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THE THEOLOGY OF R. W. DALE

by SAMUEL J. MIKOLASKI

DR. MIKOLASKI, who is Professor of Theology in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, gives us here the first of a series of six studies of the theology of R. W. Dale, P. T. Forsyth and James Denney, with special reference to the doctrine of the atonement. These studies form a sequel to work which Dr. Mikolaski did a few years ago at Oxford, where he received the doctorate in philosophy. Each of the theologians mentioned is the subject of two essays in the series, the first dealing with his theology in general and the second with his understanding of the atonement in particular.

BY any yardstick Robert William Dale was an unusual man—unusual in what he himself was and for the work he accomplished during a significant period of British religious life and theology. A boy who has studied books like Butler's *Analogy* and Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* in his early teens, and who by the age of seventeen then writes and publishes a serious statement of Christian conviction (*The Talents*, 1847) can be called unusual. While the book reflects the vigour and tone of a youthful intolerance, it heralds the full-grown man who, possessed of unflagging energy and deep-seated dedication to the truth, committed his life to his Lord's service.

The lives of R. W. Dale and J. A. James, his predecessor at Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, span the nineteenth century in the ministry of this one church, and they join hands with and bridge the gap between two distinct eras in the religious life of England. James led the congregation in Carr's Lane from 1804 until his death in 1859. Dale came to Carr's Lane as student assistant to James in 1852, he was ordained co-pastor in 1854, he became sole pastor on the death of James in 1859, and he continued in the ministry of Carr's Lane until his own death in 1895. James was tied wholeheartedly to the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century expressed chiefly in the traditional categories of Puritan Calvinism and Methodism. Dale's roots lay in that same evangelical conviction but he, confronted by the new problems in science and biblical research, had to blaze new trails to vindicate his evangelical convictions. He preached and wrote as the pastor of a thriving church

in a key industrial city while engrossed in the life not only of his church but of the city and the country. In England the power of the Liberal Party lay, on the one side, in the strength of Congregationalism and for a time during the century it appeared altogether possible that the alliance could and might force the disestablishment of the Church of England. An ardent Congregationalist, a vigorous Liberal, and an outspoken critic of the Establishment, Dale nevertheless retained cordial ties with fellow-clergy and scholars of various persuasions. They gladly responded with their own friendship and admiration.

THE OLD EVANGELICALISM AND THE NEW¹

Dale cherished the values of Puritan Calvinism but as modified in important ways by the Evangelical Revival. His theology did not develop primarily in the lists of theological debate but out of the vigour and the fire of his own spiritual experience. The spiritual uncertainties of his youth later drew down his criticisms upon both Calvinism and Methodism. The union of these was the cornerstone of evangelism, piety, and theology for Congregational churches, and to Dale the combination posed an intellectual challenge to state theologically both where his faith agreed and where it disagreed with the accepted forms of truth. That Dale rejected certain traditional formulae of Calvinism is clear. Some of these were the doctrine of the decree to reprobate, limited atonement, and irresistible grace. Yet he admired Calvinism for its theological perspicuity and proclamation of God's sovereignty.² Dale himself is admirably clear in his theological writing. What he consented to wholeheartedly as Calvinism's chief point was its testimony to the truth that righteousness is possible to man only where it is denied as possible by man, i.e., to those who rest wholly in God for it.³

Both Calvinism and Methodism stood under fire, he claimed, because they interposed creeds or shibboleths between God and men. At the time of his own spiritual struggles he had turned to J. A. James's *The Anxious Enquirer* for help that failed him. This booklet had an enormous distribution in England during the early nineteenth century. It was a "personal work" booklet similar to an epitome of the Christian gospel that may be used today in evangelistic crusades. But though he tried sincerely to believe what the book said the young Dale found no rest.

¹ *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*, 1889.

² *The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons*, 1880, pp. 22, 195.

³ *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 1882, pp. 50-51.

Later he said:

At last—how, I cannot tell—all came clear; I ceased thinking of myself and of my faith, and thought only of Christ; and then I wondered that I should have been perplexed for even a single hour.⁴

The Methodists were so informal and exuberant that at first nonconformity embraced their evangelistic approach hesitantly. But questions such as that of man's capacity for the knowledge of God, whether Christ died for all men or for the elect only, whether the believer's relation to God in Christ should be viewed as more personal than forensic, and whether in fact men do and must choose for or against Christ in the divine economy, were being asked. At mid-nineteenth century the justification of this theological trend lies in significant renewals of interest in the Incarnation viewed not as an expedient on God's part due to the sin of man (which it had never really been for the Calvinist theologians) but as the expression of the eternal and ideal relation which Christ sustains to the race, and which the race sustains to God by virtue of its union with Christ (which had been obscured).

Dale sided with the Revivalists because, he said, they cared supremely for men. They believed *and* preached that "God does love all men alike."⁵

Christian experience must precede credal utterance however closely they stand together. "The biography of saints is a higher authority than the decree of councils."⁶ Nevertheless, three characteristics of the older evangelicalism were as much its weakness as its strength.⁷ First, the urgency of witnessing to men as individuals in need of personal conversion tended, he said, to obscure the wider realization of the Kingdom's principles in society. Second, the revivalists sometimes lost sight of the communal life of the church and of the role each Christian should fill in society as the member of a redeemed community. Finally, he argued, evangelicalism too often failed to show disinterested love of truth for truth's sake. Their aim in expounding the truth, he said, was primarily for conversions, and not as much as it should have been for the acknowledgement of truth as truth. Without doubt the religious and scientific controversies of his lifetime accentuated the need of this to his mind.

GOD, MAN, AND THE WORLD

The list of Dale's published books, sermons, lectures, and other

⁴ *The Epistle of James and Other Discourses*, 1895, p. 265.

⁵ *The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons*, p. 196.

⁶ *Christian Doctrine*, 1894, p. 307.

⁷ *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*, pp. 17-19.

papers is impressive but I will not make an attempt here to catalogue them. The reader who is interested may consult the authoritative biography, which includes a comprehensive list, by Dr. Dale's son, A. W. W. Dale (*The Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1899). It is my purpose, however, to comment on some key elements of Dale's theology, leaving for a further paper a discussion specifically of his doctrine of the Atonement.

At mid-nineteenth century the traditional education a young man got for the ministry (with the stress placed upon the traditional apologetic for Christianity including a high regard for metaphysics in philosophy and systematics in theology), and which Dale got at Spring Hill College⁸, Birmingham, suffered a severe shaking up. These were the decades of apparently crumbling foundation of faith. Two factors stand out: first, the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* that gave a vigorous impetus to naturalistic interpretations of the world, and second, the rise of the Higher Criticism in biblical scholarship. The attack on Christian faith struck not only at the gates of the citadel, but, it appeared, at its very foundation.

Dale saw what was distinctively Christian and he held on to it tenaciously despite the capitulation of some to scientific materialism and of others to philosophical idealism. All the while, I think it can be said fairly, he struggled to sift out the grains of truth from the heaps of theories, scientific, philosophical, and critical. Man was created, he said, to be free in a world made up of many forces, yet "whatever power belongs to man comes to him from the appropriation of force from without."⁹ The history of man's progress is the story of his alliance with and use of these forces. He is to be, in a word, *sui generis*. Whatever other purposes are served by the world's creation, Dale said, "this material universe . . . was made for man; to be his home, to develop his physical powers, to stimulate his intellectual faculties, to be a test and discipline of his moral character."¹⁰ Man's intellectual and moral capacities are his uniqueness. Dale refused to bifurcate them. Men cannot free themselves of moral responsibility when handling the data of their environment. For both science and religion, he said at the open-

⁸ The college was later moved to Oxford to become Mansfield College. Dr. Dale had a very significant share in this move, and his name is still cherished at Mansfield where the first extensions to the original building that he helped erect are now being made under the leadership of the principal, Dr. John Marsh.

⁹ *The Atonement*, 1875, p. 415.

¹⁰ *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, 1871, p. 49.

ing of Mansfield College, facts are supreme¹¹ and they ought to cast a restraint on the speculative faculty. That is, categories and evidence should interact. We come to the data of experience with certain categories, but the evidence must mould and revise our categories as the truth grasps us. This is both an intellectual and moral process.

The idea of the moral is dominant in Dale's theology, and frequent references to Bishop Butler occur. Morality, he said, is the ground of religion.¹² Man is a self-conscious, moral being created in the image of God, and this last has to do more with his nature than with his character. The purpose of God is to create a free moral being, i.e. a creature capable of freely doing good according to the will of God. Man is most like his Maker at the point of conscience.¹³ Dale rejected the ethical determinism of Comte and the naturalism of Spencer. Man is neither a cog in a machine forsaken by God nor a pawn in a deterministic universe. Man, he claimed, is free, he can control his environment and in his will he transcends his environment because the will exercises no other law than its own; "man is like God in this,—that he possesses freedom to choose the objects of his life, and the means by which he will secure them . . . the will of man stands erect, confronting all authority and power."¹⁴ It is at the key point of the moral relationship between God and man that Christ enters incarnate, fulfilling righteousness and carrying the race along with His own response. The ideal of the race is epitomized in the obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of the Father.

God's primary relationship to the world is personal and moral, he said, and to say the one is to declare the other; "all Christians, all theists, acknowledge that God is the Moral Ruler of mankind and of the whole universe."¹⁵ The highest activity of God is to maintain and vindicate the universal authority of the eternal law of righteousness. Little need be added here about the importance of this for Dale's theology, especially for the Atonement. As early as 1864 in a notable address before the directors of the London Missionary Society he said: "when God gave existence to creatures having a moral nature, invested, therefore, with the prerogatives of free-will, He assumed the responsibility . . . of governing

¹¹ *Fellowship with Christ*, 1891, p. 108.

¹² *The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons*, p. 46.

¹³ *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, p. 51.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁵ *The Atonement*, 1875, p. 364.

them according to the principles of eternal righteousness."¹⁶ The existence of such a standard was for Dale a first truth just as clearly as the reality of God, the self, and the world, and he held it to be the **ground of the relations of all three**. When challenged whether in fact such a law exists he said:

Given certain relations between beings, and a certain conduct is righteous—righteous by virtue of an eternal and immutable law. The case is precisely analogous to that of mathematical necessity . . . what is righteous *here and now*, will be righteous *there and then*.¹⁷

But the eternal law of righteousness does not have an independent existence, it is not superior to God, nor is there a conflict between it and God. When God is truly known, Dale argued, conscience confesses that the authority of the law of righteousness recognized as the ideal law in fact is the awful and glorious prerogative of the living God.¹⁸ No division of the law from God need be entertained because its authority is actively asserted in God. This undercuts the criticism that Dale's theory of the atonement rests on a juridical scheme of relations between God and man. "In God," he said, "the law is alive; it reigns on His throne, sways His sceptre, is crowned with His glory."¹⁹ The judgment of God therefore is God judging sin. Neither is the moral relation of God to the world deistic, His providence mechanistic, nor is His redemptive act purely forensic.

The mystery of the relations between God and man can be explained further by an elucidation of the mystery of the relations between the persons of the blessed Trinity. The possibility of the Incarnation rests on the eternal relation of the Son to the Father and the Spirit exhibited in the eternal law of righteousness. It is at the point of the ideal relation of the race to God through Christ on the ground of the eternal law of righteousness that the Incarnation and Atonement present their most profound aspects for study.²⁰ He claimed that no adequate exposition of the preeminent place assigned to Christ in the order of things according to Scripture in the light of the foregoing principles had been made. This theme is touched upon by Dale frequently whenever he says that Christ is the root of the race. That it should be possible for God to be manifested under the conditions of a human history implies a kinship between God and man. Man was created to share in the

¹⁶ *God the Saviour of All Men*, 1864, p. 23.

¹⁷ Preface, *The Atonement* (7th and following editions), pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

¹⁸ *The Atonement*, p. 372.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

eternal relation of the Son to the Father; "in union with the Son of God we share His relations to the Father and His eternal perfection and blessedness."²¹ The progress of the argument is clear: God is the Moral Ruler of the universe; Jesus Christ is the Moral Ruler of the race and "moral responsibility is responsibility to Him."²² Christ, both with the Father and as incarnate, is the living source of the eternal law of righteousness. God purposes to bring humanity, Dale said, into a relationship with Himself analogous with that sustained by Christ the incarnate Lord.

We must love God with all the fervour of enthusiasm which is inspired by the perfect ideal of righteousness and goodness; for in Him—in His personal life and eternal activity—that ideal is gloriously fulfilled, He is the ally, the inspiration, and the strength of righteousness in all His creatures. With His infinite power and infinite wisdom He is striving to secure the triumph of righteousness in this world and in whatever worlds righteousness is possible.²³

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE RACE

The question of how individual men stand related to one another in the race follows from the foregoing and, of course, must figure prominently in any Christian theology. The term "interdependence" epitomizes Dale's idea. Few of Dale's critics have grasped its significance (though Dr. Rashdall thought that in Dale's theology Christ stood related to the race along the lines of Platonic universals to objects) but it can be stated fairly that his doctrine of the atonement will not be grasped rightly without understanding of it.

The principle of mutual interdependence, he said, underlies man's life both natural and spiritual, "while God's providence overshadows all aspects of life, he has *ordained* that in natural and spiritual life we are responsible for one another."²⁴ Enunciated at the beginning of his theological career, this idea dominated Dale's interest throughout his lifetime. In what ways did he think of it? Interdependence as organic and social, but above all as moral. It specifies the fact of the community of moral life first in the family and then by extension to the race,²⁵ and it isolates that aspect of the nature of man that is the channel for transmitting good and evil.

²¹ "Preliminary Essay", in C. Schmidt, *The Social Results of Early Christianity*, 1885, pp. xv-xvii.

²² Preface, *The Atonement*, p. xxvii.

²³ *Atheism and the House of Commons*, 1880, p. 5.

²⁴ *The Funeral Services Occasioned by the Death of J. A. James*, 1859, pp. 23-24; cf. *Discourses Delivered On Special Occasions*, 1866, pp. 67-68 and p. 143; and *Fellowship With Christ*, 1891, pp. 306-307.

²⁵ *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 203-208.

In fact, the quality of the moral relationship is itself the moral dynamic of which I speak:

Is there not also a community of moral life between all mankind? And does not the common life of the race include a certain "lawlessness" which is impatient of the supreme authority of God and resents His grace . . . a force, a tendency, a bias, an element—call it what you will—hostile to righteousness?²⁶

The foregoing appears to define for Dale what it means to speak of the race as fallen. At this point his sympathies seem curiously mixed. On the one hand he thought of St. Paul's account of Adam in Romans 5 as incidental to the apostle's argument; yet on the other, while he defined sin as personal and actual he accepted its universality:

The guilt of every act of sin that we commit attaches to each of us—separately and apart: it is our personal defiance of the authority of God; and yet in some terrible way, we are implicated in the sin of the race.²⁷

We receive the gospel, he concludes, because we know that we have sinned, and we preach it to all men because we know that all are sinners. We stand together as a race morally therefore, but Dale did not specify this in concepts of transmission or imputation, but of actual continuing moral solidarity.

Our Lord's incarnation means that He came into the community of the moral life of mankind, and this was the very possibility of atonement. God gave the principle of interdependence of a mighty influence in every part of man's life and history to prepare him for centring his affections upon Christ. Interdependence is the ground of the relationship between Christ's work and our condition as well as of our response:

The principle of interdependence is variously illustrated in the general structure of the moral system of this world, assumes its sublimest form in the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ for human guilt, and the new relations established between heaven and earth, on the grounds of His amazing sacrifice.²⁸

The mighty power working for unrighteousness has been vanquished by the mightier grace of God working redemption. Christ introduces a principle working for righteousness in which we may all share. Dependence upon Christ is both the command of God and the duty of man:

It is no arbitrary appointment, it arises out of the relations of subjection and dependence which now exist between mankind and Him,

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 208, 212.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 217.

²⁸ *The Funeral Services of J. A. James*, p. 25.

that all should be required practically to acknowledge Him as Prince and Saviour of the world.²⁹

Now, the purpose of God is to make us one with each other and with Himself, that is, to create a redeemed community of moral creatures freely choosing righteousness. We are not saved to individualism, but to spiritual and moral interdependence; "we are largely necessary to each other, and the gifts of Christ's grace often reach us through the ministry of brotherly affection".³⁰ Christians, he said, are destined for the glory of the Father by resting upon Christ, and to eternal participation in the life of the Father in their union with Christ. The ideal appears to be paradoxical: we retain and achieve our individuality fully only within the redeemed community and in fellowship with and dependence upon Christ:

We were created that we might be eternally one with each other. Not individualism, but communion, extending through the whole of the interests and activities of human life is the Divine idea of the universe.³¹

SCRIPTURE AND REVELATION

No question arises about either the value or the authority of the biblical revelation in Dale's theology but nonetheless his view is not easy to formulate systematically, chiefly because he lived during an age when the new science of biblical criticism tended to mute the older utterances about Scripture. Yet this cannot be taken to mean that either Dale or other late nineteenth-century evangelicals hid their light under a bushel. Four of his major books were devoted to the exposition of Scripture: *The Ten Commandments* (1872), *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (1882), *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church* (on Hebrews, 1865), and *The Epistle of James and Other Discourses* (1895), and these were widely circulated. Dale was equipped neither as a scientist nor as a textual critic, nevertheless he was alert to the movement of thought around him.

The question we must ask of the biblical narratives is, he said, "What were the truths which they embodied?"³² The revelation is historically mediated, so we must learn to distinguish between the prophetic vision and the ideas of the times. When contrasting the ancient sacrificial system with the finality of Christ's work in the Epistle to the Hebrews he said:

Human forms of thought and human conceptions of material things, were the necessary vesture of divine revelation, as truly as human

²⁹ *God the Saviour of All Men*, p. 28; cf. *Christian Doctrine*, p. 217.

³⁰ *A Manual of Congregational Principles*, 1884, p. 22.

³¹ *Fellowship With Christ*, p. 307; note *The Atonement*, p. 418.

³² *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 323-4.

language, which is indeed nothing but a brief summary of what man has come to think about himself and the world.³³

But he leaves in doubt what he means by the inspiration of Scripture. Certain utterances such as "the inspired authorities of our faith",³⁴ and of sympathy for the Puritan reverence for "God's law . . . God's word" might lead one to suppose wrongly that he, like his predecessor J. A. James, held a verbal inspiration theory.³⁵ Yet he was convinced that honest scholarship would confirm rather than destroy the essential elements of the historic faith. At the opening of Mansfield College he claimed "freedom to criticize and reconstruct the text of the Holy Scriptures" extending the point also to questions of traditional dates, authorship, and exegesis.³⁶

Dr. Rashdall was plainly wrong therefore, in his inference upon Dale's views when he claimed that Dale constructed his doctrine of the Atonement upon pre-critical views of Scripture. Dale went as far as to say that the Old Testament narratives "may not have been kept free, even in their original and uncorrupted form, from all mistakes."³⁷

In *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels* he seems to outline the point of view to which he had come. This is, first, that the *substantial* trustworthiness of the Gospel records by themselves and also as joined to the witness of the apostolic fathers is unimpeachable and, second, that whatever were the original grounds of the believer's faith in Christ, once a man is a Christian the reality of Christian experience is self-authenticating. What Dale was saying, if one may put the thing as men do now, is that the religious understanding of historical facts can be relevant to their determination as historical events.³⁸ He set out to show both in this book and in *The Atonement* that whatever value there may be in amassing the textual evidence on a particular doctrine the facts recounted by the apostles cannot be rejected whether or not they were inspired, and, that "the importance of the inspiration of the original Apostles may be said to vary in an inverse ratio with the importance of the religious doctrines on which they are writing."³⁹

³³ *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, p. 21.

³⁴ *The Funeral Services of J. A. James*, p. 45.

³⁵ Note *The Atonement*, pp. 20-21.

³⁶ *Fellowship With Christ*, p. 113.

³⁷ *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, p. 20-21; cf. *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 216.

³⁸ H. D. Lewis, *Our Experience of God*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959, p. 150.

³⁹ *The Atonement*, p. 108.

While in the Old Testament the mode of the divine speaking meant that the primary sense of revelation is its first stage (those to whom it came), in the New Testament God has spoken directly to us in Jesus Christ. While Christ was upon earth, he said, God "addressed us in human speech." The Bible is a record of that revelation; we should distinguish between the "facts recorded by the evangelists" and the "truths taught by the apostles".⁴⁰ The authority of Scripture is the truth of Scripture. The Word of God is verified in the saintly life:⁴¹

Protestantism does not accept the truth of the *teaching* of Holy Scripture merely because it acknowledges the *authority* of Holy Scripture; it would be more accurate to say that it acknowledges the authority of Holy Scripture, because it accepts the truth of its teaching.⁴²

Dale argued that the positivism of Comte made knowledge impossible and intellectual effort a waste of time. He rested his case for the validity of human knowledge upon certain ultimate realities given through experience and grasped by the mind. These have been noted already: the reality of God, the self, the world, and the eternal law of righteousness.⁴³ While rejecting the old faculty psychology, Dale said that by the logical understanding we grasp the truth of the laws of nature, and with the higher reason the world of spiritual facts and persons. Of both we have immediate and direct though limited knowledge.⁴⁴ Now, the distinctive character of the higher reason is its relation to the moral realm, i.e. the discrimination of data in relation to the divine eternal law of righteousness. Faith therefore does not stand at the end of an argument. Faith is rooted securely in the very depths of men's moral life; it is an act not of the logical understanding but of the higher reason.⁴⁵

All of this leads to a conclusion on the nature of revelation, or in other words, to the epistemological ideal. That God takes the initiative in His self-disclosure was clear to Dale.⁴⁶ Specifically, revelation comprises the acts of God in history (the progressive unfolding of His gracious purposes for mankind) the significance of

⁴⁰ *The Faith Once For All Delivered to the Saints*, p. 112; *The Funeral Services of J. A. James*, pp. 28, 46.

⁴¹ *Fellowship With Christ*, p. 104.

⁴² *Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle*, 1874, p. 63.

⁴³ *Christian Doctrine*, p. 22; *The Atonement*, p. 365.

⁴⁴ *The Atonement*, pp. 18, 164.

⁴⁵ *Christ and the Controversies of Christendom*, 1869, p. 15.

⁴⁶ *God the Saviour of All Men*, pp. 7, 22; *The Ten Commandments*, 1872, p. 2.

which is disclosed to men by the Holy Spirit. His sermon *God the Saviour of All Men* based upon I Timothy 4: 10 stresses that Christianity proclaims the *Living God*, the God who is alive, personal, and interested in us, and, who has acted in His Son Jesus Christ for our salvation.⁴⁷ "The revelation consists", he said, "not merely or chiefly in words, but in Divine Acts."⁴⁸ Similarly, he said, our life rests not only upon the memory of ancient deeds and words spoken but upon the present and personal activity of God in Jesus Christ,⁴⁹ the church is the present revelation of the power and grace of God in human life;⁵⁰ and the sacraments are the visible signs of divine acts, "they are revelations of Christ in acts, not in words or in things."⁵¹

But if God has acted in history and Jesus Christ, there remains the interpretation of the acts. It is here that Dale enunciates most directly what is to him the ultimate principle of authority in Christian experience. On the one hand there are the various experiences and categories by which what is specifically Christian is mediated to us and grasped by us; however, the final authority is the person of Christ in the life of the Christian. When Dale says that he prefers to speak of the supremacy of Christ than of the supremacy of Scripture,⁵² he means that the Holy Spirit whilst utilizing the historical data nevertheless has immediate access to the lives of men; "the power of the Spirit of God is with us, and He, in wonderful ways, finds direct access to the innermost life of man."⁵³ Only as the Holy Spirit illumines the minds of men to apprehend the significance of the divine acts are they known as revelatory. For example, he writes, "apart from express Divine revelation . . . I do not see how the death of a lamb or bullock could have been regarded as possessing expiatory significance or value."⁵⁴ One particular instance of this that stood out prominently for him not only for revelation but for the developed doctrine of the atonement was the increased awareness the apostles gained

⁴⁷ *God the Saviour of All Men*, pp. 14-17.

⁴⁸ *Preface*, p. xxx; cf. *The Atonement*, p. 39; and *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 39, 256-7.

⁴⁹ *God the Saviour of All Men*, p. 15.

⁵⁰ "The Evangelizing Power of Spiritual Fellowship", in *Constructive Congregational Ideals* (D. Macfadyen, ed.). London: H. R. Allenson, 1902, p. 139.

⁵¹ *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 348; *A Manual of Congregational Principles*, p. 123.

⁵² *The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons*, p. 151-152.

⁵³ *The Atonement*, p. 32.

⁵⁴ *The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church*, p. 195.

of who Jesus was and what He had done. The substance of their faith lay in "what the illumination of the Holy Spirit enabled them to discover in Christ." Hence the "spirit of wisdom" may be called also the "spirit of revelation" for unless the former is given the latter is unintelligible.⁵⁵ How then did the Apostles arrive at the conclusion that Christ is preeminent in the universe as Creator and Sustainer and for the race as supreme Moral Ruler, as St. Paul says in Colossians 1: 16-17? Out of their own experience of Him as Redeemer and Lord, answered Dale:

They reached it not by *a priori* speculation, but by an orderly development of spiritual thought, controlled and directed by the Holy Ghost. Their thought took its departure from what they knew for themselves about their own relation to Christ, and was enriched at point after point by the constant remembrance of the great fact that Christ was God manifest in the flesh.⁵⁶

Stress upon the validity and authority of Christian experience, though not as irrational nor as unbiblically founded, is the underlying theme of Dale's life as a Christian, as an outstanding preacher, and as a respected theologian. At his ordination he had testified that the usual evangelical language had failed to reach him, but that a sermon by the Reverend Alfred Morris of Holloway entitled "Christ the Spirit of Christianity" won him. Morris preached that Christianity was primarily neither adherence to the "letter" nor a "system" but a "spirit" and that the proper conception of the Christian's relationship to Christ can be formed only when Christ is seen as the living Person indwelling believers.⁵⁷ The sermon transformed Dale and for the remainder of his life its theme became his.

⁵⁵ *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, pp. 137-140; *Christian Doctrine*, p. 39.

⁵⁶ *The Atonement*, p. 408; *Preface*, p. xxxi.

⁵⁷ A. J. Morris, *Christ the Spirit of Christianity*. London: John Gladding, 1849.

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