 1) The creator God is not the supreme God of the cosmos. This creator is far removed and ignorant of the highest God, and is far lesser a "Power" than the supreme God.
- 2) Jesus was simply a righteous man who was temporarily adopted by the heavenly and spiritual Christ at his baptism. But this spiritual Christ departed from Jesus just prior to the crucifixion and did not endure suffering.
- 3) During his earthly ministry, the adopted Jesus preached an "unknown Father" God.
- 4) Cerinthus himself appears to have actively partaken in fleshly and sensual pleasures.

⁹ A 'gnostic' Cerinthus is further attested to in the early church literature by the *Epistula Apostolorum* which relates Cerinthus in some way with the gnostic Simon Magus.

¹⁰ A 'Jewish' Cerinthus is further attested to in the early church literature by Hippolytus and Dionysius Bar Salibi.

¹¹ For an able reconciliation of these seemingly different patristic appraisals of Cerinthus, see Hill, "Cerinthus, Gnostic or Chiliast? A New Solution to an Old Problem." *J ECS* 8 (2000), pp. 135-172.

- 5) The chiliaistic kingdom taught by Cerinthus was, by appearance, Jewish and very materialistic (and possibly carnal) in nature and was still a future event.

Contra most scholars, we believe both the FG and 1 John comprise a unified front against Cerinthian theology.¹² By explicitly proclaiming in John 1:1-4 that through Jesus Christ all things were made, John clearly advances the idea that the one true God and the creator God are one and the same. This directly contradicts item #1 of Cerinthian theology mentioned above, where Cerinthus proposed a ditheistic view that separated and even denigrated the creator God in relation to the supreme God. John 20:24-31, along with John 1:14, directly contradict item #2 of Cerinthian theology. By affirming that Jesus Christ is an ontological and incarnational unity, John is clearly articulating a position that opposes the dichotomy between the human Jesus and the spiritual Christ proposed by Cerinthus, as well as the adoptionistic christology that immunized the spiritual Christ from suffering.¹³ John 8:19, 8:28, 10:38, 14:7-10, and 15:15 all refute item #3 of Cerinthian theology in stressing that the Father is knowable and has been made known by Christ.¹⁴ The idea that the FG might have been written with the intent of refuting Cerinthian theology is bolstered by the fact that all the above references are unique to the FG in comparison with the Synoptic material.¹⁵

In conclusion, John 20:27 should be seen, in part, within a milieu of combating heresy. John is presenting an accurate historical narrative, but also a narrative that is designed to advance a particular theology and refute false teaching in the process. But does this cinch the case for the permanency of the nature and features of Christ's resurrected body? Can't we still say that the inclusion of the Thomas story in the FG, while accurate, was nonetheless driven by a particular agenda, and that given the selective nature of the Biblical narratives, does not preclude the possibility that other post-resurrection appearances occurred in which Jesus appeared differently than he does here in John 20? In my view, the above historical analysis, while strong, does not technically close this loophole on its own. To complete the case, we need to look at Hebrews.

¹² I have written on this in some detail elsewhere. See my "By Water and Blood? An Exegetical Analysis of 1 John 5:6-9." (unpublished)

¹³ See also 1 John 1:1, 2:22, 4:2, 5:1, 5:6; 2 John 7.

¹⁴ See also 1 John 2:3-4, 2:13, 3:22-24, 5:2-3.

¹⁵ Refutations of items #4-5 can also be found in the FG, but for the sake of brevity, will not be explored in detail. In snippet form, the FG's stress on obeying the commands of God in John 14-15 (especially when combined with 1 John 2:15-17) can be seen as refuting item #4 of Cerinthian theology. Lastly, the FG's often noted stress on 'already' eschatology can certainly be seen as refuting the futurist eschatology of Cerinthus in item #5.

The Relationship between John 20:27 and Hebrews 2:10

Comparing John 20:27 and Hebrews 2:10 is admittedly problematic in the absence of a high view of canonicity. Of all major commentaries on the FG and Hebrews, only Spicq's piece on Hebrews has made any sustained attempt to mine the possible theological similarities between the two documents and propose some degree of literary indebtedness between them.¹⁶ Very few have followed Spicq,¹⁷ but we think Spicq was on to something, even if his view of literary dependence is problematic.¹⁸ What follows is an attempt to see John 20:27 as something of a picture of what Hebrews 2:10 says about Christ in his role as priestly mediator. If such an argument proves successful, it will strongly link the nature of Christ's resurrected body with the permanence of Christ's priestly office.

Hebrews 2:10 says that Christ was made perfect through suffering. This has long been a difficult passage, because it seems to imply that prior to the crucifixion, there was something morally imperfect about Jesus. But this is not what Heb. 2:10 is saying (cf. Heb. 4:15, 9:14). Instead, the idea of perfection (in Heb. 2:10, the word used is the aorist infinitive form of τελειόω) should be seen in the sense of completion, or bringing something to climax and finality.¹⁹ So what did Jesus bring to completion? TDNT remarks, "God has qualified Jesus...to come before him in priestly action. He has done so by the suffering (2:10) in which Jesus confirmed his obedience."²⁰ In other words, it was Christ's priestly office that was perfected through his sacrificial suffering on the Cross. The perfect obedience of Christ was *confirmed* through his suffering.

¹⁶ Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Librairie LeCoffre, 1952), I.102-138.

¹⁷ Although, C.J.A. Hickling tried in vain to revive the findings of Spicq and suggests additional similarities between the FG and Hebrews not mentioned by Spicq. See his "John and Hebrews: The Background of Hebrews 2:10-18," *NTS* 29 (1983): 112-116.

¹⁸ Spicq proposed something of a dual dependence between the FG and Hebrews, in which the writer of Hebrews used a 'catechesis' which allegedly lied behind the Johannine material as one of his sources, with the final version of Hebrews then becoming a source for the author of the FG when it was ultimately put to papyrus. I have my doubts about Spicq's circularity proposal. If there is a literary relationship between Hebrews and the FG, I am more inclined to think the FG relied on Hebrews, since Hebrews is almost certainly the earlier writing of the two. Plus, the geographical movements of the early church would make a Johannine catechesis a bit problematic as a source for the writer of Hebrews. This is especially true if the author of Hebrews is Silvanus, as I'm inclined to think, since according to Acts, Silas ministered around Ephesus (though admittedly not in Ephesus itself) probably well before the Apostle John concentrated his ministry in this area of Asia Minor.

¹⁹ See Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 996.

²⁰ Friedrich and Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), VIII.83.

Without the sacrificial suffering of the crucifixion, Jesus' performance of his priestly office would have been imperfect in the sense of being incomplete, and would still be imperfect/incomplete today. The suffering of the crucifixion was necessary to 'perfect' Christ's priestly work and perfectly represent humanity and atone for the sins of God's people.²¹ This understanding is confirmed by Heb. 5:8-9, in which Christ was made perfect through suffering by perfectly 'learning' obedience and fully qualifying him for his atoning work.²² In order for Jesus to be fully qualified to be the pioneer of salvation for the many sons he has brought to glory, it was necessary for him to pass through atoning vicarious suffering as the priestly redeemer of his people.²³ Another way to put this is to say that his ability to bring many sons to glory depended on the perfection of his own sonship, and it is supremely through the sufferings of the Atonement that it is demonstrated that Jesus fully perfected "the path of obedience and not [the path] of human arrogance."²⁴

In light of this, the significance of John 20:27 (and 20:20²⁵) is more greatly revealed. The Doubting Thomas story is not just about evidence leading to conversion,²⁶ and it is certainly not about Jesus consenting to the demands of Thomas for proof that he really had risen from the dead.²⁷ It is partly about refuting Cerinthian docetism as we've already mentioned,²⁸ but it is

²¹ On this, see Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, WBC (Waco: Word Books, 1991), p. 59. See also L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 371.

²² Murray eloquently notes, "The *obedience* is that by which he is furnished so as to fulfill [his role as the captain of salvation], to conduct to salvation and to bestow it. In other words, the obedience is the accomplishment that procures salvation and ensures its bestowal." *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 2.156.

²³ George Wesley Buchanan correctly notes that the nature of Christ's sufferings is not spelled out in detail here in 2:10. The author seems to be assuming that his audience knows about the sufferings of Christ he is talking about. However, the almost constant drumbeat of Hebrews surrounding Christ as the priestly mediator of a better covenant squarely sets this passage within the larger context of Christ as Priest. See his *To the Hebrews*, AB (NY: Doubleday, 1972), p. 32.

²⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), II.384.

²⁵ Commenting on 20:20, Hendriksen lists four implications, including the appropriately strong affirmation of Christ's body and resurrection as physical. See his *John*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), p. 459.

²⁶ This is the only main significance that Dodd articulates. See his *The Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 441. In saying this, however, I do not want to downplay the evidential aspect of this passage too much. I do think the passage provides powerful reasons to reject Bultmann's program almost entirely, in that it provides a solid basis to ground the Jesus of faith in the Jesus of history.

²⁷ This is a common misreading of this passage. See Bultmann, *John*, pp. 694-5; Brown, *John*, II.1045; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 614; Rudolf Schnackenberg, *The Gospel According to John* (NY: Crossroad, 1990), III.330; C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 572; George Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC (Waco: Word Books, 1987), p. 385; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 657. Thomas' statement in 20:25 makes little sense if we see it as a demand for proof that Jesus isn't dead. If Thomas thought Jesus was dead, to whom exactly would Thomas be making this demand? Clearly he couldn't demand the disciples to provide this kind of proof. In making this statement, Thomas is probably expressing sarcastic unbelief of the

also more than that. By highlighting the wounds in his glorified body, Jesus is showing us a number of things.

First, he is pointing out the permanency and ongoing continuation of his priestly office. Christ continues to be the great intercessory priest for his people today, and his ability to continue in his role as priest in the present and future is a result of his priestly work on the Cross in the past in line with Heb. 2:10. By highlighting the wounds in his glorified body, Christ has linked the permanency of his priestly office to his own glorified state. This makes the features of his resurrected body permanent as well, and heightens the eternal significance of Christ as priestly mediator. Christ as priest is not exclusively an office of external acts, but is a permanent inward reality of Christ reflected in his very body.

Second, Christ is pointing out the completed fulfillment of his priestly office. Though he continues to intercede for us today, his ability to do so is based on the completed work of atonement, as John 19:30 makes clear. As Hebrews 5:9 makes clear, obedience was perfected at the Cross, and it is on this basis that Christ is qualified and entitled to continue his priestly work of intercession. Christ's work as priest was not completed at the Cross, but the perfection of his eternal qualification for priestly mediation was perfected and completed at the Cross.

Third, Christ is showing that a strict separation between who Christ is and what Christ does is difficult to maintain. This is a tricky area in which to probe. Scholastic theology has traditionally separated the person of Christ from the work of Christ, while nonetheless keeping them close together. But if Heb. 2:10 and 5:9 are talking about the perfection of Christ in the context of the perfection of his office as priestly redeemer through his obedience, what does John 20 tell us about the relationship between the priestly work of Christ and the person of Christ himself? Can we really draw a sharp distinction between who Christ is and what he does, or is

announcement of the disciples, while still betraying a very real hope that what they were saying was true. For more on this, see William Bonney, *Caused to Believe: The Doubting Thomas Story as the Climax of John's Christological Narrative*, BIS (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 158ff.

²⁸ Even J.N. Sanders partially acknowledges this. See his *The Gospel According to St. John*, HNTC (NY: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 437. Predictably, however, Kasemann does not, insisting that "[t]he assertion...that the Fourth Gospel is anti-docetic, is completely unproven." Quite the contrary, Kasemann believes the Fourth Gospel itself reflects tendencies of a "naïve docetism." As is regularly the case, Kasemann is very much on his own in making such suggestions. See his *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 21.

what he does somehow part of who he is?²⁹ I cautiously think it's more the latter, and I think John 20 helps us here.

The perfect glorified body of Christ permanently and eternally bears the wounds of his priestly work. It has to be significant, as Bultmann hints, that the very body of Christ, which clearly reflects his incarnational nature, will eternally and vividly bear the wounds of his priestly work. If this is so, isn't there some sense in which Christ's work as priestly redeemer is somehow part of who he is? What John 20:27 shows us is that the perfection of Christ through suffering described in Heb. 2:10 not only brought Christ's priestly office into a state of completion, but it also brought Christ's own priestly glorification into a state of completion.

Put simply, the way of Christ's exaltation was through his humiliation.³⁰ This is obviously true of Hebrews 2:10, and as Bauckham notes in regards to the Fourth Gospel, "Jesus' self-humiliation actually is his exaltation by God."³¹ Importantly, when the issue is framed this way, we move beyond comparisons of ontology versus functionality in our discussions of christology. Both Hebrews 2:10 and John 20:27 reveal both the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, and show that both humiliation and exaltation are part of the "divine identity"³² and are thus complementary.

When comparing Heb. 2:10 and John 20:27, we find that the permanency of the nature and features of Christ's resurrected body are eternal and permanent. This is because they are thoroughly linked with the perfection of the permanent priestly office of Christ to which the wounds so clearly refer. *WCF* 8.4 is astutely correct to discuss the resurrected body of Christ in the context of a chapter devoted to Christ as Mediator. Without John 20:27, we miss a vivid picture of what Heb. 2:10 describes. Without Heb. 2:10, we run the risk of lacking sufficient Biblical controls to forcefully argue for the permanency and unchanging nature of Christ's resurrected body as displayed in John 20:27, and all that this entails. Each passage enriches the significance of the other. This is critical, because if the glorified body of Christ shown to us in John 20:27 is permanent and unchanging, this has considerable relevance in addressing our present-day perceptions about the nature of the glorified state that is the basis for the Christian's

²⁹ For more on this methodological knot in traditional systematics, see Millard Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 675-677.

³⁰ For more on this, see G.C. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 39ff.

³¹ R. Bauckham, *God Crucified* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 67. Bauckham goes on to note, "The divine identity is known in the radical contrast and conjunction of exaltation and humiliation... This is the meaning of the Johannine paradox that Jesus is exalted and glorified on the cross." (pp. 68-69)

³² *Ibid.*

eschatological hope. In addition, it also helps provide an often needed biblical theology of suffering that can be incorporated in our present experience of hard-fought sanctification, as will be discussed below.

Practical/Personal Application:

It is worth reflecting upon the straight-forward reading of John 20:27. The glorified body of Jesus Christ still has holes in his hands. The wounds of his sufferings have not disappeared in his glorification. He has wounds and scars in the midst of perfection. How can that be? My conception of perfection is an absence of such things. Yet, Jesus is perfectly glorified, without blemish, but continues to bear the wounds of his vicarious sacrifice. This really turns my ideas of perfection on their head. Glorified perfection is much more deep and rich than my simple categories allow.

It's not hard for me to see how the Atonement has lasting and ongoing significance from the human perspective, since lives are changed and transformed constantly as a result of preaching the story of the Cross. But I had the latent tendency to think that from God's perspective, the atonement was a finite, discreet event that while incredibly significant, nonetheless came and went and is now over with little ongoing significance on the God-side of eternity. But the glorified body of Christ tells a different story. The wounds of the crucifixion are eternally preserved in His glorified body. If the wounds relate solely to something Jesus did in history, what's the importance of preserving such wounds in a body and realm that is beyond history and time? Could it be that the holes that remain in his hands should be seen as signs of priestly perfection rather than blemish? If so, is there some sense in which 'wounds' are not universally negative, but that there is also something positive about them as well? I cautiously tend to think so, even though this tends to fly in the face of the societal association of wounds as something totally negative and worthy of being avoided at all costs.

The bottom line is that those who have difficulty, as I do, associating wounds with perfection need to look anew at the glorified body of Christ to see wounds and scars gloriously on display in the midst of perfection, rather than being eradicated by perfection. It seems to me that such a reality demands a more rigorous doctrine of glorification than is often espoused in the church today. There may be no suffering in heaven, but heaven is not devoid of the wounds of suffering. Suffering itself is eradicated in the glorified state, but the marks of suffering are not.

Something tells me this stands in great conflict with our general perception of the glorified state and what it means to attain perfection. In my view, the marks of suffering on display in heaven demonstrate the truth that the evil which caused and necessitated suffering has always been under the control of God, and is purposeful in attaining his perfect purpose. That the scars of suffering are forever memorialized in the glorified state signify the necessity of suffering in God's plan. The scars are not erased, but glorified. Glorification is not about making the marks of suffering invisible or nonexistent, but visibly glorifying them for eternity and calling us to take up our own cross and join Christ through suffering during this period of sanctification.³³

The Western idea of glorification that includes little to no trace of suffering, struggle, or pain is not easily reconcilable to the notion that the scars of suffering will be eternally glorified even while suffering itself will be eradicated in the consummation. But this is what John 20:27 and Hebrews 2:10 present to us. Jesus is not shy about showing off his glorified wounds. To exclusively relate this to evidential considerations is to flatten its significance. Christ's sufferings were so purposeful that the wounds resulting from his sufferings have been glorified and immortalized into his eternal body, and he displays these marks without apology or shame because they represent the perfection of his priestly work. In our daily battles with suffering and struggle, we should see the wounds of John 20:27 as building an essential bridge between future glorification and current sanctification.³⁴ Christ's glorified body reassures us that just as Christ's sufferings were and are eternally purposeful, so are ours. And like Christ, we need not be ashamed of our own scars because like Christ's scars, ours will in some way be redeemed in our glorification.

³³ For more on this, see Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 95.

³⁴ Calvin argues something similar in regards to Heb. 2:10 and 5:9. Arguing that the *τελειῶσαι* of 2:10 is best translated as 'consecrated', while the *τελειωθεῖς* of 5:9 should be translated 'sanctified', Calvin believes the man Jesus is being sanctified through suffering (John 17:19), and that in both cases, this sanctification fits the context of human sanctification that is also addressed in each passage. See his *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. by Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), pp. 63-64, 124-5.

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